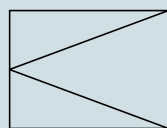
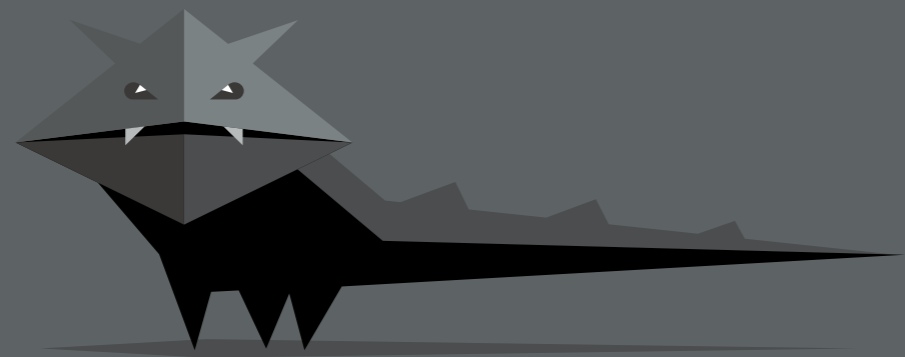


## TALES OF THE BEAST OF KAUNAS

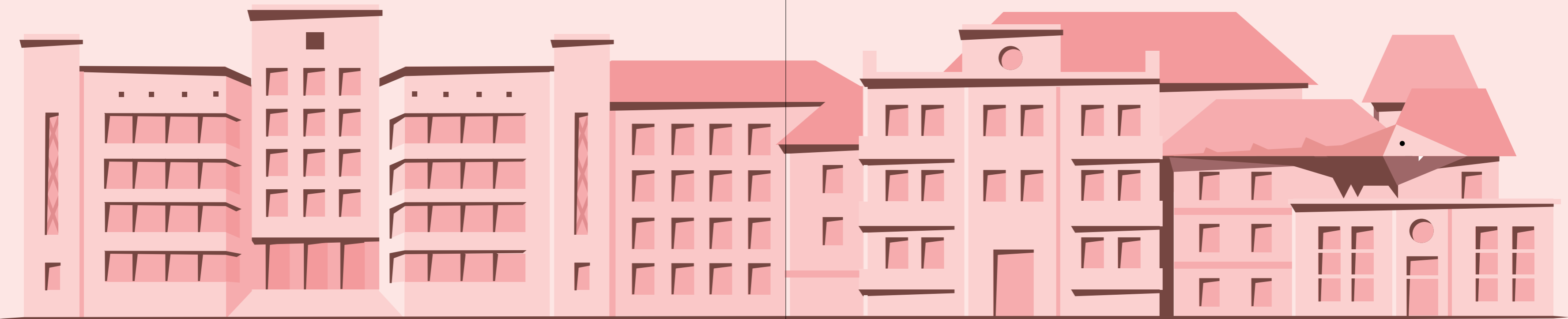


Kaunas 2022  
Contemporary  
Capital  
European Capital of Culture



**“A city only becomes a real city once its guts and its underworld have been inhabited by a Beast. From that point on, the city ceases being temporary. It becomes eternal.”**

*(The Mystic’s Notebook, circa 1441)*



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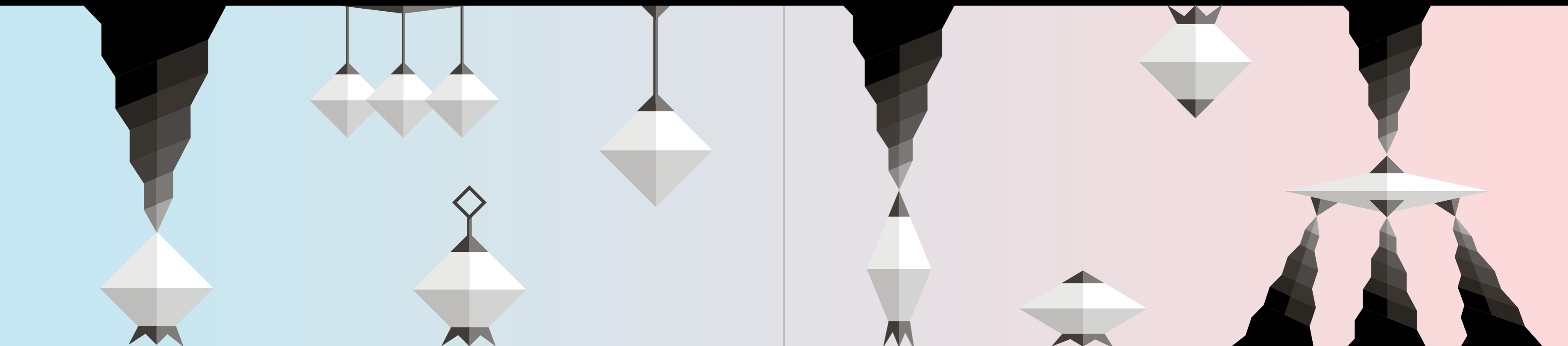
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## HOW THE BEAST CAME TO KAUNAS

There is a subterranean city beneath Kaunas – everyone knows that. There are streets, squares, a great variety of houses, gardens and underground springs, shops and an underground market, where you can buy a Magic Lantern.

Magic Lanterns are useful in Underworld Kaunas, because it's usually dark here. The sun illuminates the underworld city only through various apertures:

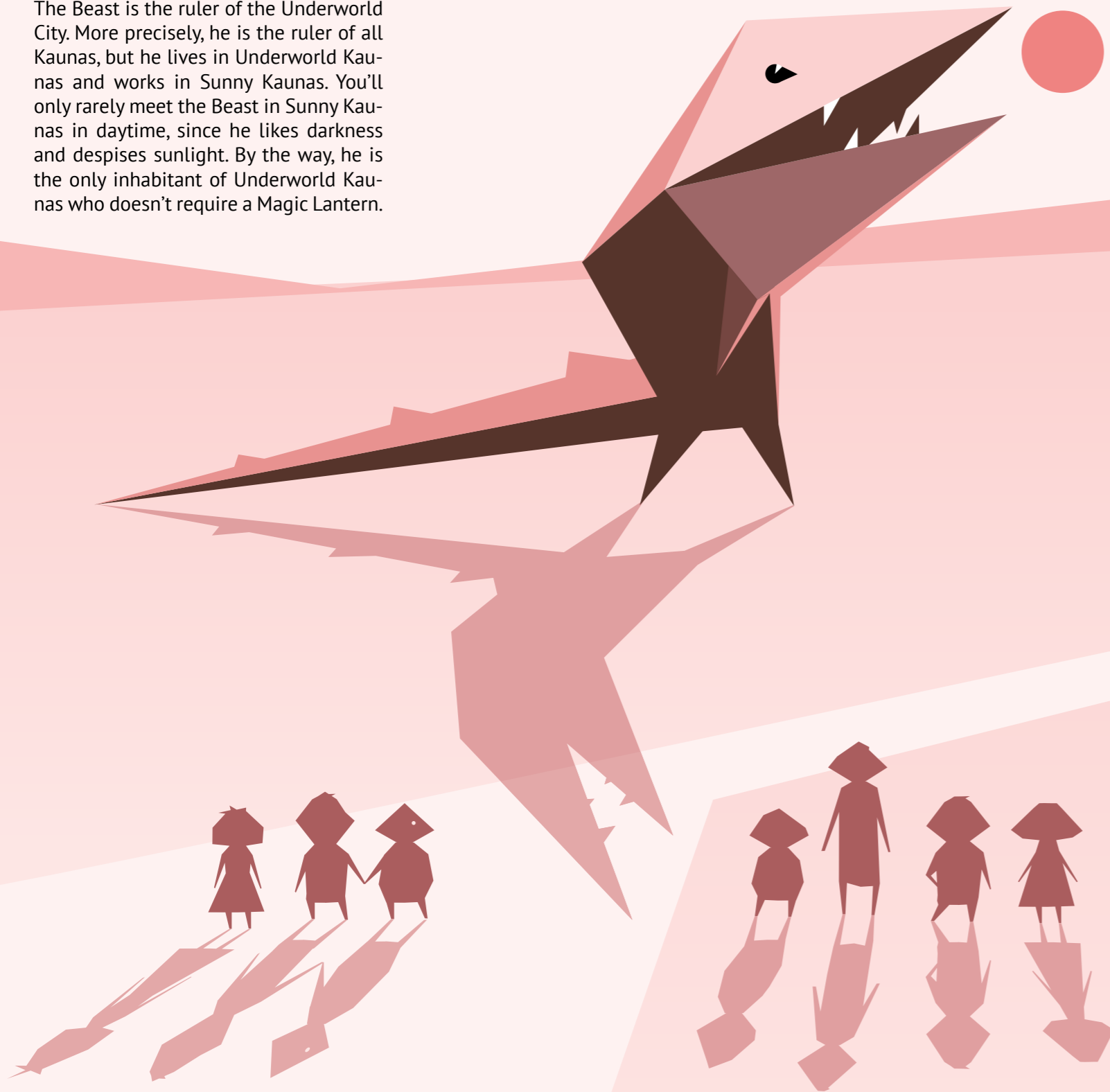
through sewer grates,  
through the holes on manhole covers,  
through chimneys,  
through cracks in kitchen floors,  
through crevices in building foundations,  
through underground passageways,  
through the railway tunnel,  
through mouse holes.

You've probably grasped that not much sunlight gets through – sometimes none at all. Which is why every inhabitant of Underground Kaunas possesses a Magic Lantern. Why are the lanterns magical, you may ask? Because they don't require electricity, fuel, or the like. The lanterns thrive on darkness. Darkness ignites in them and becomes light. So it is.

Besides Underground Kaunas there's also Sunny Kaunas, the one above ground.

And now, enter the Beast.

The Beast is the ruler of the Underworld City. More precisely, he is the ruler of all Kaunas, but he lives in Underworld Kaunas and works in Sunny Kaunas. You'll only rarely meet the Beast in Sunny Kaunas in daytime, since he likes darkness and despises sunlight. By the way, he is the only inhabitant of Underworld Kaunas who doesn't require a Magic Lantern.



How did the Beast find his way to Kaunas, you may ask?

Well, it was like this. A good seven hundred years ago, the city was still a small town that fitted neatly within Santaka – the small spit of land at the Confluence of the rivers Nemunas and Neris. The townspeople enjoyed living there, since all kinds of boats laden with goods came drifting by and, in the evening, you could watch some spectacular sunsets.

But then something terrible happened. One evening the sun set and no longer rose!

The town was plunged into total darkness; even the aloe plants wilted. The dismayed townspeople met in the Town Hall Square to discuss what to do. They decided to go to Santaka and look for the sun.

And so they did. There, standing smugly before them, they encountered the giant Beast who had swallowed up the sun!

The townspeople begged the Beast to give them the sun back.

'What will you give me in return?' he asked.

'Anything you wish!'

'I want to be your town's Beast!' demanded the Beast.

The townspeople had no choice but to agree, and so the Beast released the sun.

The sun sprang from his jaws and flew high into the sky, shining brightly. Only then did the Beast understand that he had made a mistake. He couldn't bear the brightness of the sun, which is why he had swallowed it in the first place! Once again, the Beast jumped into the Confluence, poised to swallow the sun for good. But, after its first little adventure, the sun had cleverly learned not to allow itself to be swallowed up.

So, the Beast had to content himself with Underworld Kaunas, entering Sunny

Kaunas only at night or on dreary, cloudy days.

There was something else that came of all this: because the inhabitants had given their city to the Beast, he had no choice but to watch over Kaunas and protect it. Moreover, according to this agreement, the residents have been obliged, ever since, to take care of each other and their city, while the Beast has committed to defending it from its enemies and other calamities. In short, the Beast got more than he bargained for, and has been standing guard ever since!

This is why the Beast is now called the Beast of Kaunas. And he's not just the Beast of Kaunas, but the Mythical Beast of Kaunas. That's his full name.

'Mythical' means important!

Which is why this book is about the Beast, about the inhabitants of Underworld and Sunny Kaunas, and all kinds of adventures.



## WHAT DOES THE BEAST OF KAUNAS DO ALL DAY?

Having promised to watch over Kaunas, the Beast landed himself with quite some work.

What kind of work, you may ask?

It is the Beast's responsibility to make sure that all is well in Kaunas.

The Beast always enters the city through one and the same place: the cellar of house no. 36 in Laisvės Boulevard, and it is here that his journey begins.

Firstly, he checks if all is well in Laisvės Boulevard.

Then he checks if all is well in the Žilinskas Gallery, for there are paintings and sculptures depicting beasts, dragons and other people there.

Then he checks if all is well in the Picture Gallery.

Then he checks if all is well at the bus station and whether anyone missed their ride to Rome.

Then he checks if all is well in Ramybės Park, and whether it is, indeed, as serene as its name would suggest.

Then he checks if all is well in Žaliakalnis.

Then he checks if all is well in Ažuolynas Park.

Then the Beast gets tired and goes looking for a pleasant distraction, which he finds in the County Library stacks in the form of coffee and some kind of book. Reading a book requires some light, so he has to use a bit of fire from its jaws. Sometimes, if the book happens to be rather interesting, the Beast exhales too much fire in his excitement and the book gets scorched. Finding scorched books always frightens the city librarians, because they know what it means.

After a bit of coffee and reading, the Beast climbs down the Kauko Stairs to check if all is well on Putvinskis Street.

Then he checks if all is well in the War Museum.

Then he checks if all is well at the universities.

Then he checks if all is well in the Devils' Museum. You can always expect trouble there, since devils are ill-natured and poorly educated. Their sole interest lies in merriments, fast cars and other devilry.

Then he checks if all is well in the Theatre of Drama and has a chat with the theatre ghost, who's always complaining. You see, he's depressed...



Then the Beast checks if all is well in the Theatre of Puppets, and all is always well in puppet theatres because puppets are clever people and don't get up to any nonsense.

Then he checks if all is well at the City Council.

Then he checks if all is well in the Theatre of Music and the Philharmonic Hall, where he simply can't resist a brief blow into a big tuba.

Then he checks if all is well in the Old Town.

He always walks around the building at 34 Mikalojaus Daukšos Street and sighs: how quickly time flies!

Then he checks if all is well in the river Neris, hurriedly chomping some clams.

Then he checks if all is well in Vilijampolė and scratches his back on the Vilijampolė bridge.

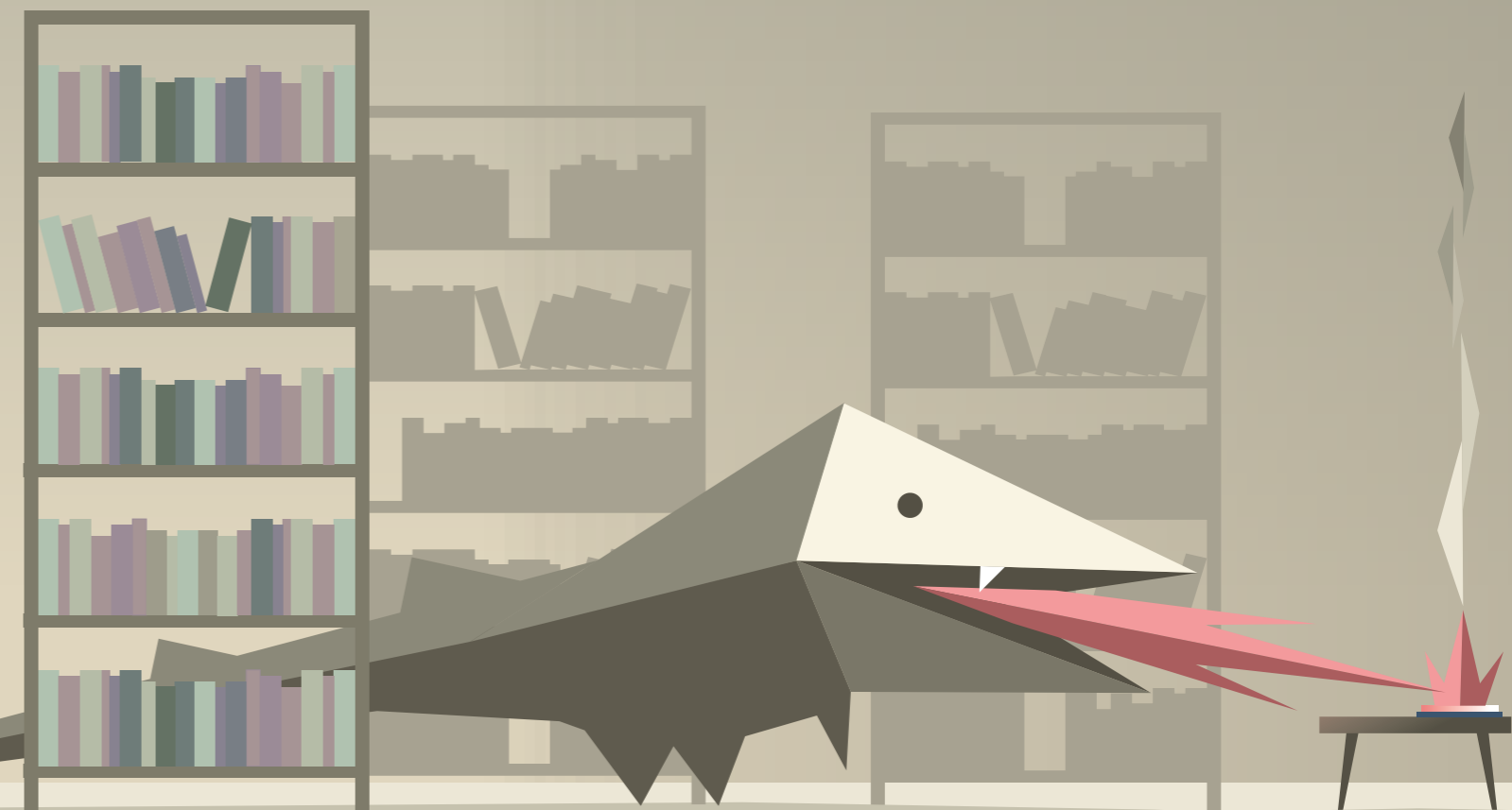
Then he creeps down to the island close to Vilijampolė bridge and has a look inside the bushes, in the hope of finding a fisherman to scare.

Then he checks if all is well at Santaka.

Then he checks if all is well in the river Nemunas and scratches his back on the Vytautas Magnus Bridge.

Then he checks if all is well on both banks of Nemunas in Aleksotas, Freda, Upper and Lower Šančiai.

Then he checks if all is well in all the forts, and neatly hangs the bats from their ceilings, because they don't know how to



do it themselves and are constantly quarrelling.

Then he checks if all is well in Šilainiai.

Then – Eiguliai and Kalniečiai.

Then – Dainava and Petrašiūnai.

Then in the other parts of Kaunas.

Finally – in Kaunas district: Raudondvaris, Rokai, Ringaudai, Garliava, Zapyškis, Karmėlava, Kulautuva, Kačerginė, Klėboniškis.

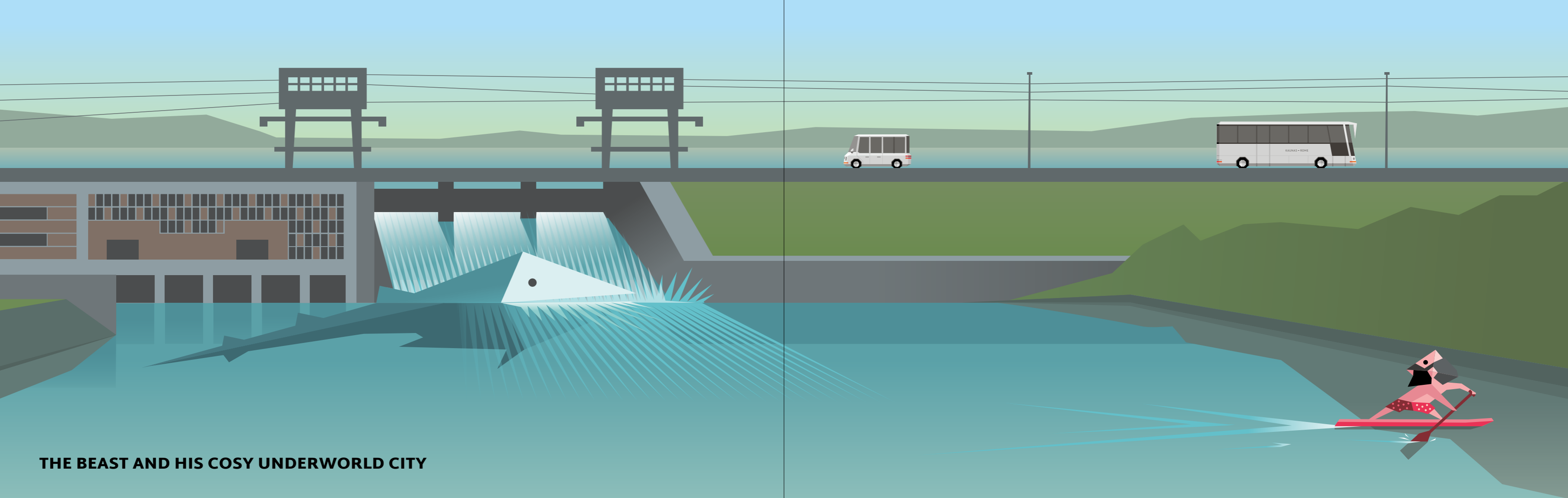
After all this work, the Beast gets very tired.

Very, very tired.

So he finds the railroad tracks and trudges wearily along them until he reaches the Tunnel.

There he curls up in a ball and dozes off.





## THE BEAST AND HIS COSY UNDERWORLD CITY

The Beast lives comfortably in Underworld Kaunas.

He wakes up only after sunset, then lets out a mighty roar. Then he lies in bed as the echo of his voice wends its way once through the city and returns. The echo makes a round through Kaunas in about ten minutes during summer and in five during winter, because it's rather cold in the winter, which makes the echo run faster. Along its way, the echo gathers up all the other echoes and rumours in the city and, upon its return, presents them to the Beast. This is how the Beast catches up with the city's latest news. Then he gets out of bed and makes his way to Kaunas Castle for a bath.

Underneath Kaunas Castle the Beast has two swimming pools: one with water from the Nemunas, the other with water from

the Neris. Water from the Neris is always colder and green, while that from the Nemunas is warmer and blue. On even-numbered days, the Beast bathes in the Nemunas pool; on odd-numbered ones he does so in the Neris pool. On state holidays, he bathes in the Kaunas Reservoir, scaring the yachtsmen and cleaning his teeth on the turbines of the hydroelectric power plant. Before the plant was built, the Beast used to clean its teeth on the Castle towers, but the towers didn't withstand this very long and collapsed.

For breakfast, the Beast crawls under the Town Hall where he has set up his dining room. You can also access the dining room from above, through the City museum, however, the museum's staff is afraid of going down there for they well know that anyone entering the Beast's dining room during breakfast

will duly be devoured. But one can say that the Beast is a pescatarian, since he primarily feeds on fish and clams. He prefers white Nemunas clams for breakfast, the shells of which he later scatters on the riverbanks. There the city dwellers often find clams riven with the Beast's tooth marks.

After finishing breakfast, the Beast goes to the music room which he set up under the Music Theatre. He is especially fond of romantic operettas, but he also likes when the orchestra begins playing any kind of march. The Theatre musicians have often reported that they feel the ground beginning to shake whenever they start playing a march – that's the Beast, accompanying them with his tail. This is the reason why none of the orchestra musicians agree to remain in the Theatre after midnight, for this is when the Beast pokes

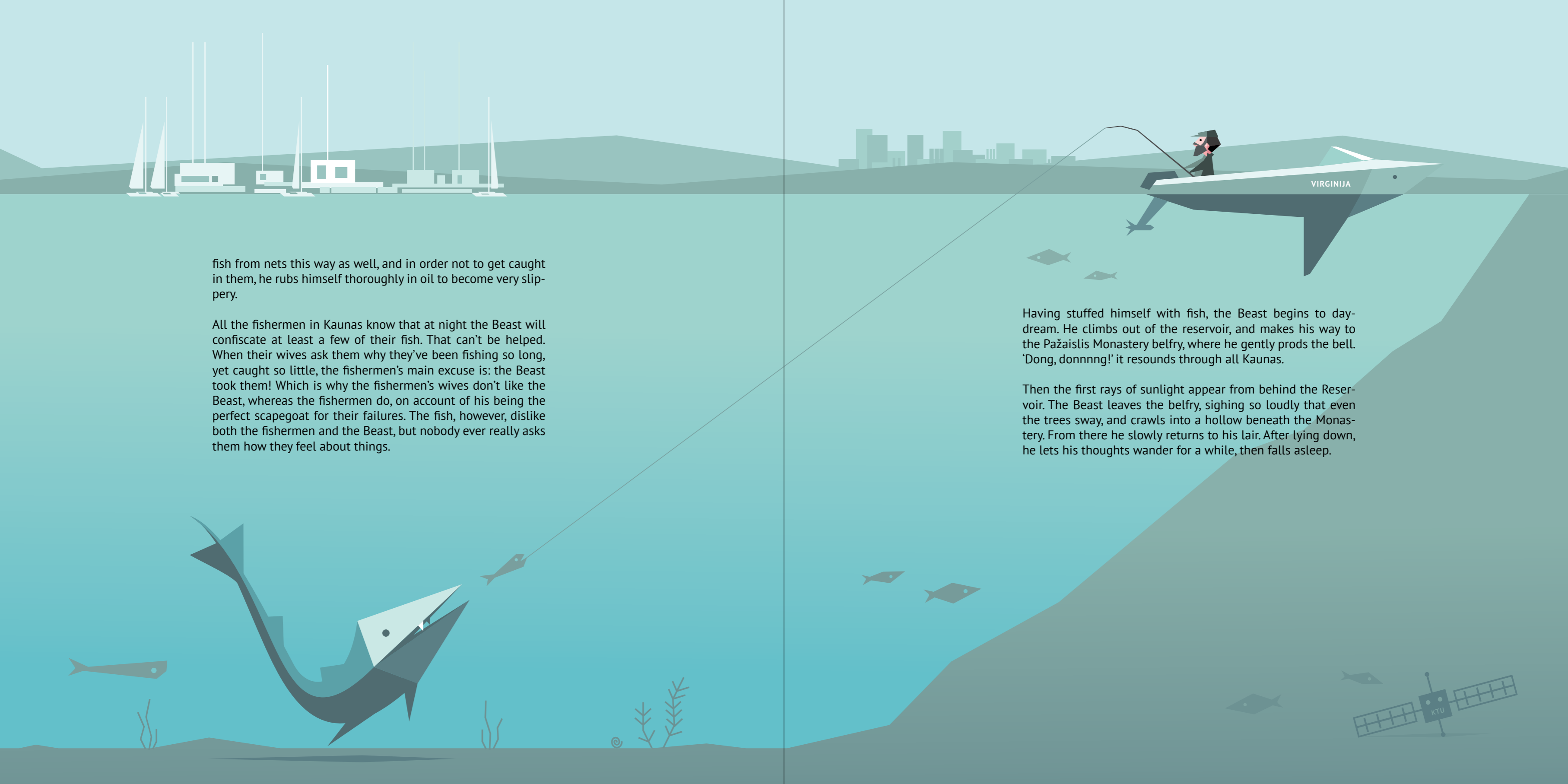
his head out from under the stage to see why everything has gone quiet.

After hearing some music and getting in the mood for a great night, the Beast departs for work.

After finishing his work and just before sunrise, he goes for lunch in the Kaunas Reservoir, because the fish are larger there.

Well, he never really catches the fish himself. This is what he does: he picks a fisherman, silently swims up alongside him and patiently watches the fisherman's hooks bobbing underwater. As soon as a fish bites, he speedily pounces and carries it away, sometimes including the entire hook! The fisherman jumps to pull in the line, but it's too late. The Beast gathers



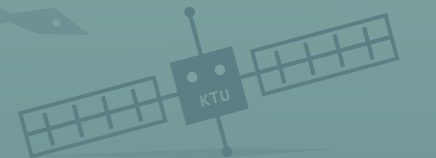


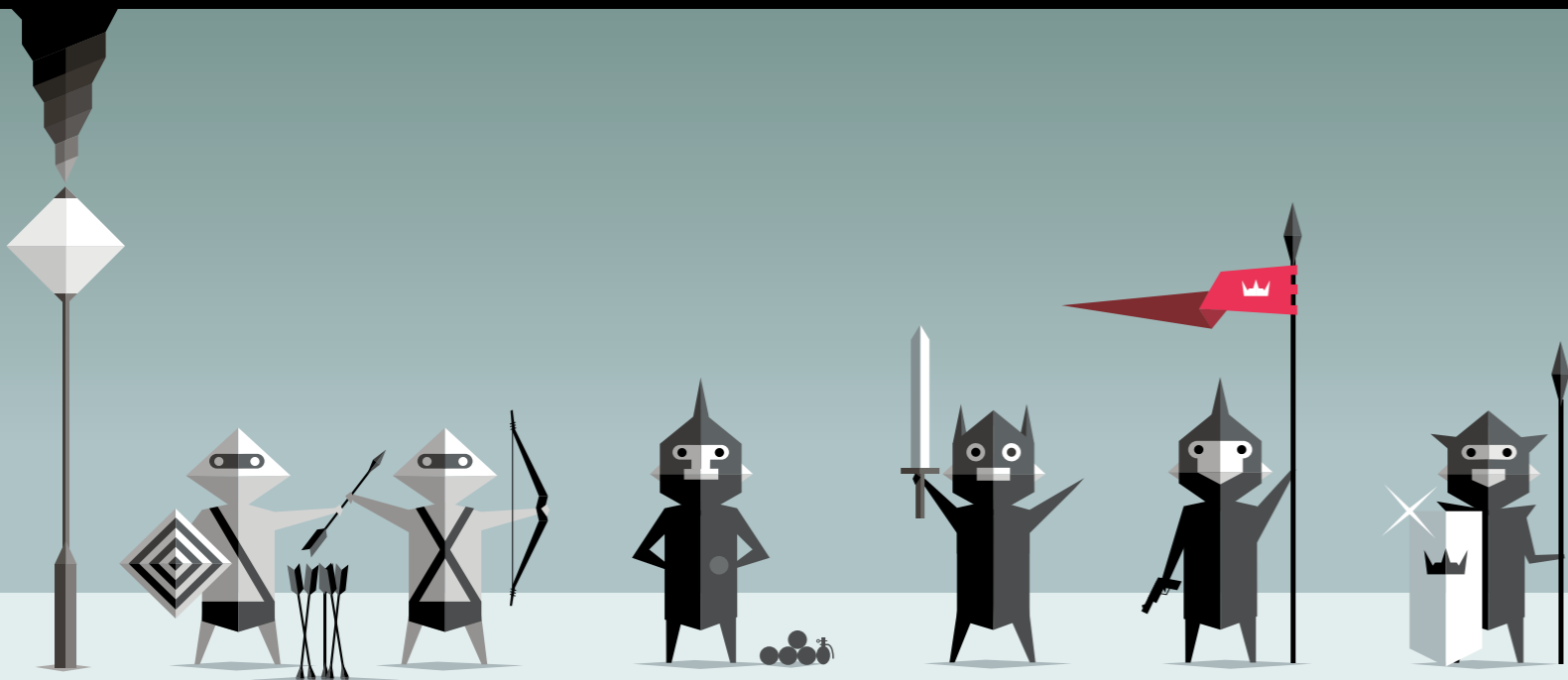
fish from nets this way as well, and in order not to get caught in them, he rubs himself thoroughly in oil to become very slippery.

All the fishermen in Kaunas know that at night the Beast will confiscate at least a few of their fish. That can't be helped. When their wives ask them why they've been fishing so long, yet caught so little, the fishermen's main excuse is: the Beast took them! Which is why the fishermen's wives don't like the Beast, whereas the fishermen do, on account of his being the perfect scapegoat for their failures. The fish, however, dislike both the fishermen and the Beast, but nobody ever really asks them how they feel about things.

Having stuffed himself with fish, the Beast begins to daydream. He climbs out of the reservoir, and makes his way to the Pažaislis Monastery belfry, where he gently prods the bell. 'Dong, donnnng!' it resounds through all Kaunas.

Then the first rays of sunlight appear from behind the Reservoir. The Beast leaves the belfry, sighing so loudly that even the trees sway, and crawls into a hollow beneath the Monastery. From there he slowly returns to his lair. After lying down, he lets his thoughts wander for a while, then falls asleep.





## WHO ELSE LIVES IN UNDERWORLD KAUNAS?

Well, first of all, the Beast lives in Underworld Kaunas, and knowing this is good enough for most people. But he is certainly not alone. In fact, there are numerous inhabitants!

For example, there is an entire army stationed in Underworld Kaunas. It is a rather strange army: some cadets are armed with bows and arrows, some with gunpowder rifles, and yet others with swords. There are even knights from distant European countries. They are equipped with horses, cannons and everything else one could need. If you pass Kaunas Castle on a quiet night, you can hear their horses whinnying. People make fearful remarks, assuming it is the Beast hooting with laughter. But it isn't. It's just the plain, bewitched horses. The army lives in castles, one being simple and wooden, in which the archers are quartered, the other – a brick castle with four towers, accommodating the knights and other soldiers.

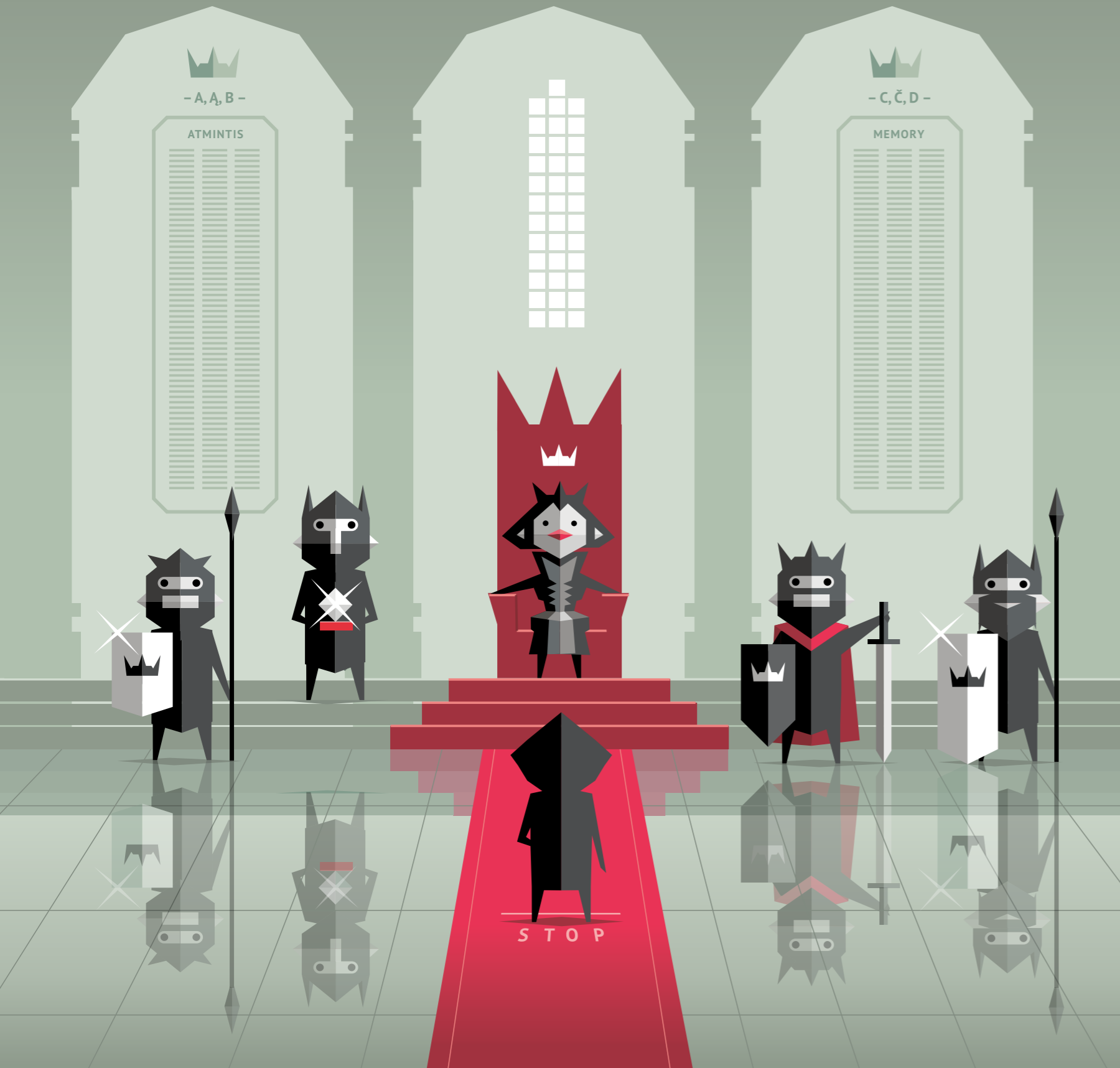
The army is led by the Princess. She lives in a palace with a park. I'll tell you a few stories about the Princess shortly.

Underworld Kaunas also harbours merchants, craftsmen and shopkeepers. There are merchants from Germany, Scotland, and even Constantinople. They live in houses you will no longer find in Sunny Kaunas, though they used to be there as well, just as there used to be a wooden castle, and later a large brick castle.

In general, you will find everything in Underworld Kaunas, that can no longer be found in Sunny Kaunas: the glass passageway of the Central Post Office, the stunning monumental University buildings, which used to crown the Aleksotas hilltop, and the horsecar – a horse-drawn tram. Nowadays you'll only find horsecar tracks winding through the streets of Underworld Kaunas.

Underworld Kaunas is home to Russian craftsmen and teachers, Jewish shopkeepers and architects, a Swiss scientist, Lithuanian shipbuilders, robbers, a noisy Finnish writer, in other words – inhabitants, the likes of which you will no longer find in Sunny





Kaunas. By the way, I have to reassure you regarding the robbers: there are no wrong-doers in Underworld Kaunas. Thanks to the Magic Lantern.

Everyone, who first sets foot in Underworld Kaunas, ends up in a chamber called Memory Hall. There the newcomer is met by the Princess. She greets the new arrival and asks his or her name. The newcomer's name is then inscribed on a wall of Memory Hall. This is why on these walls you will find the names of all people who ever lived in Kaunas.

Then the newcomer is presented with a Magic Lantern, which is solemnly brought in by the Princess' Guard with the army orchestra playing during the presentation ceremony. As I recounted earlier, the Lantern's light never extinguishes, because it thrives on darkness. Hence the recipient of the Lantern becomes bright and righteous as well. The holder of the Lantern can no longer do any bad deeds and becomes a rightful resident of Underworld Kaunas. Should the newcomer lose their lantern, they can always buy another one in the market.

Incidentally, not only people, but also their pets may be admitted to Underworld Kaunas. I have mentioned the horses,

but you'll find many dogs, cats, guinea pigs, hamsters, chinchillas, parakeets, canaries, and turtles walking, flying, or crawling through the streets of Underworld Kaunas. Since these creatures don't have Lanterns of their own, each of them waits until their past owner moves to Underworld Kaunas.

Every time a new person arrives with a Lantern, they are scrutinised by hordes of curious pets. The newcomer easily recognises his past pets. The pets, in turn, joyfully greet their master and show them around their new home in Underworld Kaunas. From now on the newcomer remains in Underworld Kaunas; there is no way of returning to Sunny Kaunas.

The only one able to freely traverse between Underworld and Sunny Kaunas is the Beast.

The Princess could too, but things aren't that simple.

You'll find out more in another story.

## HOW THE BEAST BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH THE PRINCESS

As you may already know from other stories, beasts, monsters, dragons and even bulls really like princesses. They simply cannot live without them. So, if they stumble upon a princess going for a walk, or find one in a castle or a carriage, or at a banquet... they grab her!

This is where the most interesting part begins.

The abducted princess is missed. The kingdom is engulfed in grief. The Queen, her mother, cries a lake full of tears. The King, her father, deploys messengers and summons the army. Witches, sprites, seers, dwarves and other magic people begin to bustle about. Ultimately, a hero appears, and the hero is very strong and handsome. And the strong and handsome hero, assisted by the army and the magic people, leaves on a quest to find the lost princess. He finds her imprisoned, and fights the abductor. And always defeats the abductor. He frees the princess – and the princess promptly falls in love with the hero.

Then, together with the princess, the hero returns to her parents, and a wedding is held on the shores of a lake; everyone celebrates until dawn, and the newlyweds live happily ever after.

That's what happens in fairy tales.

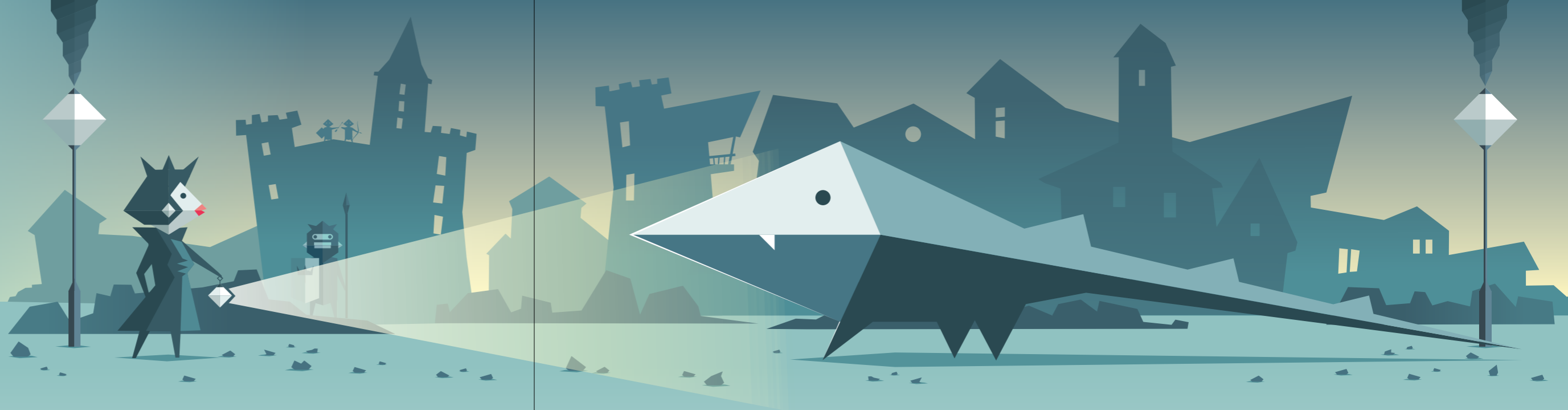
Nothing like that happened in the story of the Princess and the Beast of Kaunas.

The story took a very different turn.

It went like this: after returning the sun to the townspeople and grasping that he could not endure the sunlight very long, the Beast began darting around Kaunas Castle looking for a place to hide. He stumbled upon a hollow underneath the Castle, into which he dived and discovered... Underworld Kaunas, which you've already heard about.

Excited to meet the new guest, the Princess ran to greet him.

'Are you a hero?' she called out from a distance.  
'I am the Beast,' replied the Beast.



The Princess got upset.

'I don't want any beasts!' she cried stomping her foot, 'I want a hero to rescue me, because I've been cursed, and so on, and so forth!'

The Beast gloomily glanced around. Underworld Kaunas didn't look very good. The streets were cluttered with odds and ends, hoarded over the centuries. The Princess, her army, and all the inhabitants of Underworld Kaunas lived up to their necks in these odds and ends, which consisted of the following:

ancient furniture – in good condition, in not-very-good condition, good for nothing and even completely broken;

ancient bric-a-brac – similar to furniture, similar to tools, or not similar to anything;

assorted dishes – some dirty, some broken, some dainty;

ancient books – with covers, without covers, with pages, without pages, with drawings, without drawings, written in Lithuanian, Polish, Hebrew, Russian, Latin, German, French, Latvian and ten other known and two completely unknown languages;

ancient lamps – with lampshades, with candles, with bulbs, kerosene, and even oil lamps;

various things – good things, rare things, ridiculous things, and very interesting things;

works of art – statues, paintings, drawings, some even very impressive;

gold jewellery, silver jewellery, and cutlery, small boxes, and other expensive things, which were not valued in Underworld Kaunas and lying around haphazardly.

And much much more.

So, if you wanted to get around Underworld Kaunas, you had to climb over piles of these odds and ends as if they were hills, and some streets were so cluttered that you couldn't get through at all.

The Beast had an idea.

'If you let me live here, I'll clean everything up. Would you like that?' he asked the Princess.

'I would not. It's fine the way it is!' she retorted hotly.

But the Beast did not concede and slowly went to work. Within a good two hundred years of slow toiling and summoning the help of other inhabitants of Underworld Kaunas, he tidied up the Underworld city, which, with time, became rather cosy.

After stowing the bric-a-brac and other things in their places and removing the garbage, bit by bit squares, fountains, house facades and even benches for sitting on were revealed. The inhabitants of Underworld Kaunas rejoiced. All, that is, except for the Princess.

'This is nonsense!' she fumed. 'Soon there will be tonnes of new things! I don't need tidiness, I need a *he-ro!*'

She didn't allow the Beast to clean up her Palace, which remained the only untidy place in all Underworld Kaunas. It felt like a labyrinth there and, walking through it, you had to clear a path relying on mere luck and intuition. Even today you'll find many Palace rooms so utterly packed with things rendering them inaccessible, but the Princess doesn't give a hoot.

The Princess never thanked the Beast for tidying Underworld Kaunas, but even worse than that, she's constantly playing pranks at his expense. For example, she switches the colours of the Neris and Nemunas pools, and so the Beast ends up bathing in cold water. Or she barricades the path from the Railroad tunnel with old wardrobes, forcing the Beast to toil for a while, before he can get through.

The Beast comes up against quite a few annoying issues with that wild Princess.

## HOW THE BEAST TRIED TO WIN FAVOUR WITH THE PRINCESS OF KAUNAS

The Beast would like to make friends with the Princess of Kaunas but doesn't know how to approach her.

He had once heard that princesses liked to be serenaded from under their balconies. The Beast knew precious little about serenades but was determined to try nonetheless. After all, the Princess herself may not even know what a serenade is.

On a beautiful evening (evenings in Underworld Kaunas are as pretty as in Sunny Kaunas, except that in Underworld Kaunas they fall when it's still morning in Sunny Kaunas, and the other way around – simple, isn't it?), the Beast set out for the Princess's Palace.

Getting to her balcony wasn't easy. But never mind the balcony! The park which surrounded the Palace was itself in a terrible condition – piles of bric-a-brac, which the Princess had forbidden to be thrown away, scattered on the grounds.

It took a long time for the Beast to thrust its way through these odds and ends. On his way, the Beast:

hurt his tooth once,  
scratched his tail twice,  
knocked his foot thrice,  
fell over four times,  
got muddied five times,  
slipped six times,  
yo-yoed seven times,  
got the jitters eight times,  
lost his way nine times,

and ten times wanted to give it all up and go home!

In the end, however, the Beast overcame all these obstacles and found himself beneath the Princess's balcony. There, he cleared his throat and began to sing softly:

'Ooooooooooooooooooh...'

No response.

'Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeh...'

Still nothing.

'Uuuuuuuuuuuuuuh...'

Suddenly, the balcony door opened – and someone (guess who?) splashed a bucket of ice-cold water over the Beast's head!

The Beast got upset. He crawled out from underneath the balcony and, having overcome all the obstacles anew:

having hurt his tooth once,  
scratched his tail twice,  
knocked his foot thrice,  
fallen over four times,  
gotten muddied five times,  
slipped six times,  
yo-yoed seven times,  
gotten the jitters eight times,  
lost his way nine times,

the Beast finally returned home and decided that, for the time being, he would be better off avoiding any dealings with the Princess.

Rather, he would mind his own affairs.

Many tales of these affairs will now be told.



## HOW THE BEAST NIBBLED ON A TOWER BLOCK IN ŠILAINIAI

On one occasion, the Beast came across a rather decent tower block in Šilainiai. The tower block stood on a hill, its balconies facing west, and perhaps for this reason resembled a ship sailing to the port of Klaipėda miles and miles away. You could see curved pine trees from these balconies. It was said that once every so often, on a quiet quiet night, from the top floors, even the rustle of the distant sea could be heard!

The Beast really liked the tower block and decided to befriend its inhabitants.

On a beautiful summer night, when all the residents had returned to their homes, the Beast came to introduce himself. First, he leaned in and looked over the balcony of the ground floor. A middle-aged man sat in the room and watched TV. The Beast waited patiently to catch the man's attention, but the man didn't notice him because of what was being shown on TV. Then the Beast sneaked up onto the balcony of the third-floor. There he saw a whole family, parents and children, who were also watching TV. On top of that, the children had their eyes fixed on the smartphones. The Beast waited, waited, and waited, but they didn't pay any attention either, because their TV kept broadcasting too, and their smartphones kept texting.

The Beast came to the fifth-floor balcony. There he saw a man and a woman. They were watching TV too. The beast knocked on the window. The man came over to the window and drew the curtains.



So it was, and little could be done about it.

The Beast got very upset. When he was upset, he would always find himself comfort eating. Without even realising it, the Beast began chewing up the saplings in the courtyard. By the morning, he had gnawed all the tops off. On the following night, the Beast approached the tower block very cautiously, thinking that the inhabitants would be cross with him about the gnawed trees. But as the Beast went around, he found everyone watching TV again. Since the windows in some of the flats had been left open, the Beast let out a quiet roar in the hope that someone would step out to talk to him. But all he got in return was that people slammed even the few remaining windows shut. Before he knew it, the forlorn Beast had grazed all the grass in the courtyard, and had then, inadvertently, chewed up the two benches which stood by the building. And then he was worried sick – now, surely, the inhabitants would get really angry!



But the residents didn't get angry. When the Beast visited again on the third night, the tower block remained as it had been. The trees had been gnawed, the grass had been grazed, the benches were gone, but the residents continued to watch TV, each shut away in their flat behind the closed doors, curtains, and windows too.

How could you even make friends with such people?

The Beast examined the building from all sides, and then, having lost his final hope, he climbed onto the roof and began to mull things over, gazing at the moon. What should he do? Lost in thought, he didn't even realise how he had begun slowly nibbling at the roof, chomping up a pick-and-mix of... cables and antennas.

And then a bizarre thing happened!

The TVs turned off, the phone batteries went flat, and people had nothing left to do but to step out of their homes. As they went out, they saw that the trees had been gnawed, the grass was gone as well as the benches, and the building itself had been nibbled!

'Something must be done!' said the residents.

And so they got on and did that something together.

The Beast, meanwhile, was sitting on the roof and wondering whether it was for better or worse that, while he couldn't make friends with the inhabitants, they were getting to know each other and finally doing something together?

## HOW THE BEAST SOMETIMES DOES THINGS HIS OWN WAY

The Beast of Kaunas has different days. Some are fun and everything goes well in the city, some are sad, but there are Other Days too!

The Beast thoroughly enjoys Other Days because he can't tell at once whether such a day is going to be good or bad, which is much more exciting.

On Other Days, the Beast wakes up earlier than usual and lies in thinking. As he roars, the echo of his voice travels over and around Sunny Kaunas and Underworld Kaunas, where it gathers up all the news and boomerangs it back to him. The Beast listens to the news and is suddenly struck with a realisation: it is just like yesterday's news! And yesterday's news was suspiciously similar to the day before yesterday's news – it's been a good month like this!

'Nothing changes in this city,' the Beast decides. 'Something must be done about it.' And he begins to act.

The Beast knows that in order to change something, you have to take a look at that something from another angle. For example, to find out more about a table, you need to get under it and linger there a while. To learn more about a closet, you need to spend some time locked inside it. As it happens, sitting quietly in a closet allows you to find out who loves you the most, because the one who loves you the most will be the first to notice your absence and come looking for you.

To learn more about a book, you need to sniff it. As it turns out, all books smell differently, and some of the smells are even quite pleasant. To find out more about your neighbour, you can offer her candy. This way, you will find out if your neighbour likes candy and maybe even whether she likes you.

Another way to find out more about something is to imagine it somehow differently. Suppose you are looking at your hand and imagine that it is not a hand, but a snake. Or you are lying

in your bed and looking out of the window at the sky. Imagine that you are not at home, but on board a ship and that the ship is now in the middle of the ocean, and the rustling sound behind the window is not really the noise from the street but a storm at sea. You can also walk down the street and imagine that everyone around you is a foreigner and you have no idea what they are talking about.

This is precisely how the Beast goes about things.

On Other Days, the Beast strolls around Underworld Kaunas differently. First, he walks backwards and learns what the world behind looks like. In doing so, the Beast unexpectedly notices things he hasn't seen before. The world behind your back is generally fascinating because it always moves away from you, instead of approaching.

Later, the Beast lands on Sunny Kaunas and makes an effort to pay attention to the first- (rather than the ground-) floors of the houses, museums, hotels, and universities. This is how he discovers an entirely different city and finds out what needs to be repaired or replaced.

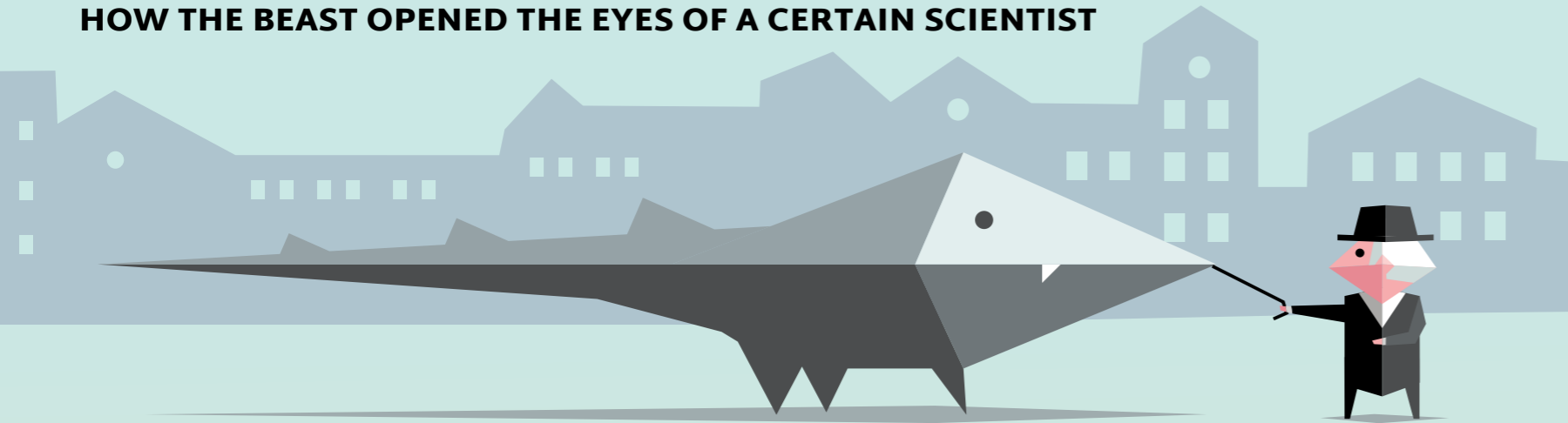
Finally, the Beast uses his imagination. At the theatre, the Beast imagines it as a factory. In a big factory, the Beast pictures a theatre performance. In a school, the Beast makes himself believe that the school is, in fact, a town hall; and in the town hall, that it is a big school or even a university. He envisages a museum as a café, and a café as a museum.

And finally, a wave of inspiration overwhelms the Beast. The Beast realises how much he has seen today, how much he has learnt, and how much easier it will now be to figure out what needs changing and where!

This is how an Other Day becomes a good day for the Beast.



## HOW THE BEAST OPENED THE EYES OF A CERTAIN SCIENTIST



Once upon a time, a Jewish scientist was born in Kaunas and immediately became very upset.

To begin with, the city appeared to him somewhat temporary, as if it had been built to last for only a short moment. If you began walking anywhere, you would almost immediately find you had stepped out of the city. Before you knew it, the only thing surrounding you was open fields with no sign of urban life.

Beyond those fields, a river; beyond the river, a castle haunted by a ghost who was off-duty on weekends. Beyond the castle, woods, bushes, and shrubs; in the woods, robbers. And where there are robbers, there was no place for scientists.

Kaunas, at first, also seemed very boring to this scientist. You'd go out on the street – and there'd be no one to talk to because everyone would be busy. Busy complaining about nobody loving them. Two acquaintances meet and ask each other:

'Do you love me?'  
'No.'  
'Neither do I.'  
And both burst into tears.

What is there to talk about with such people?

And here he was again, the scientist strolling around in the city looking for someone to talk to, finding himself beyond the river, beyond the castle haunted by the ghost off-duty on

weekends, and from there, robbers would be merely a few steps away... He'd have to return home to his mum.

'This city is temporary, and I'm only temporarily in it,' decided the scientist and stopped going for strolls. He stayed put at home, focused on his studies, and dreamed of Paris, the city he had seen in a picture.

But one night a curious thing happened. The scientist, as always, had his head buried in his studies, but as he sat in the open window, he noticed someone loitering in the street. It was the Beast himself – just checking if all was well in Kaunas Old Town.

'Hey!' called the scientist. 'Who might you be?'  
'I'm the Beast of Kaunas,' the Beast replied. 'And who are you?'  
'I'm just a Jewish scientist,' replied the scientist. 'Shall we talk? I'm bored.'

So they talked.

They enjoyed talking to each other so much so that they talked and talked many more times.

From the Beast, the scientist learned the stories of Kaunas. He heard about the Underworld City where a cursed and therefore frustrated Princess lived with her entourage and guards. He learnt how the Nemunas and the Nevėžis competed for the Neris' favour and where the name of Kaunas came from. He heard the story of a duke who shot an aurochs in the woods

outside the city and ordered for it to be memorialised in the municipal coat of arms, even though hardly anyone cared about aurochs, whether back then or today. He learned about the hidden treasures of merchants and the tunnels which led from the city to all four corners of the world. Well, and so finally the Beast told the scientist about the Beast of Kaunas, who has always lived, always lives, and will always live there.

'If you have always lived and will always live in Kaunas, that means that Kaunas, too, has always stood here and always will!' the scientist rejoiced. 'Now I'll travel out into the world and tell everyone about it.'

And so he did. He travelled to Paris and told everyone that although it was boring and temporary at first, Kaunas turned out to be eternal. The Paris newspapers wrote about this. As they read the papers, Kaunesians rejoiced and stopped complaining about nobody loving them, and built a city so large that there wasn't a field left in sight.

When the scientist grew old, he often missed his conversations with the Beast of Kaunas, but he didn't mention these conversations to anyone, because it isn't suitable for scientists to talk about beasts and other such fanciful ideas.





## THE BEAST ACCIDENTALLY PEEPS OUT IN AN UNFAMILIAR COURTYARD

There was once a courtyard where all sorts of people lived. There lived a lady who fed cats. The cats got so used to it that if the lady didn't come out to feed them on time, they would lurk about, stealthily, and start harassing pigeons. The pigeons, in turn, were supplied by another lady, who couldn't stand the cats' protector, even though she was her own sister. The two would meet in the yard every day, but wouldn't say hello to each other. The cats may have been willing to greet the pigeons, but at every attempt the pigeons would prudently fly away.

There was also a mother with a small child living in the same courtyard. She would feed her child, then take it outside in the yard in a pram, which she would station under a tree. With the child having fallen asleep, the mother would read her magazine for mums about things to do to keep a child well-fed and sleeping. Then, shortly afterwards, the child would be woken up by a man who lived on the first floor. He had an electric drill, and with that drill, he was constantly drilling something in his flat – to make holes in the walls, one might suppose. Sometimes the drill would go quiet, but this only happened when the man drilled through the wall into his kitchen by accident. Then he'd go to have his lunch. Needless to say, the mother despised the man and never greeted him.

There was also a girl in the courtyard. She was regularly visited by her boyfriend, and they would sit together in their car, parked in the yard. The girl and the guy would sometimes get told off by a wrestling coach; he lived in the attic and insisted on being respected and greeted by everyone.

A lady and a gentleman also lived in the same block, but they didn't talk to one another either, because something – no one knows what – had happened between them in the past.

And finally, there also lived an artist in the block. He said hello to everyone he met in the courtyard, but they rarely responded to him. They considered him mad, because he greeted cats and pigeons alike, and only mad people would behave like that.

This is how they all lived, strolling around their courtyard with very concerned faces. The Beast knew nothing about these people. He was even unfamiliar with this block and perhaps



would have never found out about it had it not been for that one night when he got lost in Underworld Kaunas. He had needed to turn left, but instead had turned right, and found himself in some sort of a basement. Peeping his head out to check the direction of Kaunas Castle, he saw the girl and the guy sitting in their car.

'The Beast!!!' shrieked the girl, so loudly that even cats and pigeons scattered.

The coach peeked through his window, the child cried, the gentleman and the lady ran out into the courtyard in their underwear, the artist (who suffered from insomnia) froze on his balcony, the cat lady burst out laughing, while the pigeon lady, her sister, cried, and the man with the drill dropped his tool.



Everyone saw the Beast. The Beast, upon seeing them, casually crawled out of the basement, took a good look at the surroundings, found which direction the castle lay in, and disappeared into the darkness.

The residents of the block stood stunned.

The artist said:

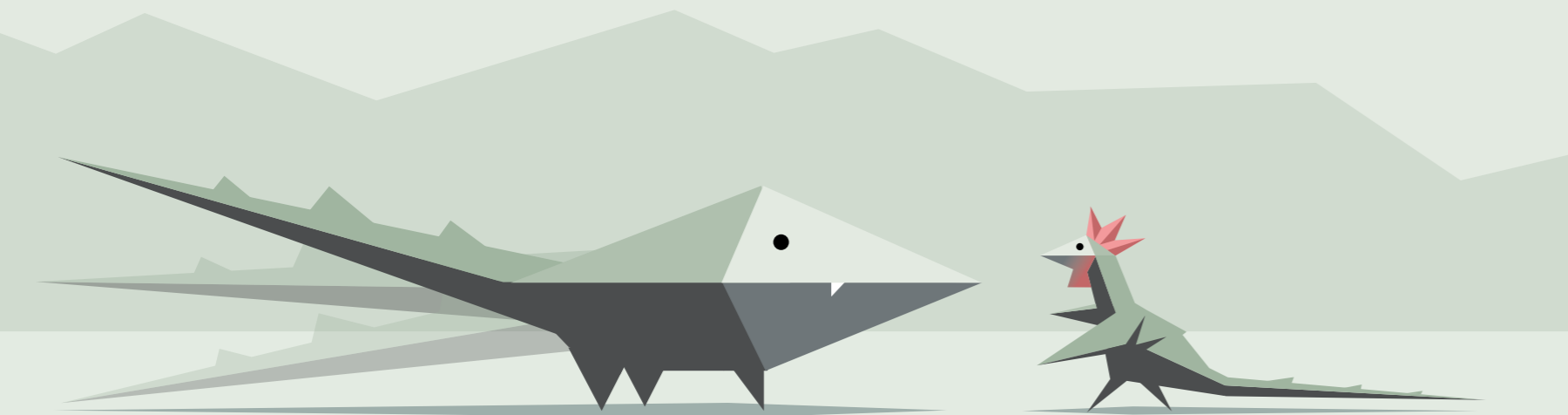
'Our block must be quite special if it has been honoured by a visit from the Beast. Now we'll have something to talk about.'

And they began talking.

In pairs at first, later in groups of three, and finally all together.

The coach brought out a barbecue, the man used his drill to spark the fire, the little kid stroked the cat, the ladies gave everyone a biscuit...

Since then, the residents of the block not only greet each other but also welcome guests warmly and tell them stories about their exceptional courtyard.



BASILISK OF VILNIUS



DRAGON OF KLAIPĖDA

SAMOGITIAN SMOK

## HOW THE BEAST SOMETIMES LOOONGS

Sometimes, the Beast grows tired of making sure if all is well in Sunny Kaunas, and he begins to long.

‘To long’ means ‘to be very sad.’ It is a beastlike word that comes from the fact that the Beast himself is quite long, and when he is overwhelmed with longing, he feels this way from the tip of his nose down to the tip of his tail.

‘I’m loooooonging,’ sighs the Beast and glumly goes walking down some sad streets.

You see, there are two types of streets in Kaunas: some are happy, and others are sad. When the townspeople are feeling happy, they walk along the happy streets, and when they are sad, they walk down the sad ones. That’s how it is, and little can be done about it.

So, as the downcast Beast ambles down sad streets, he ponders. He ponders, of course, about how lonely it is to have no one to talk to in a truly beastly manner.

The nearest relative of the Beast of Kaunas lives in Vilnius. It’s the Basilisk of Vilnius. He lives in the dungeons at the Subačius Gate by the Tower Hill. Once upon a time, the Basilisk was young and fierce – everyone in the city feared him. And he is still feared today. As they walk past the old city wall and the dungeons after midnight, the townspeople still take care not to look in that direction, to avoid the Basilisk’s accursed gaze. Yet, few people suffer from that gaze, for the Basilisk has grown lazy and hardly bothers to gaze. Only the crowds of clamouring tourists make the Basilisk angry enough, sometimes, to lead them astray down the little streets of Vilnius Old Town. That’s pretty much it.

Another good acquaintance of the Beast lives in Vėžėjų Street in Klaipėda. It is the Dragon of Klaipėda. Once upon a time, the Dragon left its footprint there and was gone for a long time after fleeting moment, meandered who knows where, but since then he has returned to Klaipėda where he lodges with an artist. It must be said that artists are generally liked by all kinds of beasts, dragons, serpents, gnomes, and household sprites because they are good conversationalists and always come up

with something to talk about. There is a separate story about it – trust me, you would like it.

Another relative of the Beast is the Samogitian Smok. Sometimes he awakes, gulps down a lake, rolls over, and falls back to sleep. A lot of water is needed by that Smok. In principle, he would like to come to visit the Beast of Kaunas, but he runs out of lakes somewhere around Šiauliai and loses his strength.

Well, there are a few familiar faces among the sprites and ghosts in nearby mansions, but what would the Beast talk about with creatures of this kind?

Such are the sad thoughts running through the Beast’s mind as he walks down the sad streets of Kaunas when he longs. Without noticing, the Beast reaches Narėpai, and from there, the river Neris is closeby, over which high voltage cables stretch. The Beast rises on his feet at the top of the slope and, as he gazes over to the other bank of the river with deep sadness, twangs a cable with his claw.

‘Dang,’ goes the sound.

The Beast then stirs the other cables, this time using both of his claws.

‘Ding, dong, bzzzz, trrrr,’ echoes the entire valley, from Lapės to Karmėlava, and people rush to close their doors and windows because they know that the Beast is strumming his electric harp tonight.

And this makes the Beast even lonelier and sadder.

Thus, he continues twinging and twanging until, in the early morning hours, his mood lightens up, and he falls asleep, happy and contented. The residents of Lapės and Karmėlava, having barely slept on account of the nocturnal concert, eventually doze off and sleep right through their work, school, and kindergarten.



## HOW THE BEAST MET A VERY IMPORTANT PERSON

There was a grumpy man in Tvirtovės Boulevard who detested everything.

Every morning, he would wake up already irritated by the weather outside his window – it was always either sunny or cloudy, and he disliked *both* sunniness *and* cloudiness. He always blamed the weather forecasters for this, convinced that their bad predictions caused bad weather.

Once out of bed, he would spend some time slouching around the house and staring listlessly at the floor, then turn on the TV. The TV, of course, would unfailingly broadcast the opposite of what the man wanted. Boiling with anger, he would call up the TV station and yell at them for not showing the right things. And if they asked him what he preferred to watch instead, the man would snap at them:

‘None of your business!’

Annoyed, he would then go out into the stairwell.

But there, in the stairwell, he’d get exasperated about the paint peeling off the walls and take the liberty of yelling at the neighbours for not having repainted it. Afterwards, he’d make his way out into the courtyard, but there, of course, there were too many trees for his taste. The man didn’t particularly enjoy this state of affairs. He once got so displeased that he took it upon himself to call up the mayor to express his disgust at there being so many trees in his courtyard. The mayor visited and ordered half of the trees to be cut down. But the man, as you may have already guessed, soon became bothered by the fact that there were too few trees left and he became livid with the mayor.

Having called everyone up, raising all possible demands – that the children be quiet, that the pigeons stop flying, and

that the dogs cease getting friendly with anyone in the courtyard, – he used to walk down to Tvirtovės Boulevard. But every time he reached this place, he got even more enraged because, you see, Tvirtovės Boulevard was always busy with traffic. The man loathed cars because they made noise and spat out smoke and because, as a rule, car owners always had a boot full of secrets. Hence, the man would station himself at Tvirtovės Boulevard and spend the rest of the afternoon menacing the traffic with his fist.

That’s how he was, and little could be done about it.

Such types sooner or later meet the Beast.

The Beast had heard of the man, but he had so much work to do that he kept forgetting to visit the man in Tvirtovės Boulevard. As it happened, there was a widespread rumour in Underworld

Kaunas that this man was special. He was said to be the man because of whom everything in the city happens, which meant that the man needed to change because if he didn’t, then instead of things moving forward, everything would stop still and collapse.

Finally, on one fine evening, when the Beast was checking whether all was well at the river Neris, and intending to scratch his back later on Viliampolė Bridge, he heard someone crying.

The Beast slithered deftly on top of the bridge and, there, he found a man standing by himself.

‘Was that you I heard crying?’ asked the Beast.

‘Yes, it was,’ answered the man.

‘Why, what’s the matter?’

‘Nobody does what I tell them to do.’

‘And what have you done yourself?’

‘Me? Nothing.’

‘Well, there you go. Start doing something for yourself, and others will eventually join you.’

‘...and what if I don’t?’

‘Then I will swallow you whole!’ said the Beast, and, yawning, wandered away to see if all was well in Raudondvaris, because it was still quite early in the evening.

The man, of course, did not warm to the Beast.

‘Better safe than sorry,’ he concluded and decided to follow the Beast’s advice.

When the man woke up the next morning, he didn’t heed the weather and, instead of his usual grumbling, he hoovered his pad. It became easier to breathe.

Then the man bought some paint and repainted the stairwell. Although they

didn’t offer to help, the neighbours applauded the man’s good deed.

The next day, he fenced off a small area in the courtyard for the dogs to bound around in. The neighbours came to help him.

After this, everyone worked together and strung up a tree swing for the children to play on. The kids were overjoyed.

The day after that, the man made a few calls and asked for a new traffic light to be built and for the pedestrian crossing to be lit in Tvirtovės Boulevard. And so it was that the traffic light was built and the pedestrian crossing was lit.

Finally, the man moved to Savanoriai Avenue and opened his own hairdressing salon.

## WHY THE BEAST HAS A WHALE OF A TIME IN SANTAKA

Any resident of Kaunas will tell you that Santaka is where you have the best chance of spotting the Beast of Kaunas, or at least his shadow. There is a Confluence of two rivers, their colourful waters intermingling – this is where all the castles of Kaunas once stood, where all tunnels lead, where an uneasy perplexing feeling engulfs you as soon as you come close, and where strange noises are heard in the night.

The Beast always swims over to Santaka a bit after midnight. Because after midnight you can be sure to meet all sorts of adventurers, or a pair of lovers, or run into birthday party revellers. By around one in the morning, the crowds have usually dispersed.

This is when the Beast raises his head from the waters.

He looks around, sniffs the air, and curls up on the bank.

He loves it here at the Confluence because rivers always bring something new. Here comes a tree trunk and a crow resting on top of it, now along swims a shoal of fish, and now a ball bobbing by which was thrown in by accident, and a fishing boat sailing past seeking an underwater trough where a catfish is said to live. The Beast recalls former times when many ships carrying a great variety of goods used to come sailing by on these rivers. At the riverbank, you could always get the latest news, because here you were always sure to meet someone who had travelled from far away and knew, therefore, how one king or another was doing, how well a certain empress lived, or where something really terrible had happened.

Both were rivers, and yet so different! If one became lighter, the other one, as a rule, turned darker. If one was warm, the other was cold. At Santaka, they are almost wrestling with each other, and, as he watches them, the Beast begins to wonder: who decided that the Neris should flow into the Nemunas, and not the Nemunas into the Neris?

Besides, who even decided that the Beast is a Beast, and not a Serpent, or a Bear, or, Heaven forbid, some kind of Auroch? Who decides everything in the world? And, equally importantly, why was it that as soon as you commit to thinking one

thing, you feel the urge to think the opposite? It is shameful to even mention this out loud. Does the same thing happen to other people?

Could it be that there are always two rivers, two banks, and two sides to everything? Could one exist without the other? If it weren't for the right-hand bank, how would you know which one was on the left? If it weren't for the cold, how would you know when it was hot?

So ponders the Beast, and he realises that his thoughts have been intermingling like the waters in Santaka.

And then it dawns on him.

Whatever news and novelties you encounter, whatever different rivers course through your body, everything eventually converges in your heart and you realise you are you! We are all moulded from a multitude of contradictions, and our heads are filled with a variety of conflicting thoughts and moods.

Sometimes we enjoy noise, but sometimes we want some peace. Sometimes we crave something sweet, sometimes something salty. Sometimes it's great when the sun is shining, but sometimes it gets too hot. Sometimes we are eager to learn, but sometimes we *know* that we've learnt everything there is to learn, so how dare you lecture us!

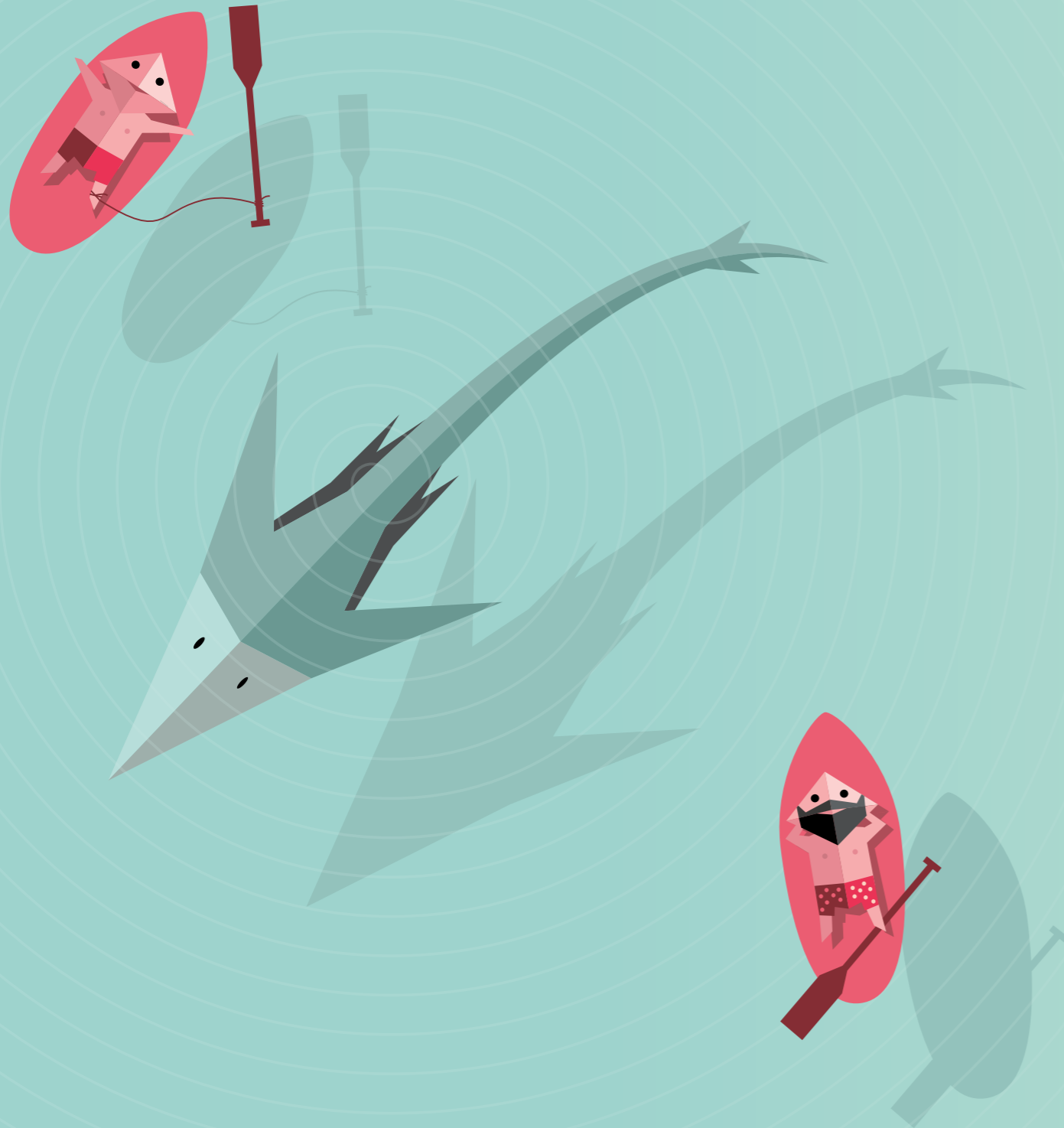
We are like Confluence ourselves.

Such is the city, too. It contains both beauty and ugliness, and hardworking people and lazy people, too. There are those who think one way, but there will always be those who believe the opposite. Those who speak one language and those who speak another. Men, women, and children, among them – misfits and eccentrics, artists and policemen, those who are happy and those who are sad, young and old, fast and slow, but they all share one thing in common. Each and every single one of them belongs to the city, and each and every single one is needed and accepted by the city because it is so much more exciting that way.

Contented, the Beast splashes the water with his tail.

In Santaka, indeed, one realises how exciting the world really is.

That's why the Beast of Kaunas loves Santaka so much.





## WHAT THE BEAST LIKES ABOVE ALL ELSE

You recall, of course, that the Beast is very fond of clams, don't you? You may even remember that on some days he likes to do things very differently. It probably hasn't slipped your mind that that he enjoys fish.

The question is, however, what does the Beast like the most, almost to a beastly extent? Even more than fish, clams, his electric harp, or midnight swims in the river. Even more than Underworld Kaunas. And even more than his own tail – which he really likes a great deal, otherwise he wouldn't have that tail at all.

Hush and listen... It's the evening. The sun has gone down, and darkness has fallen outside the window. The curtains are drawn, except for a single slender slit, and, through that slit, a star is twinkling. In the kitchen, someone is rattling dishes. A dog barks in the street. The TV in the living room is on, and from its speakers emanates a voice, singing softly. A shadow slopes about the ceiling in search of a perch for the night.

Shadows are somewhat restless home dwellers. Sometimes, they can spend as long as half a night rustling around: they

move onto the wall, descend behind the closet, or inspect under the bed. You can't help them in any way because the shadows usually don't even know themselves what it is that they want. They settle down just before the dawn when they finally find a comfortable spot, cuddle up to something, and fall asleep. What's more, they dislike draughts.

Finally, Dad or Mum comes to your room to read you a bedtime story. A brother or a sister may also come, but not everybody has such a thing as a brother or a sister.

Anyway, back to the bedtime story. Bedtime stories usually have two things in common: they have characters, and they have adventures. Adventures really like characters – they look for them, find them, and happen to them. So here you are, lying in bed and having a bedtime story read to you. Its characters are chasing adventures, and you haven't even noticed how the TV has gone silent, the dishes have stopped rattling in the kitchen, or that the dog has long since given up barking in the street. The tale goes on and on, and the night is getting quieter and quieter... And then, at the very last moment, just before you fall asleep, you hear a faint rustling noise outside the window.

Yes, this was the Beast, who had been listening to your bedtime story all along with his ear pressed up against the wall of the building.

He just can't resist stories and tales.

As he travels around Sunny Kaunas and checks if everything is alright, the Beast sometimes overhears the things we talk about or tell each other.

Sometimes, as it just happened, he hears a tale being told and becomes very interested in the characters and their adventures.

Sometimes, if he is lucky, he catches a story through a half-open balcony door about travel adventures from an Italian escapade.

At other times, he listens discreetly to an old lady chatting to her bestie over the phone about an incident, which was suspiciously similar to one they had seen in a movie some time ago.

Sometimes the Beast manages to catch snippets of a conversation on the bench – a story about someone's childhood

and how things were back then, what kind of people lived and what kind of cat they had, and that their cat knew how to open the fridge and once gobbled up all the sausages.

If he detects a story coming on, the Beast forgets about all his affairs, secretly nestles down somewhere nearby, and listens, and listens...

You should have gathered by now that neither fishing, nor bathing in the Nemunas, nor strumming his electric harp, was the Beast's most beloved and appreciated pastime, but rather listening to *sto-ries!*

I've saved the best for last. Not everyone is lucky enough to meet the Beast of Kaunas. Not only because he spends his days in Underworld Kaunas and only comes out to Sunny Kaunas at night. In fact, there are many reasons for this. After all, the Beast is very busy, because every time that he is out and about he has to do his rounds throughout the whole city and surrounding townships to inspect if all is going well.

But there is one almost sure-fire way to meet him. Well, at least to sense him quietly lurking nearby and listening with his ears pricked up. What's that way... try and guess? Yes, indeed! You need to tell a *story!*

It can be a bedtime story, and that bedtime story can be about the Beast himself, just like the story told today. He enjoys listening to stories about himself. At times, he even giggles with glee at all the balderdash, poppycock, and gibberish that people tell about him. Or else, it could be a story about something that is important to you or that you wish to share with your mum or dad...

So that's that, and little can be done about it.

If you want to meet the Beast, tell bedtime stories. And then there will inevitably come an evening when you'll sense the Beast quietly lingering by your window and listening carefully with his ears pricked up.

And at the same time, he'll make sure that everything is going well in your block.



## ON GHOSTS AND MODERNISM OF KAUNAS

Have you noticed that ghosts usually live in beautiful homes? Isn't it true that every respectable palace has a spirit? Some even have two at a time because a single ghost can't deal with having a large palace all to itself. Almost all beautiful old castles are, by and large, haunted. Sometimes ghosts also appear in ruined castles but a ruined castle is still a castle, isn't it? They can also be spotted in the Old Town, where no two houses look alike, with all kinds of moulding, unusual balconies, and lions' heads. As a rule, if you see a building decorated with a lion's head, you can be pretty sure that it is inhabited by a ghost. In short, ghosts like to stick to generally beautiful and pleasant places, especially to those that can boast a gripping story or two. Therefore, you will not encounter a ghost on the sixth floor of a tower block, because there are hardly any lions and too few stories. You won't find a single spirit in a newspaper kiosk either because there isn't much space, and ghosts like it when it's spacious.

There are many ghosts in Kaunas.

In the olden days, every house in the Old Town used to host even more than one. The residents' nerves were in tatters – and how could they not be? Chairs were being pushed around, spoons were getting stolen, socks were disappearing, there were constant rumblings and cracklings, lights

were going on and off, phone chargers were cropping up in bathrooms, and ghosts queuing by the toilet door every night after midnight. But then someone gave the ghosts a valuable piece of advice: Kaunas has many more beautiful places to live with a rich history, that is if you look outside of the Old Town. And indeed, there were plenty of houses built during the days when Kaunas was a Temporary Capital. They were known by an unfamiliar term – modernist buildings. Ghosts hadn't heard any such word before, nor did they care much anyway. It was enough for them to have heard the rumour that some beautiful new accommodation options had opened up.

So they set off in search of Kaunas *mod-er-nism*.

What they found stunned them. It turned out that Kaunas was full of beautiful houses with gorgeous windows, breath-taking facades, carved doors, lobbies decorated with coloured tiles, and balconies perfect for lounging, even in winter. Would you believe me if I told you that some of them stood entirely empty? To cut a long story short, thus began the Great Migration of Kaunas ghosts. This is how the following buildings were discovered: the Central Post Office Building, Pažangos Building, Pienocentras Building, Lapėnas House, Daugirdas House, Schneider House, Gudavičius House, Chaimsons



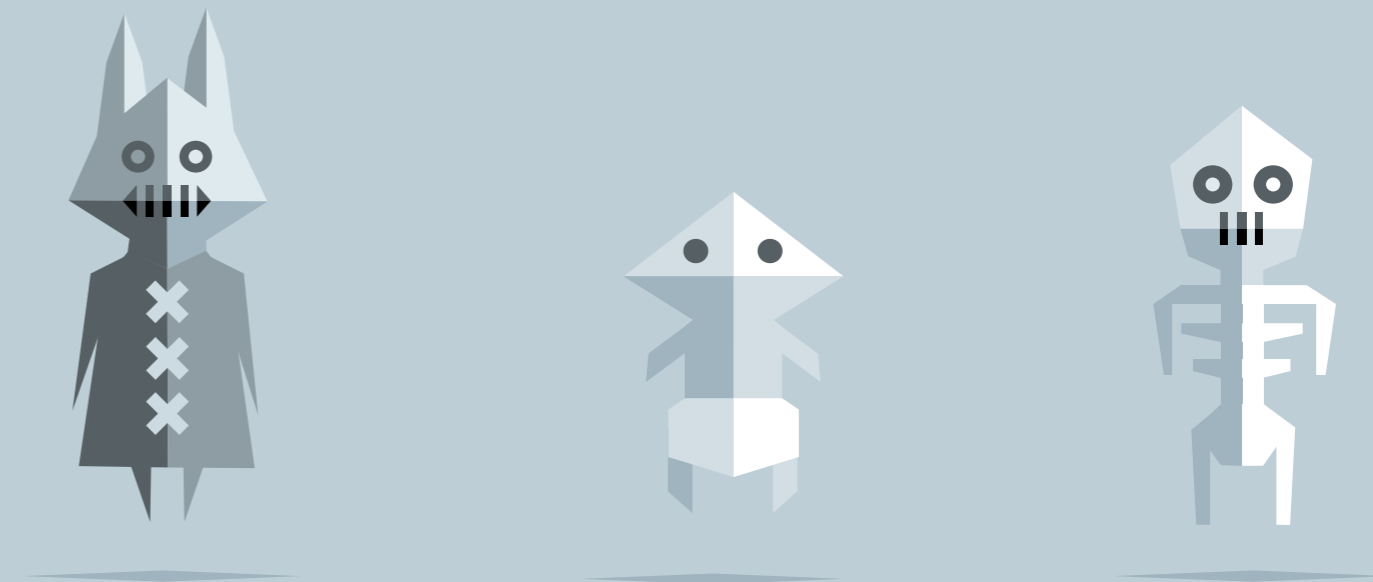
Tower, the Kaunas Garrison Officers' Club Building, Resurrection Church and five thousand other such gorgeous places that all the ghosts vacated in the Old Town which then became so quiet that even residents began to miss the spirits.

But in five thousand other homes, new lives began. At the Central Post Office, ghosts invaded all five floors. They would rummage through letters, mix up addresses, and hide parcels at night. Their mischievous doings lasted for so long that the Post Office needed to be shut down. And so, shut down it was, and all its employees moved online. But the ghosts didn't settle down. They turned off the heating. Winter came, water froze in the heaters, then thawed in the Spring, and flooded all the

floors. It was a wonder that the Post Office didn't end up floating like a boat down the river Nemunas...

Pažangos Building and Pienocentras Building used to be home to universities. But, as you may know, Science does not believe in ghosts and haughtily retreats if it encounters them. So, as the ghosts flooded in, the universities abandoned their quarters for the newly-erected glassy science valleys and left the old buildings under the sole control of the spirits.

The officers, however, as you may know, are far from cowardly or arrogant. So, in the Garrison Officers' Club, hardly anyone



pays attention to the ghosts at all. One night, an ordinary general yelled at a pale white lady whom he saw hovering around in the hallway, 'For goodness sake, what is this wraith doing here! March on and dress properly!'

In private modernist homes, ghosts tend to linger in the attic and have a whale of a time, in the night, sliding down the curved handrails and poking their heads out through the circular windows.

It must be said, however, that lately ghosts are reappearing in the Old Town. Thus far, they have behaved rather timidly and haven't disturbed the townspeople over mere trifles. They are

more interested in scaring tourists these days. But tourists, in fact, seem to quite like such interactions.

The Beast of Kaunas has little to do with ghosts. There are no wraiths in Underworld Kaunas, but he does occasionally encounter a ghost or two at night in Sunny Kaunas. But being as busy as he is, he has never had a chance to stop and have a proper chat with any of them. The Beast is simply pleased to know that these ghosts look after the empty houses, which means less work for him.

And that's the way things are, and little can be done about it.



## ON THINGS AND THEIR RIGHT PLACE

Once upon a time, a lady from Petrašiūnai received a potted palm tree as a gift. Occasionally people do present such things as gifts and even hope that they will bring joy. The lady was pleased at first, but soon grew worried: where would she put the palm tree and its pot? She decided to stand it in the sitting room for the time being. At first, it looked rather good.

Later, the lady noticed that her sight had started to grow weaker, and that mess had worked its way into the bookshelf. For the palm tree, with its branches and leaves, obscured the light, and the books stopped conveniently reading themselves to the eyes of the lady. Moreover, the pot made accessing the shelf and returning books to their places tricky, so gradually the shelf became exceedingly empty on one side, while a pile of books and newspapers rose up on the other. In short, it soon became clear that the palm, the window, the books, and the lady's eyes couldn't all get along in the same sitting room.

Then the palm tree was relocated to the bedroom. At first, it looked rather good.

However, after a good month, things got worse, as the lady noticed that the room was full of tiny flies. As it turned out, the gaps between the branches and the trunk of the palm provided the perfect habitat for these minuscule insects. But the habitats of flies and people's homes hardly go well together, if at all. In such cases, it is people who have to come up with a solution because flies, rest assured, won't take any action by themselves.

The lady carried the palm tree out onto the stairwell. At first, it looked rather good. But one day, as four removal men were carrying a piano up to the third floor, they tripped over the pot and rattled down the stairs bringing the heavy instrument down with them. Along the way, it produced such a sad *do-re-mi* that even the great Lithuanian composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis could not have written a sadder one; and his *do-re-mi's* were distinctly sad. It became clear that the potted palm tree, the men, and the piano couldn't all get along in the same stairwell.

Having run out of ideas of where to put that naughty palm tree, the lady from Petrašiūnai took it out and placed it on the lawn in the courtyard. At this point, she couldn't care less what the palm looked like, whether it thrived or barely survived, because she'd had enough of the mess and misery that it was causing. So she just left it there in the yard and went to the hospital to visit the four men who, after the sad *do-re-mi* fractured:

an arm,  
a leg,  
four ribs,  
and had seen a couple more teeth fall out.

The palm tree was left sticking out like a sore thumb on the lawn in the courtyard.

Then good things started happening. As it was summer, warm, and sunny, the palm suddenly shot up. Its leaves broadened. An old teacher from a nearby house came, carrying a chair, and sat down beneath its leaves. Then a raven alighted on the palm tree. Before long, a cat stationed itself below, because cats take a great interest in crows. The cat's owner came looking for her pet, met an old teacher, and chatted

with him about cats, gardens, and politics until the evening came. The next day, a certain man watered the palm tree. A week later, someone pulled it out of the cramped pot and planted it in the soil!

And so it began: a table and benches were installed, a sandbox for the kids appeared, the car park got fixed, and neighbours developed a habit of getting together to chat and sharing pictures on their smartphones.

As if that weren't enough, an evening of dance was organised under the palm tree to celebrate the Kaunas City Festival! The whole Petrašiūnai and Kaunas were so surprised by the event that even a TV journalist was rushed to the scene to cover the gathering with great disbelief: how could all this be happening here, in Petrašiūnai?

The old teacher knowingly explained:

'When they find themselves in the right place and at the right time, things or, indeed, people can make others inordinately happy.'

The journalist didn't understand a word of this, but she felt the leaves of the palm tree, made a quick call and drove off. Nobody even noticed her, this being such a fun night.

So goes this tale. Why does the Beast of Kaunas not appear in it, you may ask? Because he is not needed here. And when the Beast is not required, he doesn't show up.

Especially since, recently, someone gave him a wrecked old piano and now he is casting around for a home for it in Underworld Kaunas.



## HOW THE BEAST STUDIES AND EVENTUALLY LEARNS

The Beast, of course, never attended school. It shouldn't come as a big surprise, for you are well aware that there are no such things as schools for mythical beasts. But you could hardly call the Beast of Kaunas illiterate or a halfwit – he knows and understands many things, has his own opinions, and can express them eloquently when asked. A great many people have benefitted from the Beast's sage advice, and even the matters of the city are hardly unfamiliar terrain to him.

But where do his wit and wisdom come from?

Well, the reason is quite simple: the Beast learns by listening and engaging in conversation with those who know or are skilled in something.

When he was still a small beast, his favourite pastime was hiding in the castle under the Duke's throne and listening to him solving matters of state. This is how the Beast learned Lithuanian, German, and a little Latin. For, in the Castle, all messengers of the Teutonic Order were addressed in German, and monks in Latin. Whenever he wanted to consult with courtiers or plot a conspiracy, the Duke would speak in Lithuanian so that no stranger would understand what he was saying.

Hiding under the Duke's throne, the Beast learned that the Duke despised being opposed. What's more, he didn't like admitting when he had made a mistake. And, above all, he was forever at pains to conceal when he struggled to understand something. When a crusade proved successful, the courtiers would always humbly thank the Duke and glorify him in all respects; but if a crusade turned out to be a failure, then it was either the fault of the gods or the priests for having elected the wrong day for the crusade, or else an inferior set of armour or a warped sword were to blame, but Heaven forbid that it could have been the Duke himself at fault. This is how the Beast realised that the Duke had to be treated with prudence, and be praised and lauded; the Duke would then be generous and grant rewards. Unless, that is, it slipped his mind to do so, given his heavy calendar commitments of glorious pursuits and endeavours.

Later, when the city's Town Hall was built, the Beast relocated to the dungeons beneath it, and from there he listened carefully to the discussions conducted in the city council, the

words uttered by the Mayor, and the decisions taken in the city's court. The Mayor wasn't as strict as the Duke was wont to be – it was permissible to argue with the former, to tell him he was wrong, even to file a complaint. The key was not to be afraid of the Mayor, because when people are afraid they rush into making foolish decisions.

At the Town Hall, the Beast learned a lot about taxes, and the rights and duties of citizens. He also learnt that wealthier citizens, for some unknown reason, had more rights than the poor and that the less well-off somehow had more responsibilities. Another lesson he learnt was that the less you knew or cared about your rights, the fewer of them you had. The Beast also realised the importance of paying taxes; if you did not pay your taxes, the city would have no resources to repair the streets, which would acquire potholes, and people would fall into these potholes and perish. And finally, sheltering in the dungeons of the Town Hall, the Beast came to the realisation that it was important for the townspeople to take care of each other: to help those in distress, but also to discipline those who misbehaved.

Later, when the Governor's palace was built in the city, the Beast would wander over there to listen to the orders the Governor gave to his subordinates; this is how the Beast learnt Russian.

But the Beast took special pleasure from paying an occasional visit to the President of the Republic (when this role appeared in Kaunas) to check on the state of the Republic. From the President, the Beast learned to think not only of himself but also of the country. Because when you do something, your actions have an effect on other people – and other people's actions, on you. So it is always a good idea to think of others from time to time, for you are not alone in this world.

After these lessons, the Beast began to visit other places where he thought he could learn something. He heeded what doctors were talking about in their meetings, what actors were discussing in theatres, what could be learnt from the city's festival-makers, and the concerns of builders and trolleybus drivers.

But what a great many things the Beast has learned from pupils and students! He has particularly enjoyed quietly attending to them, before their exams, and eavesdropping on them



as they have been revising aloud. This is how the Beast has learned algebra, and why apples fall from trees instead of shooting to the sky, and has realised that the moon revolves around the Earth, the Earth around the Sun, and has vowed to drop all attempts to swallow the sun because the Sun is scorching hot and he might get burned.

In fact, the Beast has never missed a chance to learn something new whenever and wherever he has been able to.

Obviously, he has a lot of work and responsibilities, so he has to study on the hoof, often during his commute across the city, but he doesn't complain because he's always curious to find out and learn something new from people who know better, or are more skilled, than him.

He calls these studies his 'Tempo Academy', because everything is happening at such a brisk tempo.

## HOW THE BEAST RECOGNISES A KAUNESIAN

First of all, it is rather important to know that the Beast recognises a Kaunesian easily, and rarely mistakes them.

How does he manage it? Well now, this is a fairly tricky question. When asked what kind of a person a Kaunesian is, the wise Beast simply turns his eyes sideways. For many, such a gesture may seem like an attempt to dodge the question, but those who understand Kaunas, live in it, or love it from afar, know what the Beast means by it.

And what he means is this: a Kaunesian is someone who has secrets!

In fact, Kaunesians can be divided into at least several types according to the kind and the quantity of secrets that they have.

There are Custodians of Secrets: they put up tall fences, set up very solid doors, reject the idea of having large windows, and take time to find the most secure locks. In the city, the Custodians of Secrets tend to drive cars and wholeheartedly detest walking. If it turns out that they absolutely must take a walk even for the shortest of distances, they creep under thicker shadows, make sure to dress inconspicuously, hide their faces under a hat, and avoid standing out from the crowd at all costs. You can converse with them about the weather, and the weather, and... well, that's it. They don't even like to talk about what they had for lunch or breakfast, so they aren't the most interesting of interlocutors.

The Beast likes Custodians of Secrets because he can appear to them in confidence – they will not babble about the encounter to anyone. The enemies of the city, on the contrary, cannot stand Custodians of Secrets.

Another type are the Seekers of Secrets. They are inquisitive and tenacious people, suspecting secrets everywhere. If you tell them a tale, they will assume that you did not reveal the entire story, and that you kept something valuable from them. If brought a letter by a postman, they will carefully inspect the postman himself, pondering in suspicion, 'Why was he the one who brought the letter and not somebody else?' After opening the envelope, they closely examine it, turning it inside out, and

even placing it under a magnifying glass, just in case. Seekers of Secrets usually don't own a computer because a computer is a particularly suspect item. Whenever they visit someone's house, they always suspect that there is a secret room, because, well, there always is, and little can be done about it.

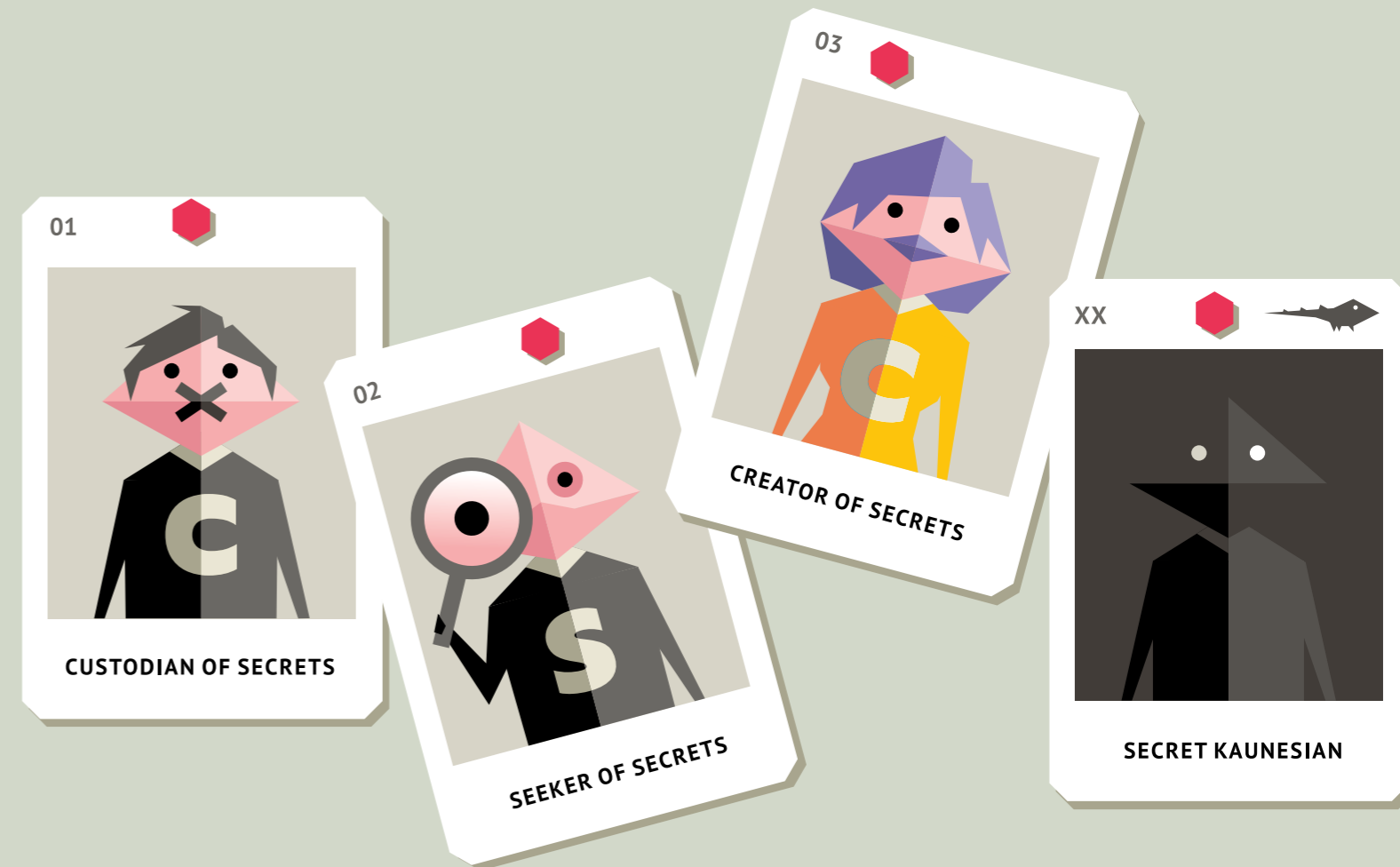
The Beast dislikes Seekers of Secrets because there is nowhere you can hide from them: they will check under a carpet, look behind a wardrobe, shine a flashlight into a half-open sewer well, dig through a pile of leaves, touch a sculpture in a museum to see whether it is real or made of plastic, and so on, and so on, and so on. Needless to say, they report sightings of the Beast everywhere, even in places where he has never made an appearance.

Another type of Kaunesians are the Creators of Secrets. Such a type must exist, for where else would the Custodians and the Seekers get their secrets from? Creators of Secrets are cheerful and friendly people. They are fond of clubs and societies and, most of all, of adventures. You can always invite a Creator of Secrets for a coffee, they will come to a birthday party, you can also meet them at all of the city's festivities because every Creator of Secrets is interested in events. The more events they learn about, the more stories they can tell, and consequently the more often those stories and events get laden with all kinds of secrets, much like apple trees get laden with little apples or aloe with little aloes. The Beast rubs shoulders with them sometimes, especially when he wants to announce an important message to the townspeople.

Finally, there is another type in Kaunas known to only a small handful of people. This is because these people are themselves... well, how shall I put it... a secret.

They are called Secret Kaunesians.

A Secret Kaunesian does not necessarily live in Kaunas, although there are many such people in Kaunas, too. For example, you can meet a Secret Kaunesian in Kėdainiai, you can meet them in Palanga, you can meet them in Alytus. In particular, many Secret Kaunesians are waiting to be uncovered in Vilnius. But there are even more Secret Kaunesians outside of Lithuania.



You may rest assured that, as we speak, a certain Kaunesian is gazing eastwards from the one-hundred-and-first floor of a skyscraper somewhere in New York and longing for far-away Kaunas. Or, as he is having dinner at his vineyard in South Africa, another Secret Kaunesian realises that the sunset at the back of the meadow resembles perfectly the sunsets in Santaka, and gets nostalgic. Or, somewhere in the suburbs of Tokyo, another Kaunesian notices a sparrow landing on a fence and thinks that this sparrow is just like the ones she used to see in Kaunas. Secret Kaunesians live everywhere in the world. They are great in number, and they quietly care for their city. Never giving themselves away, without telling anyone that they belong to this most unusual type – the type of Secret Kaunesians.

The only one who knows all of them is the Beast of Kaunas, for Secret Kaunesians are his dearest friends. You may even say they are the Honourable Beast Society.

People say that once every few decades or every dozen years, all Secret Kaunesians from all over the world come back to Kaunas – without any prior planning or special invitation. They simply feel a relentless desire to go and see how their city is doing.

This may fall on any day of the year, in any year of the decade, so it is highly advisable for the city to be well prepared for such an occasion.

## HOW THE BEAST LOOKS FOR RIVERBOAT PEOPLE BUT FINDS FEW

There were many ships in Kaunas at all times. Sometimes so many that you could cross the river Nemunas simply by jumping from one ship to another. In bygone days, almost all the best merchandise would be brought by boats, because inland roads were few and far between, but even those that existed were dangerous – swarming with ticks, bears, and crusaders. Meanwhile boats sailed safely in the middle of the river and, traveling downstream, reached Kaunas at such a high speed that captains had to be careful not to run ashore. A certain Estonian ship once sailed straight into the market square and stopped just an inch before hitting the vegetable stand. A mark survives to this day of the route ploughed by the keel of the boat.

It was, of course, much more difficult to swim upstream – people had to be hired to pull boats into Kaunas using ropes, while the banks, as I mentioned before, were crawling with ticks, bears, and crusaders. Nobody liked such drudgery, so eventually steamboats were invented. Steamboats were so popular that they filled two ports in Kaunas – the Old Town Port and the Winter Port. The steamers were beautifully decorated, with daintily painted chimneys, and in some steamers they even had orchestras playing.

Why, you may ask, am I relating all of this to you now? Well, because almost no one in Kaunas takes boats out anymore and the Beast of Kaunas is very much distressed by this fact, because he is exceedingly fond of boats. And while it is only fair to acknowledge that, in his time, the Beast himself has eaten a handful

of small ships, one should nevertheless make allowances for the foolishness of youth, and not condemn the poor Beast for such things. For one thing, he is well behaved now; and for another, the best way to get to know something is to have a little taste of it, don't you think?

So there you go... The beast greatly misses the boats. First of all, because a ship's hull gets overgrown with shells, and shells to the Beast are as crisps are to children – he is very fond of munching them. He licks them off the sides, and gnaws them off the keel. The riverboat workers, upon hearing the noise at night, used to say: 'There goes the Beast, toiling away.' Another reason for why he likes ships is that they are a bit like him – they too are *biig* water creatures! The Beast knows that this misrecognition is nothing more than an act of self-deception, yet it still helps him to feel less lonely among Kaunas's vast expanses of water, in which no other creature like him lives. It used to be the case that, swimming submerged alongside a big steamer, he could imagine that he had found a friend... Oblivious, he would suddenly bump the steamer sideways. The whole crew, including the orchestra, would plunge into the water, and the Beast, ashamed, would flee away.

However, those days are long gone, because, as I said, there are no more ships sailing along the rivers of Kaunas. Although there are still ships – the Beast even knows a secret port in Kaunas, where many boats are moored awaiting their crew, – those with ambitions to become riverboat people are, unfortunately, harder and harder to find.

The beast is worried. He has even tried to do something about it. He sailed to Klaipėda and went to see an old sea captain for advice. They sat on a jetty by the lighthouse all night, drinking a barrel of seawater, but couldn't come up with any bright ideas. Finally, the captain slammed his fist upon the stone of the jetty, saying:

'Lithuanians are like cats: they like fish but not water!'

A chunk of breakwater broke loose and drowned in the Baltic Sea, as if to say: 'A true fact!'

The Beast sailed back to Kaunas and decided not to give up – he still kept up his search for those willing to become riverboat workers. He asked everyone, but the townspeople kept turning him down.

One girl said she didn't want to be a riverboat worker because rivers were very humid and she could catch a cold.

Another chap refused because, while on a boat, one must obey the captain, and following orders was not his cup of tea.

One other man simply didn't want to do it, full stop.

A certain lady was close to signing up, but she was raising a hooligan son at home and could not risk leaving him to his own devices when he could get into trouble.

Yet another young man admitted to the Beast that he was rather terrified by the Beast of Kaunas, who controlled the

rivers and swallowed everything in his path.

And in the end, when the Beast had finally succeeded in convincing someone to sign up, it so happened that on the day the fellow was supposed to step aboard the ship and set sail, he boarded a plane instead and took off.

The Beast fell into despair. At that time, one of the few remaining ships in the Nemunas happened to be passing by. It had a small café, where a few dozens of tourists were sitting. The Beast came close to the deck of the ship and began to listen; he was hoping to hear some useful advice. But, to his surprise, the Beast heard nothing of any use – the tourists were only interested in their coffee, their meals, their smartphones, and one another. The Nemunas, and the ships, and the surroundings did not even seem to cross their minds.

'Why don't they talk about the river and the surroundings?' the Beast marvelled,

poking his head out of water, risking being spotted and ending up on Instagram.

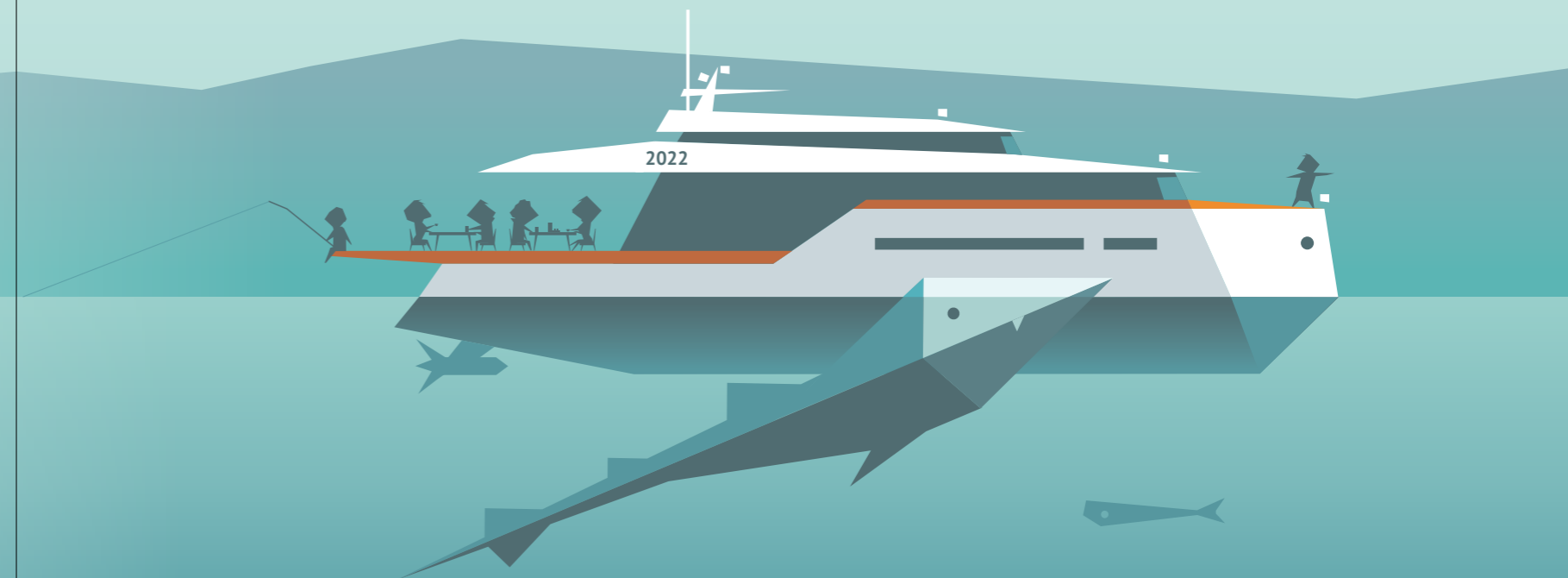
And suddenly it dawned on him!

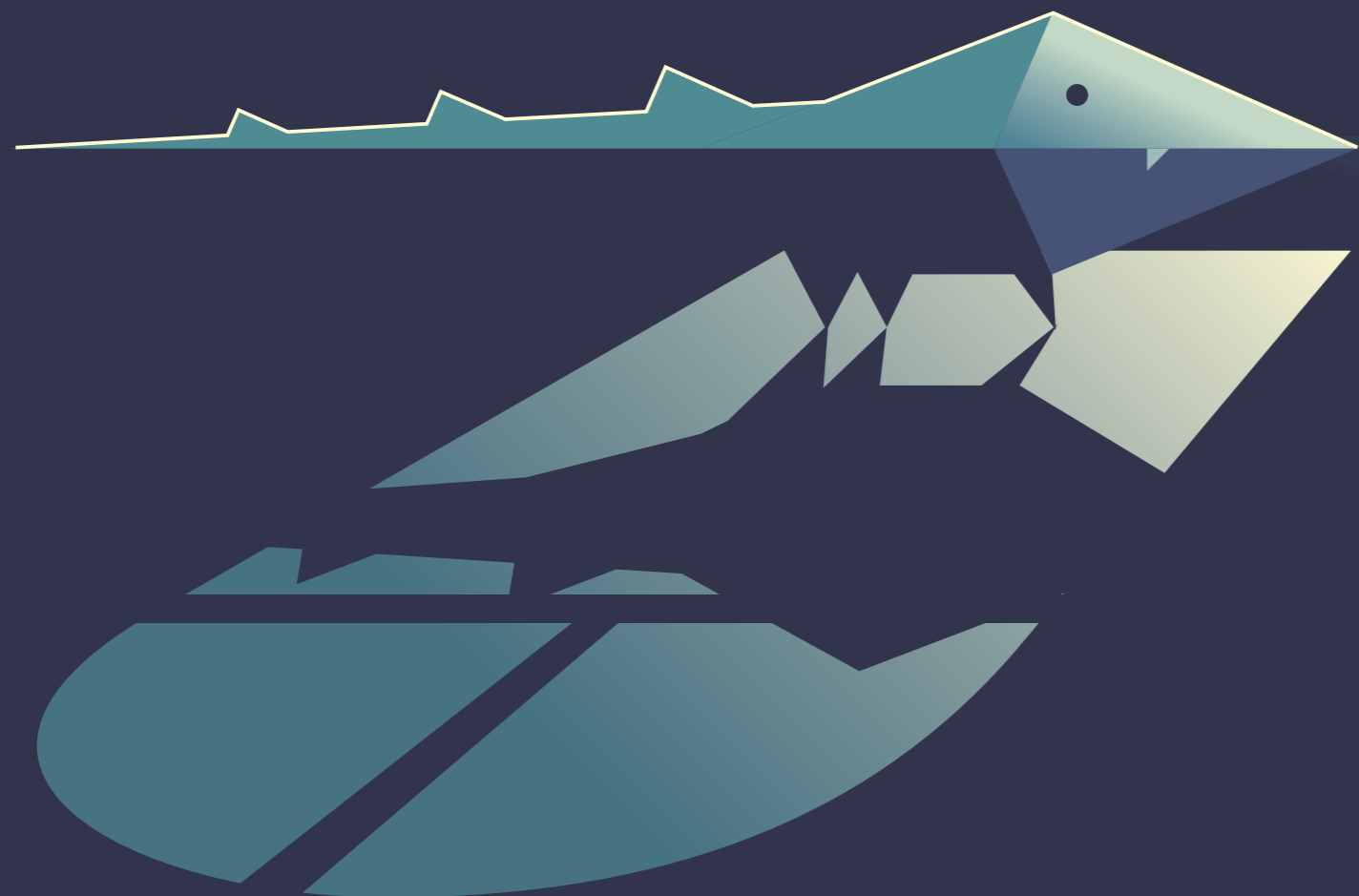
No one was interested in the surroundings, because little of these surroundings were even visible, and what was visible was mostly ugly!

If you want the trip along the river to be interesting, you must clean its banks, build marinas, and erect signs indicating which mound is which, where different castles stand and the various ghosts live! Shrubs are begging for a trim, bird-watching stations long to be built, rare plant meadows wish to be marked, and sightseeing trails demand to be laid down, so that tourists may learn what remains of the bears, ticks, and crusaders, without fear. When such a time arises, even more sights will appear, and people will be drawn to see them – and when they do, there will be more people eager to become riverboat people. This was what the Beast understood.

So now, on long winter's evenings, having examined whether all was well in the city and its vicinity, the Beast is quietly working on something new. He gradually munches away river shrubs, clears up all kinds of dumps and debris, collects rusted tractors from under the bushes, chases beavers, and builds nesting boxes for waterfowl. Near Kaunas Castle, many things have already been grazed, and the townspeople are very pleased with the beautiful river views that have opened up as a result. Now, little by little, he continues to graze and hopes that one day everyone will want to sail around Kaunas in the Nemunas and the Neris or the Nevėžis and marvel at the wonders they see, and the Beast will once again be able to savour the molluscs that cling to the sides of the ships.

If you want this to happen sooner, you can always help him clear up the riverbanks and the surroundings!





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## HOW THE BEAST DISCUSSES HAPPINESS WITH CHEF VASILIAUSKAS ON A WARM SUMMER'S NIGHT

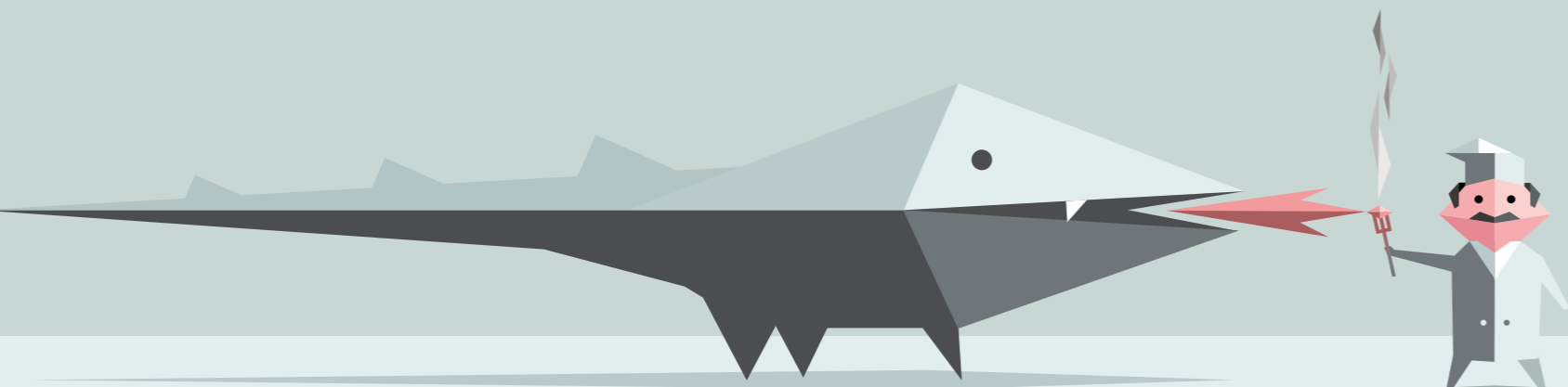
Summer nights are magnificent in Kaunas. Amorous shadows linger in the streets of the city, cats nap on warm paving stones, woodland fairies spread their picnic blankets in Ažuolynas Park, people lounge on balconies and in numerous cafés with lights twinkling in their windows. The evening hustle and bustle quiets down after midnight, and the only thing that one can still hear in homes with attics are the martens quietly nibbling the eggs they've stolen from pigeons.

Around this time of night, a certain well-known Old Town restaurant sees off its last diners, but chef Vasiliauskas is in no hurry to turn the stove off just yet. He takes a large copper frying pan, and pours in some of his finest Tuscan olive oil; then he adds some garlic and ginger, along with his secret

concoction of herbs that he has collected from the banks of the river Neris that same day; he heats everything up, and tosses some tiger prawns from a large bowl into the sizzling pan. As soon as the smell of roasted prawns reaches the intersection of Vilnius and Mapu Streets, there comes a knocking on the small kitchen window.

No guesswork is needed to tell who the mysterious guest is – the chef knows him already. Vasiliauskas takes the pan off of the stove, opens the small window, and places the pan on the windowsill. A paw appears in the opening, gently skewers a prawn with a claw, then disappears, and, after a moment, there comes a chomping sound from outside.

'Chomping is bad manners, don't you know,' says the chef.



Now one of the Beast's eyes appears in the small window.

'I am terribly, terribly sorry,' says he, and gives a wink to Vasiliauskas, his old friend.

Vasiliauskas rotates the pan to make it easier for the Beast to reach his food, and sits in the depths of the kitchen, curiously watching his friend's paw grab the prawns one by one, transferring them into his mouth somewhere just beyond the small window. The chef doesn't come very near to the window, and the Beast, too, prefers to interact with his friend through what is one of the smallest restaurant windows in all of the Old Town, through which not even his head would fit. Obviously, the Beast of Kaunas is not a man-eater, unlike some of his old-fashioned relatives in Europe. Still, with chef Vasiliauskas – a man of a rather chubby constitution with sausage-like fingers, who from tip to toe is seasoned with delicious sauces, with a delightful scent of onions and even a whiff of saffron – he cannot be too careful.

There are times in life when you accidentally eat a friend and have to live with the regret for the rest of your days. This would be a terribly, terribly unfortunate outcome for them both.

When the Beast is finally full-up, the chef pours them each a glass of kvass; they gulp them down. Then the Beast rests his nose on the windowsill, and the two begin to talk.

'Are you happy?' asks Vasiliauskas.

'Uh-huuuh,' the Beast prolongs happily. 'And how about you?'

'I often feel sad.'

'All happy people must feel sad at times.'

'Is that so?' says the chef, rather surprised.

'Indeed,' nods the Beast. 'You humans often look for happiness in the wrong places. You seem to believe that someone who always laughs must be happy, which is utter rubbish. A person who laughs all the time is not happy, but rather mad.'

'Perhaps, then, happiness means being rich?' wonders Vasiliauskas.

'I don't believe so. In Žaliakalnis, there lives a collector so rich that no one knows how much he actually owns – not even he himself. Yet he is more burdened than the poorest of the poor, for he is plagued by the fear of getting robbed. I have even paid a visit to the local thief chieftain for him, and the chieftain has guaranteed he has no intention of stealing anything from the collector, yet still the rich man cannot find peace.'



'Happiness means being handsome,' says the cook, somewhat bitterly, examining his image in the lid of the pot, '...and slender.'

The Beast gives his friend an ironic look and asks:

'Do you find me handsome?'

'Frankly, not very.'

'Well, there you go. And I am your friend, nonetheless.'

'Well then, how does one create happiness?' ponders the chef.

The Beast exhales slowly, letting out such a long sigh from his nostrils that the light even goes out in the kitchen.

'Now, there you've asked the right question. Happiness is, indeed, *cre-at-ed*. Just as an architect designs a house or a fashion designer sketches a garment, so do we create happiness – we build it like a house or knit it like a coat. We are our own architects and builders, designers and tailors. A good fit that matches our build and the joy we get out of it are what matters most. Happiness is unique to every being. Such is the oft-forgotten truth. Happiness is like this little chink in the wall through which you treat me to prawn for dinner: it may be small, but it is wide enough for the both of us, for we wouldn't even need a wider one as it may be...

life-threatening. By the way, your prawns are the most delicious in the world, Vasiliauskas... Thank you very much.'

A smile appears on the chef's face. He stands up, and would like to run and hug his friend's nose, but the Beast, sensing it, blows the air through his nostrils so hard that the gust blows Vasiliauskas back into his chair.

'Until the next warm night, Vasiliauskas!'

'Until then, my friend! By the way, Beast...'

'Yes?'

'Perhaps happiness is the absence of misfortune?'

'Happiness and misfortune are strangers to one another. They belong to different tales, so don't confuse them.'

And the Beast disappears into a warm Kaunas night. Through the small window, instead of a nose or an eye, the moon is glistering. While moonlight streams leisurely into his kitchen, the chef settles into his chair feeling elevated, although he can't really tell where this feeling is coming from.

## HOW SOME OF THE BEAST'S FRIENDS HAVE EXTRAORDINARY POWERS

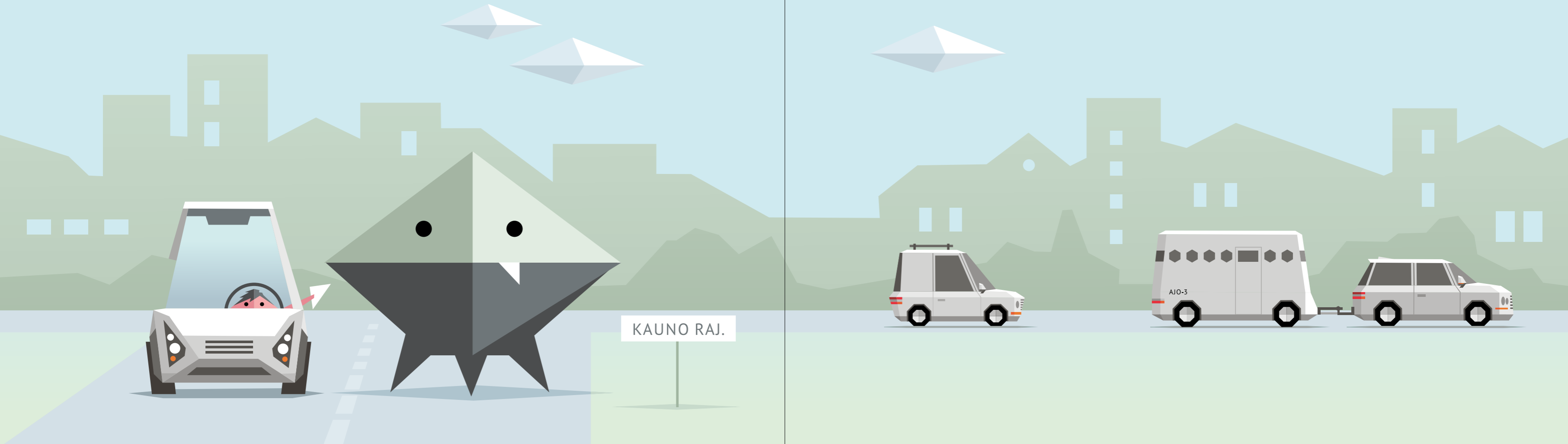
Many people assume that the Beast of Kaunas has all sorts of special powers and that he is unique in this regard. He certainly does have some pretty beastly skills; after all, every child knows that the Beast of Kaunas can spit flames from his mouth whenever he feels the urge. The Beast, however, rarely uses this skill. Still, sometimes he has no choice, especially when he needs to light his path, or kindle a fire in the hearth, or spook a certain hooligan. The Beast also boasts a sleep-inducing gaze. But even this power he rarely puts to use. On the contrary, the Beast now tries to look only out of the corner of his eyes because, as history has proven time and time again, when he takes a look at someone by accident, they fall

asleep, and no-one can ever wake them up again. In addition, of course, the Beast is a specialist in diving and even knows a thing or two about flying. Many can master diving or flying, but only waterfowl and some mythical beasts can do both. It must be said that the Beast of Kaunas only lifts off on rare occasions and very reluctantly. The word on the street is that he is afraid of heights.

Most interestingly, the Beast is not the only one who possesses all manner of mystical powers. Travelling around Sunny Kaunas, the Beast has met people with such incredible powers that even he himself does not possess.

Imagine, there is a blind girl who can hear the grass growing! The girl, who is also the Beast's friend, has such finely tuned hearing that she can tell which city she is in by the noises it makes. As it turns out, Vilnius or Paris sound differently from London or Klaipėda; which in turn sound differently from Kaunas, Šiauliai, or Warsaw, each in its own distinct way. Every city has a voice that is uniquely theirs, just like a human, says the girl. Moreover, their voice changes throughout the day – cities are raucous in the earliest waking hour, drowsy in the afternoon, until they finally quieten down in the evening, still retaining their tell-tale voice, that is undeniably their own. The girl says that Kaunas' voice is tender and generally pleasant. Especially late at night, when she and the Beast meet to talk, and he is not afraid to come out from behind the window shutters because he knows the girl will not catch sight of him or turn her smartphone camera on him.

Another man with magical powers resides in Žaliakalnis. He is so short that when he drives his car, you can see only a tuft of his hair through the windshield, and people usually assume that they have encountered a self-driving vehicle. This amuses the short man greatly. But not many people know of his mysterious power: he can find any lost or missing item. How he does it is, in all likelihood, a mystery to him too – although his friendship with the Beast started precisely with one such lost thing – a tooth. The Beast loses a tooth exceptionally rarely. But when he does, it bodes a great disaster, for the Beast's tooth is a potent weapon and can be used to commit evil deeds if it falls into the wrong hands. Having searched high and low for the tooth, the Beast was relieved to learn about a man who could find anything in the world. When the Beast visited the man, it took him no effort at all to point out the place where the tooth could be found. This was how the



two became friends. In exchange for this favour, the Beast now helps the short man to pull his suitcase down from the top of the wardrobe, because the short man – you see – sometimes gets called to help the police. He assists them in finding people who have gone missing.

Another friend of the Beast with a mystical power lives in Dainava with her sister, parents, and a brother. She cannot walk, finds it hard to speak, and usually sits in a motorised wheelchair. Still, her magical power is unparalleled: anyone who

comes near her experiences a speedy recovery from whatever ails them! After talking to her, even the crookedest crooks and the grumbliest grumblers suddenly perk up and learn to appreciate life in the same way that this extraordinary companion of the Beast does. The Beast always pays her a friendly visit on her birthday.

Once, she surprised the Beast by asking for a very unusual gift: 'Take me flying with you.'

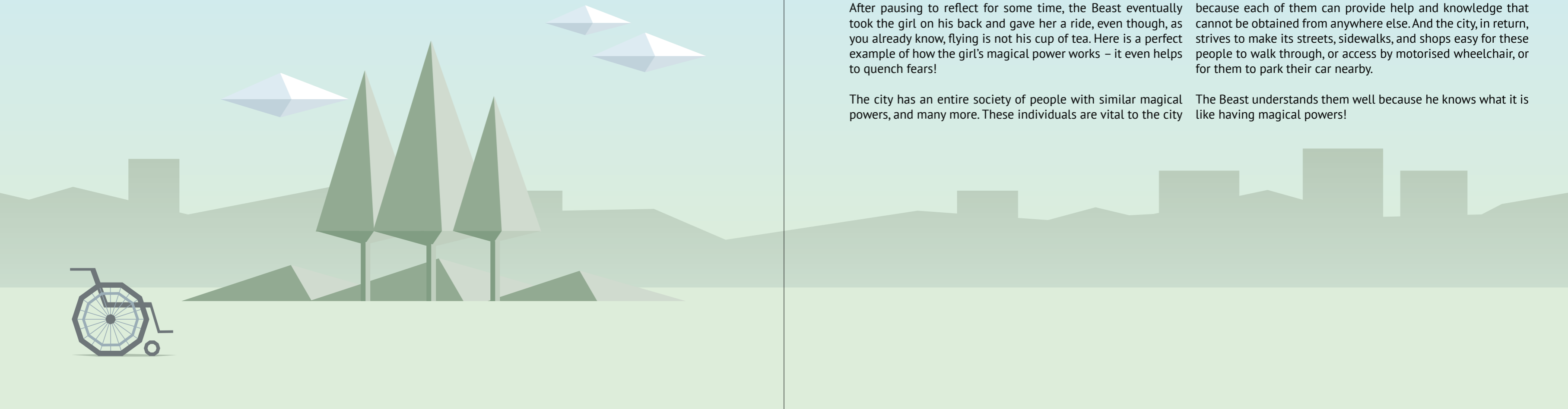


After pausing to reflect for some time, the Beast eventually took the girl on his back and gave her a ride, even though, as you already know, flying is not his cup of tea. Here is a perfect example of how the girl's magical power works – it even helps to quench fears!

The city has an entire society of people with similar magical powers, and many more. These individuals are vital to the city

because each of them can provide help and knowledge that cannot be obtained from anywhere else. And the city, in return, strives to make its streets, sidewalks, and shops easy for these people to walk through, or access by motorised wheelchair, or for them to park their car nearby.

The Beast understands them well because he knows what it is like having magical powers!



## ON THE MEMORIES OF THE BEAST OF KAUNAS

The Beast has lived for so long that he remembers a great many things and events. He likes to compare his memories to the layers of an onion: unless you peel one off, the other one won't show up. So in order to remember what happened a very long time ago, you first need to remember what happened yesterday, then the day before yesterday, then the day before the day before yesterday, and then a week ago, and so on, and so forth, until you have reached the event you were looking for. This peeling of memories layer by layer takes a long time, and hardly anyone is patient enough to wait, as they listen to the Beast, until he can recall the days when, let's say, Kaunas was called the Temporary Capital.

These times, by the way, were very remarkable and curious.

The city was expanding very rapidly because, having heard rumours that there was a new capital, people were flooding from all over the country to see it with their own eyes. They would come and see Kaunas, and enjoy it so much that they would decide to stay. Foreigners often came to hear about Kaunas in the same way; they then would board the trains and arrive at Kaunas with their children and suitcases full of books, dresses, and silverware.

New residents were proliferating so rapidly that the city could barely build enough new homes to accommodate everyone. Sometimes as many as two houses were built per day. Postmen were plainly frightened by this, for when they ventured out to deliver the post, they would unexpectedly run into a brand new building or a completely fresh street, which hadn't been there yesterday. Postmen are people who prefer order and so, when faced with such chaos, some started taking stress-relief pills. This, of course, made pharmacists who sell pills very happy, because the more pills you sell, the more money you make. The more money you make, the more often you can visit Paris and see for yourself if Paris is very much better than Kaunas, or just a smidgen.

Thus, the city was full of people, noises, running, rushing, shouting, and clutter. What's more, the townspeople spoke perhaps a dozen different languages, but somehow understood each

other nonetheless. The best example of this would be at the textile stores. Let's say you'd come looking for white tulle. The signboard may have been Jewish, but you would ask the merchant for the tulle in Lithuanian, the merchant would tell his assistant to bring the tulle out of the storehouse in Russian, and then you'd hear the assistant burrowing into the textile stacks, looking, in vain, for white tulle and swearing in Polish to himself. And white tulle, if you hadn't come across it before, is such a good and vital thing that without it, nothing nice can be sewn. Needless to say, a very similar interaction involving several languages would take place at the tailors. Still, in the end, it would all work out well, and the outfit would turn out to be so chic that the whole neighbourhood would be jealous.

Those who were the most disgruntled and bothered by the multitude of languages and ethnicities in Kaunas were the town's policemen because they could not properly interrogate the bicycle thieves they caught. The thieves would pretend they didn't know Lithuanian, Russian, Polish, or Yiddish. And the policemen themselves couldn't speak German, Swedish, Latvian, or Belarusian. They would then resort to a cunning trick. Suddenly, they'd switch to Lithuanian among themselves and – softly, but loud enough for the thief to hear – they would say such things as 'Well, there's nothing else left to do but to hang this thief who cannot speak any languages'. And a miracle would happen – the thief would start talking in the most perfect Lithuanian with a light Samogitian accent and beg to be kept alive.

It's probably not even worth mentioning that songs were sung in Kaunas in at least five different languages, and that the restaurants served dishes from almost every European nation.

Just as fishermen go to perch on the banks of the Nemunas as soon as the vimba brems make an appearance, so too linguists flocked to Kaunas upon learning of a new multilingual city. In markets, squares, and hairdressing salons you could see them with their notepads in hand: they listened to the words people were using, took meticulous notes, and afterwards went to Vytautas Magnus University to carry out their scholarly debates and compile dictionaries and glossaries of all kinds.



And last but not least, on a bright Sunday in Vilnius Street, you could meet the father of all linguists, Jonas Jablonskis, in a wheelchair pushed by a maid. He used to be very dignified, solemn and resembled a priest.

Even the Beast, despite his having seen everything under the sun, would sometimes catch himself feeling surprised by the sheer rapidity of this urban development. So, having crawled out of Underworld Kaunas, he would first present himself at the Mayor's house, and knock on the floor, and then the Mayor would present him with a list of the streets that had newly emerged and the new homes that had sprung up that day. Then they would both have a moan about how everything was

changing so fast, before returning to their respective lines of work. The Beast would go back to making sure if all was well in the city, and the Mayor would resume thinking about ways of increasing the tax burden on all his new residents, and deciding in which languages he ought to write the letters urging them to pay these taxes every month and on time.

Today, we find that the city has erected a monument in memory of that Mayor, but the memories of the Beast are yet to be written down.

And how good it would be if someone did.



## HOW THE BEAST GETS ON FAMOUSLY WITH ARTISTS



There's no avoiding the truth: the Beast likes artists. He likes them for no other reason than because he finds them interesting to hang out with.

Consider this: it's four in the morning, the city is quiet, and the Beast is going about his daily business checking if all is well in the city. Suddenly he feels itchy to visit someone, to warm his bones or have a chat through a window or an air-vent. And who is usually still awake at such an ungodly hour? That's right: four performance artists and painters, a designer, two composers, one video artist, two graffiti artists, five poets and poetesses, a theatre director, three actresses, two writers and another one who wants to be considered as such, but it isn't going very well for him.

In any case, if you look around the city at this time, you will always find a light on, and near that light – an artist or even a few. DJs, in general, will have only just left work at this hour.

Hanging out with such people is amusing. Why so? Because artists always have good ideas and there is so much to talk about with them. Besides, artists are the people who fix everything. Suppose there is an abandoned and uncherished building, or even an entire block, in the city. Just give it to the artists! They will turn that building or block into artists' studios, bring in a lot of bizarre stuff, set up a rooftop patio, open a photo studio in the attic, and hang accordions on the walls. Then everyone will sit in the courtyard listening to some weird music. The Beast especially enjoys such gatherings. He sneaks up on the artists and listens to what they talk about, though he understands little. Because artists read a lot, they know a lot, and they really dislike it when someone reads nothing or knows nothing. They call such types uncultured.

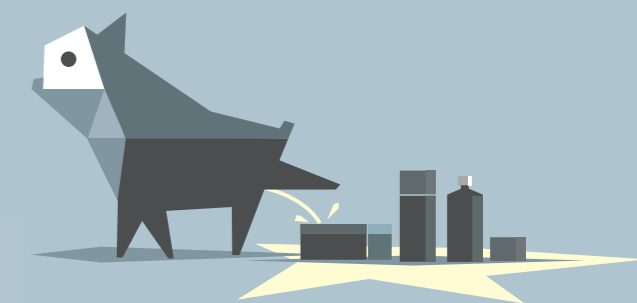
Another good thing about artists is that, most of the time, they are rather agreeable people. Of course, you can occasionally come up against an unpleasant character, but only while the successful creation of a good piece of art eludes them. As soon as they make a good piece, their mood improves at once, and they go and perch in the yard, calmly taking in some of that weird music. Even the pets of artists aren't particularly mischievous. Their puppies always get along with kittens, and their kittens with canaries. One artist had a lion, and that lion even peed in a toilet – so well-trained it was.

Ordinary people gather to gawk at artists living their interesting lives, because ordinary people are in the habit of presenting artworks as gifts on each other's birthdays. These ordinary people think that art has to be beautiful, so they do not buy good works of art, only beautiful ones. Finally, there are those who eagerly spy out opportunities to settle down near the artists because it's pretty where artists live, and there are no unpleasant characters. Gradually, the abandoned building, or the whole block, becomes particularly desirable, and then this happens: it becomes costly to live there, and even the artists themselves lose interest in staying in the area. Then they move out to revive another building, block, or factory. They restore it, improve it, and nervously await the moment when the beauty-admirers will follow them yet again, which is when the artists will have to move out yet again. This is what they talk about in the courtyard in the evenings.

The Beast, of course, does not interfere with the artists' talk because he is afraid of appearing uncultured. Besides, the Beast doesn't enjoy socializing in crowds. He loves to converse privately, so he visits his artist friends one by one. Then they talk about art, artists, and beauty-admirers, about the fact that creative work is often arduous, whereas ordinary people think that it's all moonlight and roses, enjoyable and much more relaxed than, say, building bridges, sewing clothes, or selling candy.

Because he always listens attentively and does not rush into expressing his own opinions, artists love the Beast and cherish interactions with him, but they never disclose his having come for a visit.

So when an artist says that he or she was visited by a whiff of inspiration at night, you can be sure that it was the Mythical Beast of Kaunas who had paid them a visit.





## HOW THE BEAST DREAMS OF FLOODS AND TIDES

A great many children are born in Kaunas each day. They grow up and start going to town to play. The Beast takes special care around children, for they are curious and can spot him quickly, and sometimes even snap a picture of him with their phones. This has already happened, and even more than once. The Beast goes to great lengths to evade the camera lens, yet in photos you can sometimes spot his shadow or the tip of his tail. The Beast hates to be photographed so much that there is even a legend about him having gobbled up a certain pesky

paparazzi who had been stalking him persistently. But most likely it's just an urban legend, because who would, in all seriousness, want to swallow up a photographer with all their straps, tripods, camera, and flashes? Doing so would lead to nothing less than a case of food poisoning.

The Beast turns tail and runs away from children, but in truth, he secretly loves them. This is because he has no children of his own and sometimes feels sad about it. It's easy for



humans, the Beast often thinks to himself – they can find a woman or a man and have children with no great difficulty, while it is much harder for beasts to do the same. Beasts of the opposite sex are so rare that one might say they almost don't exist.

The Beast not only loves children – he protects them. Oh, if only you knew how many drowning children he has secretly carried on his back to shallower waters! And how many

times he has pushed a jaywalker back onto the pavement with his wagging tail to prevent them from being hit by a speeding car!

Then all these children grow up and become young adults who you can meet out there in the big wide world. Some return to Kaunas, others never do. Some remember Kaunas, others forget about it. Some speak about it to their friends and children, others keep quiet on the subject. But everyone born

in Kaunas has one peculiar thing in common, and that peculiar thing finds them wherever they are.

That peculiar thing is the dream about floods and tides.

At least once a year, every Kaunesian dreams such a dream wherever he or she may live. The dream appears at about three o'clock in the morning; the dreamer finds themselves by the water, their feet submerged; sometimes the dreamer starts to

swim, and sometimes they try to escape from the rising tide. Woken from their slumber, some clearly remember the dream; others, on the contrary, may have already forgotten all about it. This depends on who can feel what.

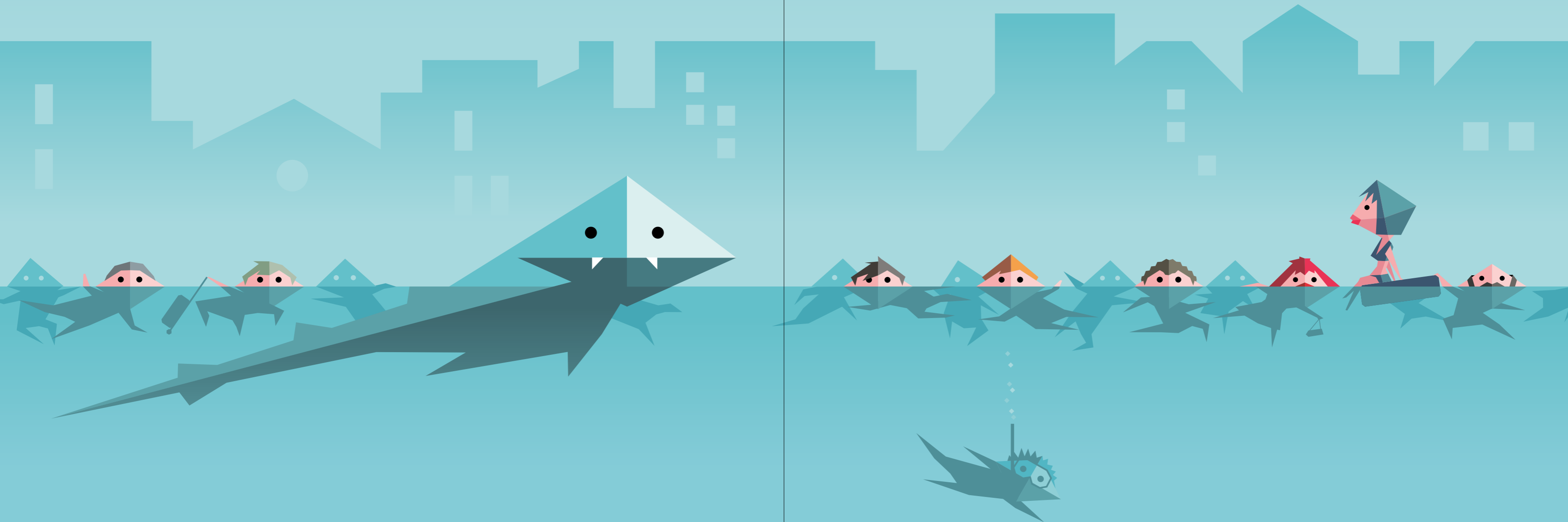
The Beast is sometimes visited by a dream about floods and tides, too. Only, in his dream, he sees people instead of water. A sea of people returning from all over the world, flooding back into their home city. Returning there to stay. Children

and young people appear in that dream in especially prodigious numbers. They travel back to Kaunas, filling up the streets and squares of the city. To their great surprise, they find here amazing clubs, landscaped parks, bike paths, playgrounds, universities, and much more. They greet each other, share childhood memories of their city, meet many friends and acquaintances. The Beast promenades among them without hiding and willingly takes selfies with everyone; and the next day, all the news websites and TV broadcasts bubble over with

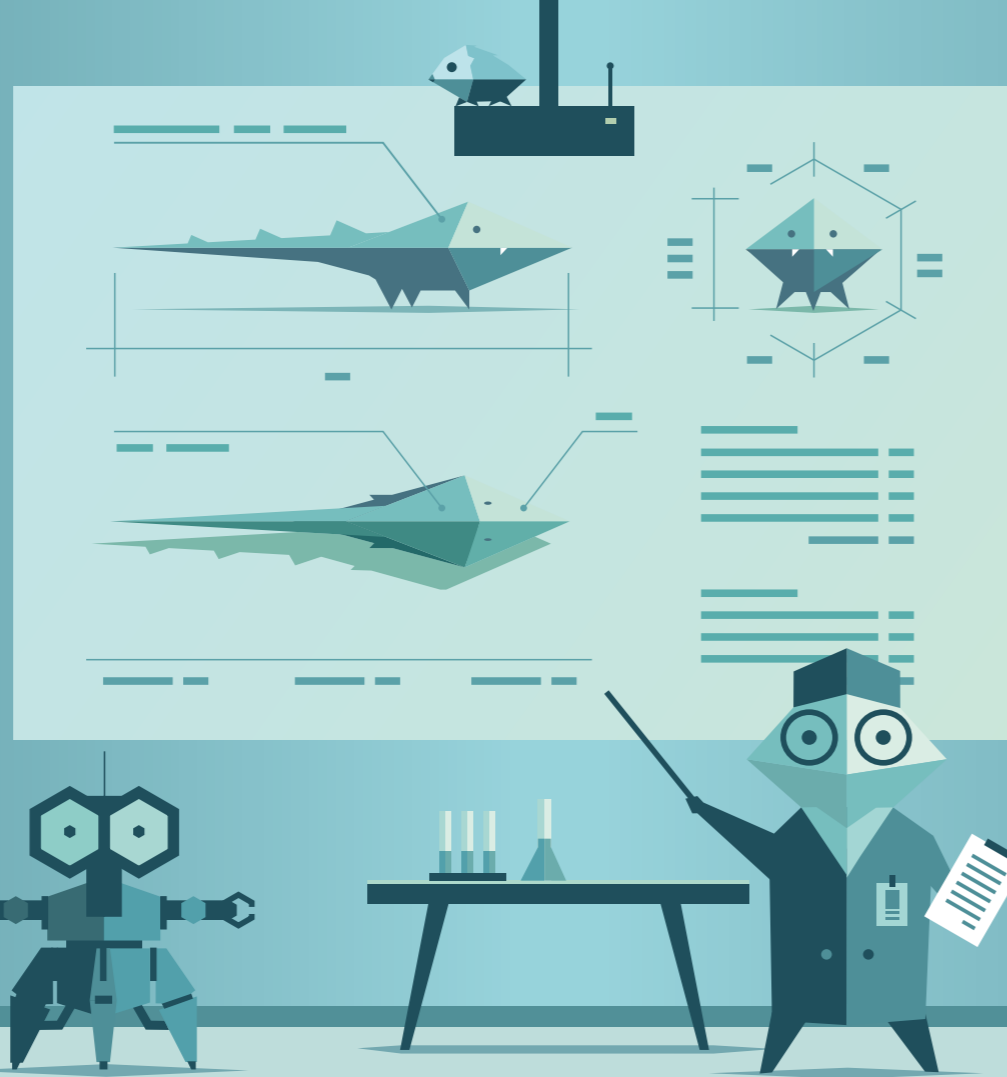
never-before-seen images, and those images are enjoyed and shared by the whole world.

This is how the Beast's dream goes.

Then he wakes up and listens to the water quietly rising in the river Nemunas, and ponders how wonderful it would be if his dream became a reality instead of remaining just a dream.



## HOW TO MEET THE BEAST?

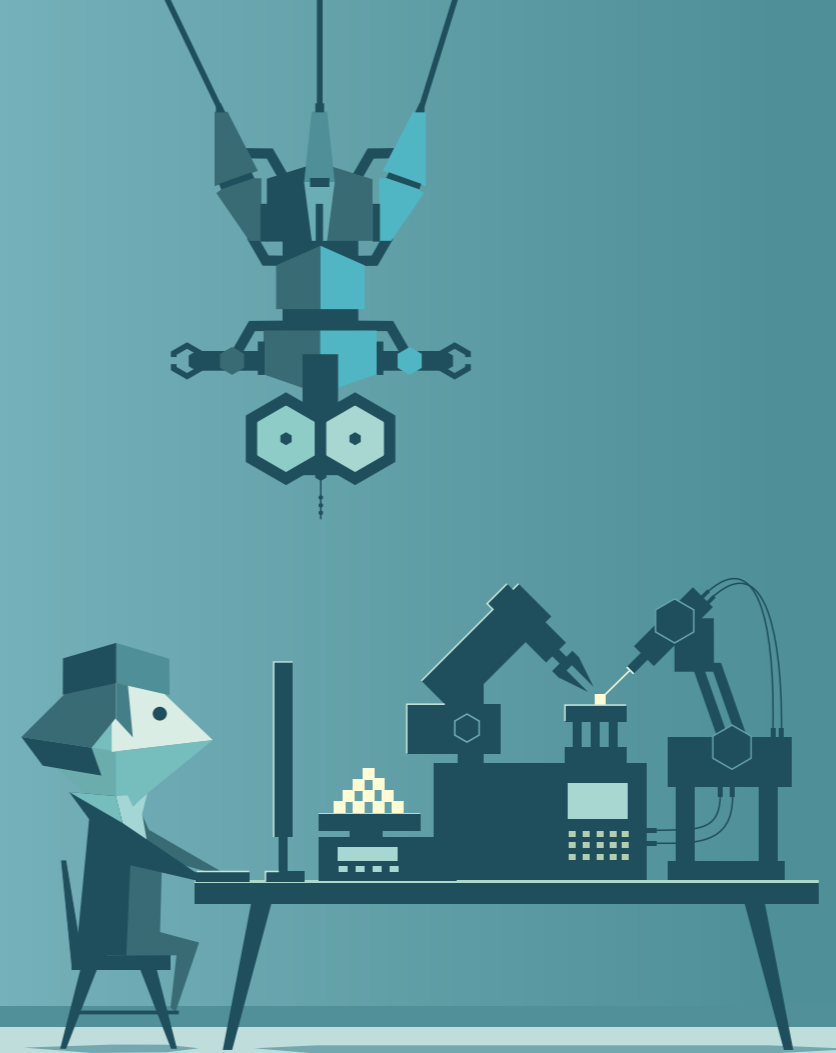


There is no consensus among the townspeople as to how and where one can be guaranteed a meeting with the Mythical Beast of Kaunas. Well, children know that one needs to read bedtime stories, and it may very well be that the Beast will quietly draw near to listen. Although it may very well also be that he doesn't show up. The Beast is very busy with checking if all is well in the city; sometimes this takes him as long as the whole night.

Scientists, meanwhile, believe that in order to meet the Beast, one must know precisely how far his territory extends, his exact size, how he responds to sound, light, and fluctuations in climatic conditions, what he evolved from and which species he is related to, whether he hibernates in winter, and how long it takes for him to digest a catfish. Who could even find out such things? No one could. That is why scientists are more interested in guinea pigs, as everything about them is very simple and straightforward.

Ordinary townspeople rarely see the Beast, but they do feel his presence. After all, who else, if not he, scares the crows so they fly in circles, croaking above the roofs of Kaunas, come rain or shine? Or who else, if not he, chases motorcyclists scared witless around the city at night so that they scoot around causing such a terrible din? Or who else tangles up the trolleybus wires so that it is forced to stop? And don't even get me started on the fish that are plucked off the fishing hooks, the nibbled-on tower blocks, and so on. All of these are the doings of the Beast, whether intentional or otherwise.

Because of these and many other things, the Beast is very much sought-after by journalists. Can you imagine what would happen if the Beast agreed to attend a press conference? The news would sweep across the world, that the Mythical Beast lives in the city of Kaunas in Lithuania, and not only lives there but even agrees to giving interviews.



Can you imagine – the Mythical Beast!

The whole world would rush to find out where this Lithuania is. Do you think they would spot it right away? Not at all. Many people confuse Lithuania with Latvia. Or with Liechtenstein. Some people believe that Lithuania is in Africa, and others claim that Lithuania doesn't exist at all. Of course, the latter group wouldn't bother going anywhere, and it would be their own loss. Those who are better educated and quick-witted would eventually discover where Lithuania is, because if you search like a normal human being, you always succeed.

Then everyone would rush to find out where in Lithuania this Kaunas is. They would sweat over its correct spelling: Kunas, Kaunis, Kowno, Kauna... Finally, they would note down the route and hurry to book their flights.

And so the day would come when reporters, bloggers, influencers, and cameramen would flow to Kaunas from all over the world! Oh, what flurry would this cause! In Kaunas, planes would pour in, and hotels would be jam-packed with highly concerned men and women equipped with film cameras, microphones, dark shades, tablets, smartphones, and they would speak in all the known languages of the world and in two unknown ones. So many of them would gather there that the venue for the press conference would have to be moved repeatedly, maybe even thrice, to an ever-larger hall each time. Initially, the great hall of the university would be deemed to be enough to accommodate everyone, then the great amphitheatre of the drama school, until the only option left would be to book the entire sports stadium.

The arena would be roaring as though it were a major sporting event. The crowd would crush as close to the stage as possible, where the Beast of Kaunas would be about to make his appearance. And the kind of questions they would come up with! They would ask what the Beast's origin was, whether he had ever seen Vytautas the Great, whether he liked the Simpsons, whether he knew how to fly, whether he had ever met Bigfoot, whether the Americans really landed on the Moon, how hot the fire he blew through his nostrils was, whether UFOs existed, how to cure every disease, what Underworld Kaunas looked like and how one got there, when all the wars in the world would end, where Atlantis had sunk, and where all the socks had disappeared to. And so on and so forth.

By the way, you might be interested to know how one ought to address the Beast of Kaunas – is he a 'thou', or is he a 'you'? On the one hand, the Beast is the oldest resident of Kaunas (and perhaps not only of Kaunas), so it is imperative to be respectful towards him. This is especially true, since any impolite interrogator may even be risking their head. On the other hand, he is our Beast, and our relationship with him is special. He is both a stranger and a friend. It seems best to ask the Beast directly how one should address him.

This is how things would be if the Beast accepted an invitation to a press conference.

However, so far, he has refused, and little can be done about it.

But who knows, maybe one day he will change his mind and accept it.

And on that day, there will be such a feast in Kaunas!

## HOW THE BEAST SOMETIMES LEAVES KAUNAS

You are probably wondering if it ever happens that the Beast suddenly stops working? For example, if he takes sick-leave. Or travels anywhere. Or goes on holiday?

Well, holidays are something that mythical beasts don't have. If you've already become a Beast, then you should remain a Beast without any days off. Occasionally, the Beast gets ill, but very rarely. Roughly once every two hundred years. The last time this happened was when Napoleon and his army were marching through Kaunas. The Beast had a severe cold and was lying in his bed under the Castle. He had a terrible headache, was feeling weak, sad, and angry. He had a fever, so he was sneezing out flames the whole time, which made him feel even worse. Napoleon's troops had been informed that the Beast of Kaunas was a particularly angry and irritable creature, so one could say that they tiptoed across Kaunas, having swathed their horses' hoofs with rags and bandages – all this so as not to disturb the Beast. Meanwhile, Napoleon restrained himself from his customary clamouring, quietly spending a night in the Carmelite Monastery by candlelight. His army built a bridge over the Nemunas in the morning and bounded off to Russia, picking fights with everyone they met along the way.

The Beast is keen to travel, but he can't bring himself to do so. As I said, his relatives live far away, and they are not particularly interesting to hang out with. Of course, flying to distant countries is an option, too, and the Beast of Kaunas often considers it... but more about this in another story.

However, he sometimes does leave Kaunas.

Everyone knows that the Beast's main occupation is to check if all is well in the city. If he finds out that something is awry, he fixes it himself or leaves it for others to fix. But as he travels around the city, the Beast is not merely spotting where a tree is leaning dangerously, or a sewer well is open, or where a ceiling may cave in. The Beast is checking whether the townspeople themselves are doing well. He attends to conversations, observes how people communicate, how their mood changes, how they manage their looks and hygiene, what they do, and what they teach their children. It is very important to him that people care about each other and their city.

What does it mean to love your city? It means striving to forge a brighter future for it. It means noticing what is wrong in it and taking the time to fix it. It also means being frank in saying what you don't like about the city, and making sure you suggest ways of improving it. If the Beast sees that the townspeople care about their city in these ways and everyone tries their best to contribute to city life, he feels contented and goes to the Nemunas to tuck into some clams.

But as soon as the Beast senses that Kaunesians have stopped loving their city and have stopped striving for it, he grows anxious. For there has been a pact made between the Beast and the city of Kaunas, which came into force on the day that he had swallowed the sun. The townspeople are bound by that pact to take care of each other and their city and the Beast is committed to defending the city from enemies and other calamities. So, if this pact gets broken, the Beast retires to Underworld Kaunas and stops appearing in Sunny Kaunas.

Whenever this happens, the city is besieged by misfortunes.

The beast shelters in Underworld Kaunas, observing, and hearing everything that's going on. Some believe that he does not abandon Kaunas completely, but continues to act through the Secret Kaunesians – through the Honourable Beast Society in Kaunas, in other cities of Lithuania, and all around the world. It is these honourable people who help to restore order and peace in the city, and then the Beast can once again roam Kaunas at night along his usual paths and pathways.

You also undoubtedly know at least one or even several people from the Honourable Beast Society. Just look around attentively – you can tell who they are from their good deeds in aid of the city.

Would you like to join the Society yourself? Just start doing some good deeds for the city and keep yourself in a state of readiness. The day will come, and you will be presented with an invitation to become a member of the very secret Honourable Beast Society!





## ON THE LIBRARY OF UNDERWORLD KAUNAS

There is a staircase leading to the cellars beneath the Kaunas Public Library, where the Beast comes to read books at night and sometimes leaves scorched pages behind. Those who are not afraid to enter know that it is a special place. It is one of the few secret entrances leading to Underworld Kaunas, others of which are located near Kaunas Castle, the dungeons of the Town Hall and the Forts of Kaunas. It is here that the inhabitants of Sunny Kaunas can get the closest they can to Underworld Kaunas. If they are careful, that is.

The library houses all the stories of Kaunas – all of its tales and legends. The library is very unusual.

What can a newcomer find in it? Just listen...

Having climbed down the stairs, you enter a beautifully lit ancient vaulted hall. You look around and gasp in bewilderment: you haven't yet spotted a single book! Nor any shelves, nor a catalogue, and certainly not a single computer. Standing idly, you shrug your shoulders, not knowing what to do next, and then

a little man emerges from nowhere right in front of you. He asks you what you're looking for. You say what it is. The little man pulls out a piece of paper from his pocket. It contains an address, a day, an hour and a minute.

'Go to this address in Sunny Kaunas, and, at that precise hour and minute, you will find out exactly what you wanted to know. But tell me first, are you afraid of ghosts?'

If you say that you aren't, the little man will wish you luck and lead you back to



the stairs. The man is called the Librarian. Surprised and astonished, nevertheless you will allow yourself be guided by him and will heed his advice.

A few days later, you will turn up at the agreed place in Sunny Kaunas. At the agreed hour and minute precisely, images will begin to appear before your very eyes. Do not be afraid. This is how the library of Underworld Kaunas operates. You will see the person or people who interest you taking part in the events that interest you. You will witness all this unfolding on the silver screen, being

shown in the very same place where the events took place. You will see the attire of that era; you will hear the language of those days. You will be shown everything precisely as it happened. Once you have found out everything that you wanted to find out, the images will disappear. You will feel a light breeze and hear the sounds of the street again. Then you may go home, baffled and bewildered.

The library of Underworld Kaunas is like this for one simple reason: the brick walls and the cobblestones of the city,

too, have memories of their own. Significant events, the lives of people, their joys and sorrows, losses and victories are all recorded on these brick walls and cobblestones. When the right time comes, and you feel so inclined, you may look at these records – the memories of the walls, cobbles, and pavements. All you have to do is to find the Librarian and tell him what you want to know. And also, you have to be very careful, because a resident of Sunny Kaunas cannot stay too close to Underworld Kaunas for too long.

## ONCE AGAIN ON THE PRINCESS AND THE BEAST OF KAUNAS

As recounted earlier, the relationship between the Beast and the Princess is a rather awkward one in Underworld Kaunas. The Beast has tried several times to make friends with her but failed spectacularly.

The Beast still feels quite embarrassed about this.

It's hard to tell if he is in love with the Princess. This is rather unlikely, but he would indeed like to be friends with her. After all, when you are the Beast of Kaunas – or any Beast at all – it's difficult for you to make friends, isn't it? A great many people are afraid of you, another great many do not like you, and yet another great many do not know about you at all.

Meanwhile, you slope about feeling lonely.

There are days when you would like to be addressed not by the name of the Beast of Kaunas, but simply to hear... 'Hey, little Beast.' Even 'Beastie' would do. And maybe you could even get a friendly pat on the shoulder. Well, okay, patting may not be necessary, but having a friendly chat wouldn't be such a terrible thing.

The curse-afflicted Princess, as one would like to imagine, would make a great friend for the Beast.

However, she does not want to be on friendly terms with him.

Is that so?

Is she certain she doesn't want that?

To tell you the truth, no one knows.

To tell you the truth, no one knows what the Princess thinks or what she busies herself with when she isn't welcoming visitors in the Memory Hall. No one knows what thoughts come to

her when, having splashed a bucket of ice-cold water over the Beast's head from her balcony, she goes to bed somewhere in the depths of the Palace amidst all the bric-a-brac. No one has ever even seen her bed because it is forbidden for anyone to enter her chambers.

No one knows what she talks about with her troops, or if she indeed talks to them at all.

No one knows what she thinks about that day when she was cursed, and found herself in Underworld Kaunas, being forced to wait for some warrior or other to show up and release her. No one knows if even a single warrior has shown up in all these long years. And if he did, then why didn't he manage to free the Princess?

No one even knows who cursed the Princess.

No one knows when this happened.

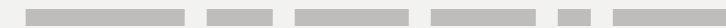
No one knows which king and queen are the Princess's parents.

The only thing that has been clear all along is that they must have been an extraordinarily special and powerful king and queen, for the Princess has inherited from them a truly regal pride and sense of entitlement. Because where else could this habit of playing pranks at the Beast's expense come from?

So that's the way things are, and little can be done about it.

Kaunesians who live in Sunny Kaunas are people with many secrets, and this has already been noted.

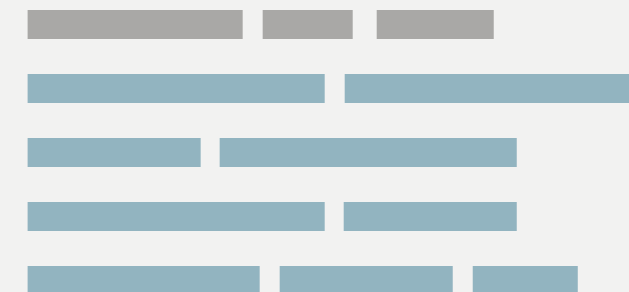
But there are even more secrets in Underworld Kaunas!

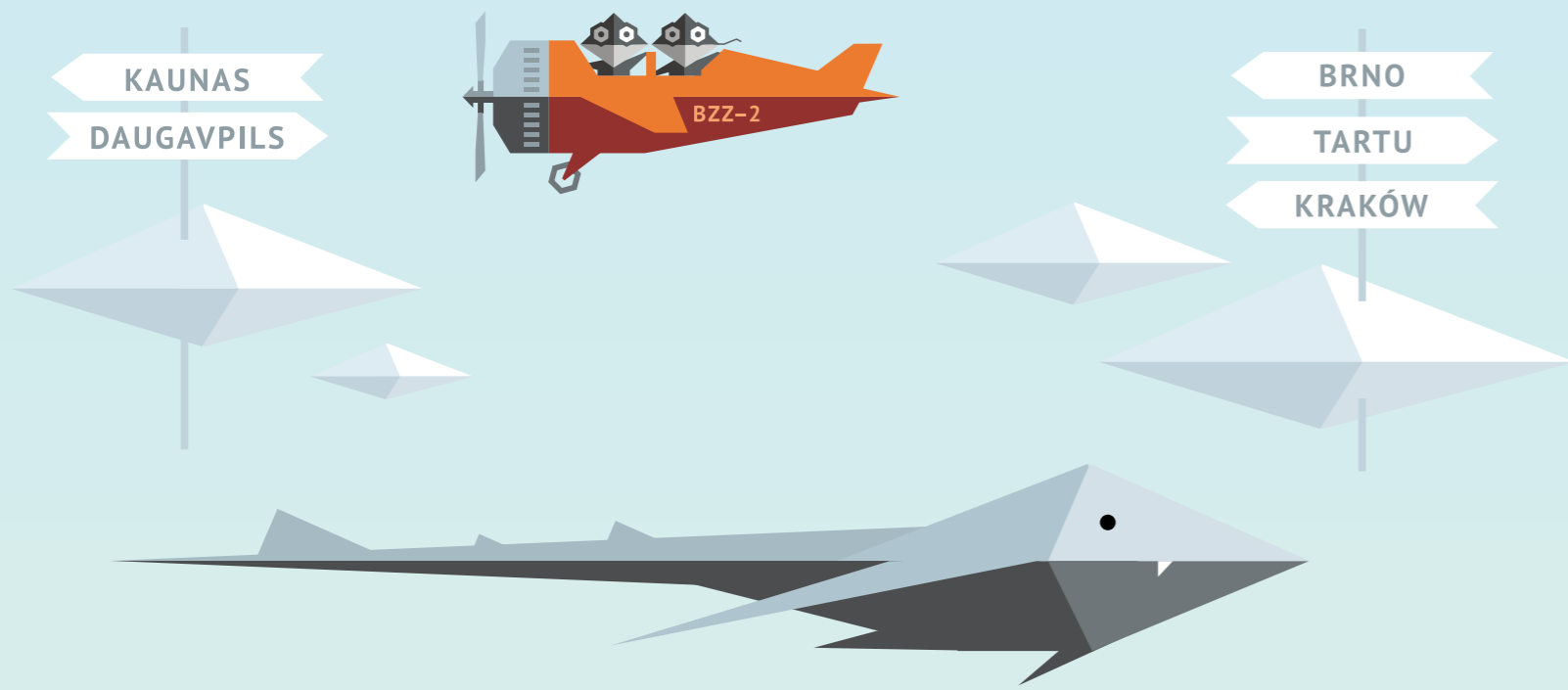


Princess of Kaunas



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## HOW THE BEAST PLANS TO OVERCOME FEARS

You have already learnt that the Beast of Kaunas is afraid of heights. On the one hand, he kind of knows how to fly. On the other hand, however, as soon as he rises above the tower of the Kaunas Town Hall, his head begins to spin. Perhaps that is why he avoids travelling, and if he does travel, he prefers swimming to flying.

Obviously, he would like not to be afraid of flying, but things aren't that simple.

Because of his fear, the Beast even once booked himself an appointment with a famous Kaunas psychologist on a beautiful night.

The psychologist gave him the following advice:

'There is a simple way to treat fear: you need to face it instead of running away from it.'

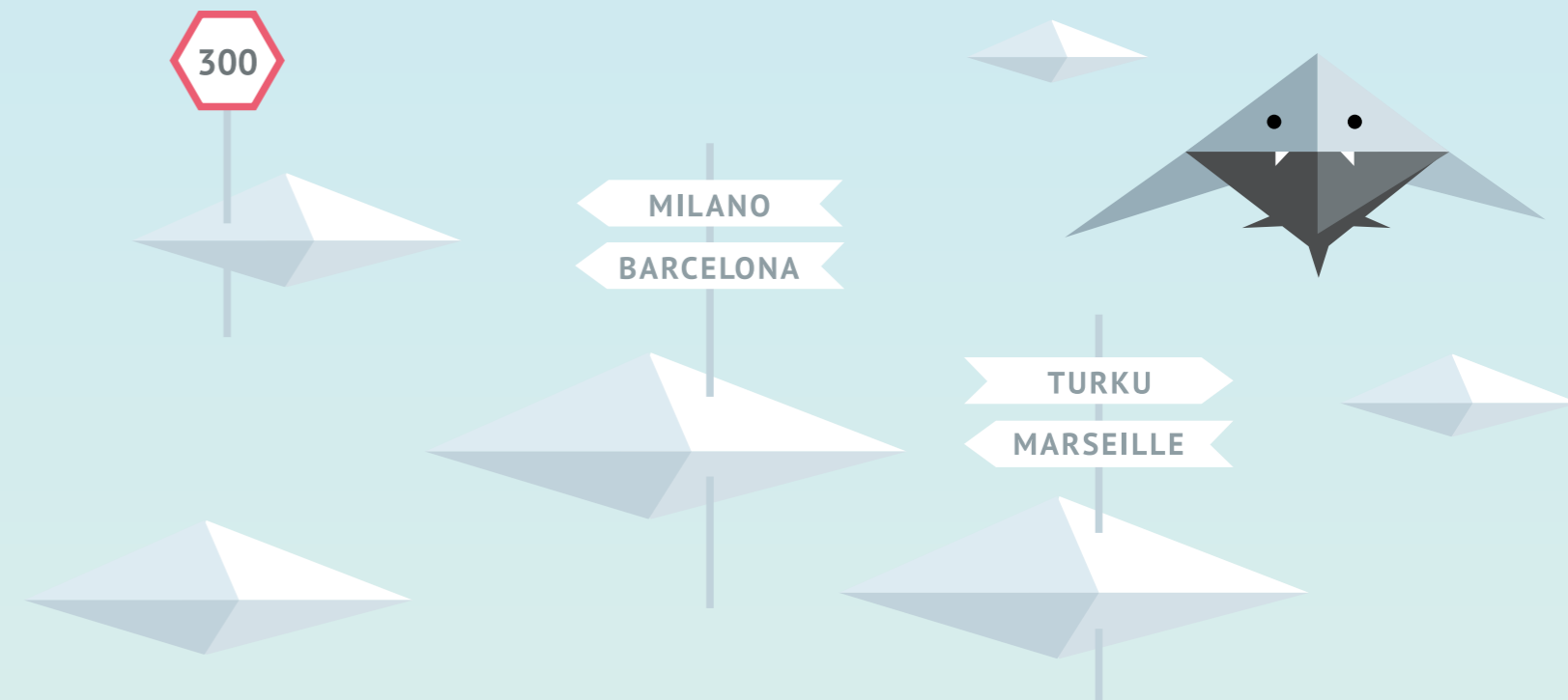
Having said this, the psychologist swiftly closed the door, for he greatly feared the Beast.

The Beast came home and spent a long time deep in thought.

Of course, the psychologist was not quite right. After all, if, for example, you are afraid of a lion, but instead of running away from it, you would, on the contrary, get into its cage, things would all end rather badly. You may overcome your fear, but the lion will still have eaten you. Or you may convince yourself that you aren't afraid of jumping off the roof, but what good would come out of it? If you jump off the roof, you would either break a bone or two or fall to your death. In short, sometimes, it is very worthwhile and beneficial to one's health to be a little afraid.

But not always.

The Beast, for instance, shouldn't be afraid of flying because he has wings of some kind; he has repeatedly flown in the past and is, in fact, able to fly. What ill could ever befall him? As a rule of thumb, if you wish to overcome your fear, you shouldn't be thinking about all the bad things that could happen. Instead, you should be thinking about the good things waiting to happen!



And there are so many good things that can indeed happen!

So on the second beautiful night (on the first beautiful night, as you will recall, he went to a psychologist), he took a piece of paper and a pencil, and wrote down what might happen while one flies:

\* From Kaunas, one could fly to Daugavpils in Latvia to see the museum of a certain artist by the name of Rothko and visit the Beast's brother – the Latvian household spirit Pūķis. Pūķis helps Latvians to keep their homes safe and brings wealth to the household, but sometimes he turns into a dragon with nine heads.

\* From Daugavpils, one could fly to Estonia to visit Tartu and its university. Then, on the island of Saaremaa, one could meet Toell the Great (Suur Tõll). He is an Estonian giant who helps humans to carry out their chores. By the way, he has a very hot temper and should be approached warily because he always carries an oak-sized club with him.

\* From the island of Estonia, one could fly to Finland, to the city of Turku, to see the ancient castle and the Suomen Joutsen

full-rigger. Then one could visit the moomins. They are good-natured and friendly trolls. Many fairytales have been created about them, and the Beast of Kaunas has read these tales.

\* From Turku, one could fly to Gothenburg, Sweden. There one could visit a fascinating opera house on the seashore, and then one could have tea with Kal and Ada, but one would have to make sure that they didn't start their customary bickering. Kal and Ada are an odd couple, and everyone in Gothenburg can tell a great many stories about them.

\* From Gothenburg, there is a direct route to the Danish city of Aarhus. There one could visit the Viking museum, which houses six very important runestones. The Beast of Kaunas could also meet someone who'd tell him more about the ancient hero Amleth (Amlóði).

\* From Aarhus, one could fly to the German city of Hamburg, it wouldn't take long. There's a place worth seeing, which is one of the wonders of Europe – the huge Elbe Philharmonic Hall. Then, flying over Germany, the Beast of Kaunas could meet



Wolpertinger. Wolpertinger is a bizarre creature – neither a beast, nor a bird. He has the antlers of a deer, the head of a rabbit, the wings of a hawk, the feet of a duck, and sometimes other strange features, and he’s a big coward.

\* From Germany, one could wing one’s way to the Czech city of Brno. There is an astronomical clock in the central square of the city, which isn’t astronomical at all, it is merely called this way. The Dragon of Brno also lives there. It hasn’t been sighted for a very long time, so the Beast would be keen to search for it.

\* From the Czech Republic, one could continue to Slovakia, to the city of Košice. This city was the first in Europe to be granted a coat of arms. In Slovakia, the Beast of Kaunas has at least a couple of friends – the waters. Here they are called ‘vodníci’. Sometimes they rescue people from drowning, but other times they make them drown. The Beast of Kaunas could play a game of cards with the vodníci – they enjoy playing card games very much.

\* From the city of Košice, one could reach Hungary. The city of Debrecen is situated there, and there is a rock music school where people who want to become rockstars study. There is a cave near Debrecen, and it is inhabited by Sárkány. The Beast of Kaunas could talk to him about treasures, and especially about princesses – after all, Sárkány has kidnapped many of them during his long years of dragoning.

\* From Hungary, the city of Timișoara, in Romania, would only be a short flight away. This city, just like Kaunas a long time ago, used to have a horse-drawn tram. In Timișoara, the Beast of Kaunas would be most attracted to an emerging under-world city now being excavated by archaeologists.

\* From Timisoara, one could fly straight to Plovdiv in Bulgaria. In Plovdiv, there stands an ancient Roman amphitheatre, Philippopolis; people used to go there to watch plays. It is likely that the amphitheatre was built by the legendary giant Ispolin, because who else could have lifted such heavy rocks?

\* From Plovdiv, one could fly to Greece, to Thessaloniki. There is a subway there, and the Beast of Kaunas could explore its tunnels. But above all, the Beast would like to meet a real mermaid called... that’s right, Thessalonike!

\* The Thessalonian mermaid could show him the way across the sea to Cyprus, where the city of Limassol lies. There the

Beast of Kaunas could meet Ichthyocentaurs! They were companions of the goddess Aphrodite, who was born out of the sea foam. The upper body of Ichthyocentaurs is human, while the front lower body is equine; they have the tail of a fish, and lobster’s pincers crown their heads! In the city, there also stands a large castle of the Teutonic Order.

\* From Cyprus, the Kaunas Beast could fly to Malta, to the city of Birkirkara. There is a train station, but the railroad itself, which used to be called ‘ship of the land’, has long since been dismantled. But there are many cats in Malta; the Maltese respect them because cats are mysterious creatures.

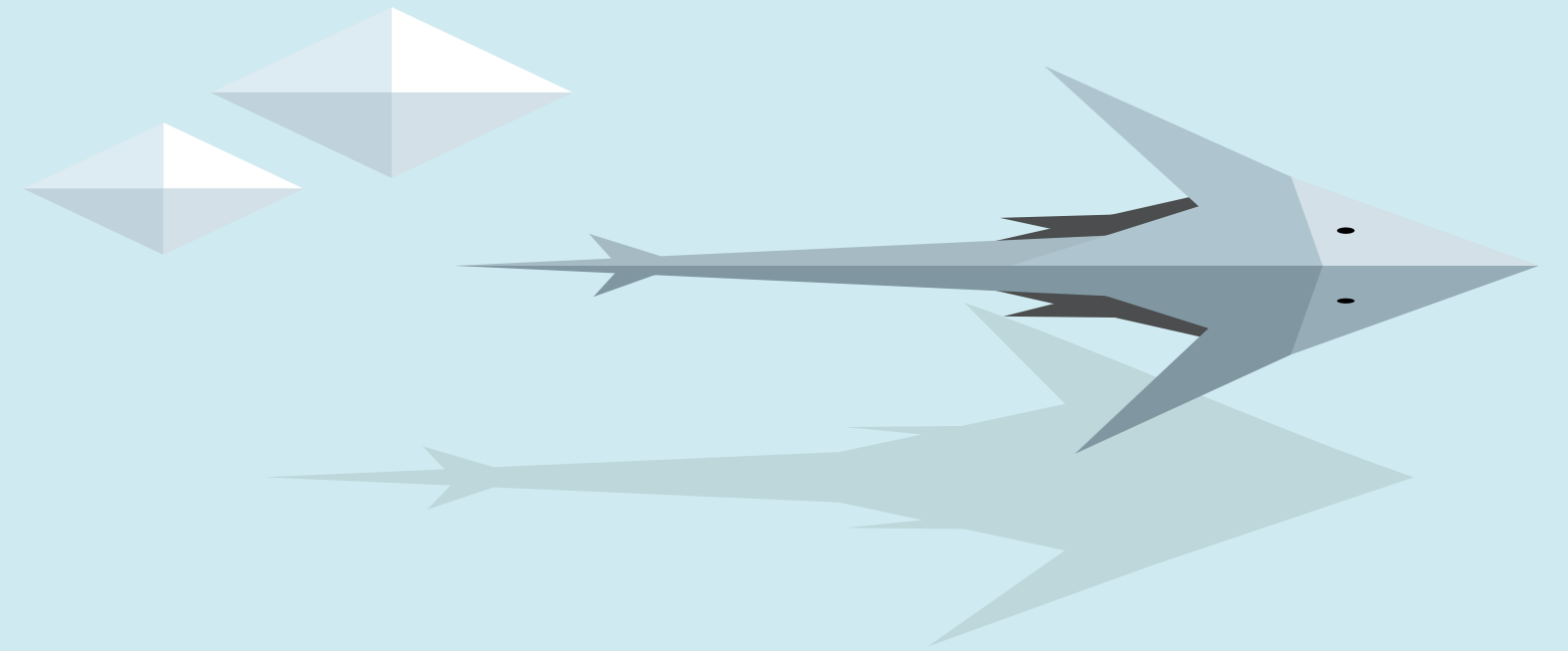
\* Afterwards, a long flight to Spain, to Barcelona, would await the Beast of Kaunas. There he would be met by the giants of Barcelona, the so-called giants and bigheads (gegants i capgrossos), who would then show him around the city and the fabulous home of the architect Antonio Gaudi.

\* Then, one could fly over the mountains to Portugal and land directly in the city of Porto. It is an absolute must to pay a visit to the Livraria Lello bookstore, which holds tomes containing all the world’s fables; the bookstore itself is fabulously beautiful. There the Beast of Kaunas would meet Nabia, the ruler of the waters, and should behave politely because she is so mighty.

\* From Portugal, the Beast of Kaunas would have to fly to France and would land in Marseille. There he would finally get to eat properly because Marseille is the world capital of sardines! Near Marseille, one could meet the monster Tarasque.

\* Then a long flight to Ireland, to the city of Cork, would await the Beast. The Dragon of Shandon resides in Cork; in fact, he is not even a dragon but rather a nocturnal street parade celebration marking the end of the harvesting season. Afterwards, one would have to travel to Blarney Castle (Caisleán na Blar-nan) and kiss the Blarney Stone.

\* From the Blarney Stone, one would have to fly over England for a very, very long time back to the continent and land in the Netherlands, in the port of Rotterdam. A very famous scientist Erasmus Rotterdam once lived there, and there is now a university named after him. The Beast of Kaunas could climb one of Rotterdam’s skyscrapers and spy the colossal sea monster Kraken in the distant sea.



\* From Rotterdam, one could fly to the city of Ghent in Belgium. The old town of Ghent is so beautiful that artists come there to make drawings of it. The Weeping Dragon also lives in Ghent. The Beast of Kaunas could go and find him there, and comfort him.

\* From Belgium, one could fly to Luxembourg, to Esch-sur-Alzette. This city has the world’s narrowest Lankelz railway – it is only open on Sundays! The Beast of Kaunas is always welcome to visit Melusine – a fairy with the tail of a snake, who controls all of the rivers.

\* Next, there awaits a very long and pleasant flight through the Alpine mountains to the city of Milan in Italy. In Milan, there stands the Sforza Castle, where the Queen Bona of Lithuania originally came from. The Beast could even expect to see the infamous Biscione, a human-swallowing Milanese snake that lives underneath the castle.

\* From Milan, one could fly to Croatia across the mountains and the Adriatic Sea. There lies the city of Split. The city still houses the Roman emperor Diocletian’s Palace. Here, the Beast ought to watch out for the dwarf Tintilinić, for you never know what pranks he might pull at your expense.

\* One could then fly to the Austrian city of Graz. There, one would do well to explore what is possibly the strangest museum of

modern art, which resembles a whale-zeppelin-jellyfish-tree. Besides that, Graz is home to the Styrian Dragon. The Beast of Kaunas would definitely have plenty to talk about with him.

\* From Graz, there is only one flight left to Poland, straight to Kraków. In Kraków, there stands the Wawel Castle in which King Jogaila has been buried. Underneath the castle, there is a cave, and in that cave lives the Wawel Dragon (Smok Wawelski). He is like a brother to the Beast of Kaunas, so if something were to happen to the Beast, he would definitely hurry to his aid. Thus, the Beast’s visit to the Wawel could last a little longer.

\* And from there, only one last flight would remain – the flight home, to Kaunas.

This was the journey the Beast of Kaunas came up with and spent a long time poring over the densely scribbled pages, scratching his head with his claw. What wonderful adventures these would be, how much fun could happen in flight!

And the Beast promised himself that he would definitely embark on such a journey!

Would you join him in his travels?

## HOW THE BEAST ANTICIPATES A FEAST

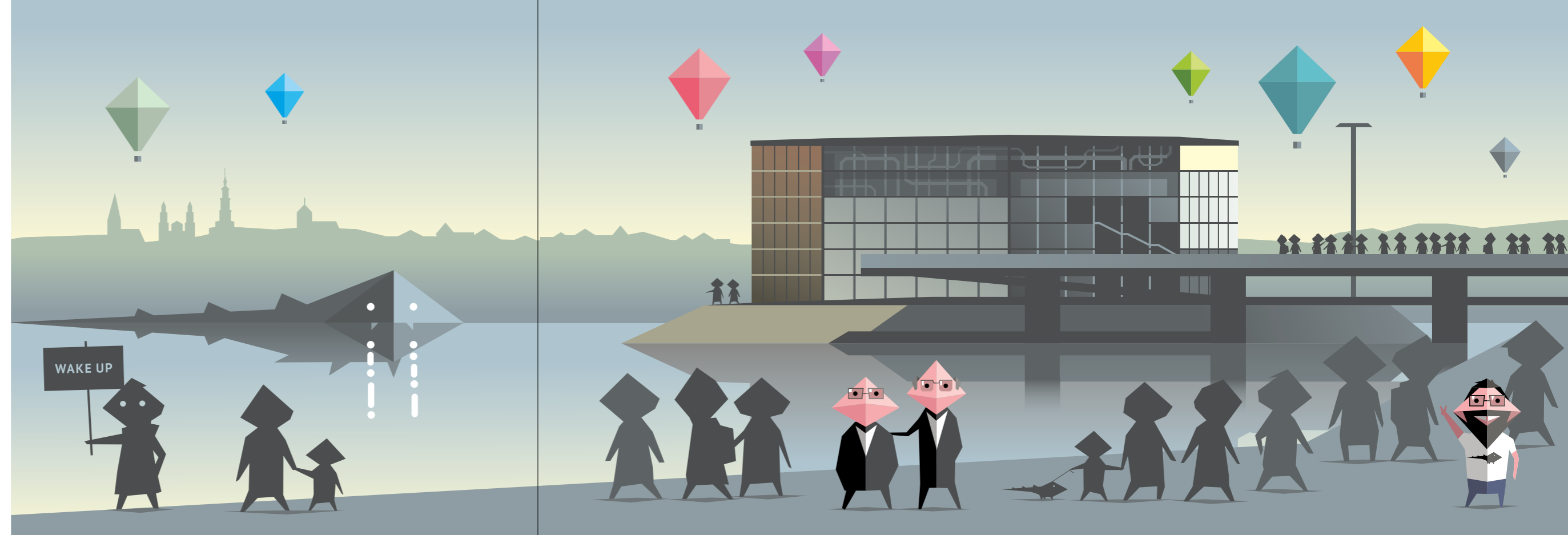
Have you noticed that people usually anticipate celebrations with eagerness? Children look forward to their birthdays, counting down the months and days remaining until the big day. Then the birthday comes, the fun passes – and the next day you're back to counting down the days left until your next birthday. To make it easier for you to wait for this birthday, you get to experience some other celebrations in the meantime. For example, Christmas is one of them. Or the summer holidays.

Adults, by the way, also enjoy Christmas and holidays. In fact, they really like all kinds of public holidays, because on those days they usually don't have to go to work. Unless you're a police officer, a fire-fighter, a doctor, or a soldier, that is. Adults also celebrate anniversaries; anniversaries are rare, and adults are always a bit anxious as celebrations of this type approach. Adults generally celebrate holidays differently from children: children always have fun during celebrations, then they get sick as a rule, whereas adults may have not only fun moments but also sad ones sometimes, and some adults even cry during celebrations, although later on they usually claim they had a whale of a time.

The Beast doesn't remember the day he was born. First of all, it was a very long time ago. Second of all, beasts do not celebrate birthdays, because who could even make a cake of a decently beastly size, not to mention the candles? These would not be mere candles, but *caaandles*, and there should be as many as seven hundred of them. This would be quite a nonsense.

The Beast generally does not enjoy waiting for the holidays as much as humans do. He likes it most when a feast comes out of the blue, all by itself. And this happens quite often. Along comes the Beast, doing his usual rounds in Kaunas and its municipal area, checking if all is well – and, as it turns out, all is well indeed. What a feast! A feast also takes place when he manages to gorge himself on clams and gobble up a fat catfish from the Nemunas. Wow, such a feast! It also sometimes happens that you bump into a long-lost friend or a ghost. A veritable feast! Finally, there are days when you wake up not *looonging* but rather feeling joy, and that is a feast by itself.

Sometimes a city festival awakes the Beast. When he hears the musical chords, he opens one eye and listens. And if there are fireworks, he opens the other eye. When all is done, he closes



his eyes again, falls asleep, and wakes up again only once the crowds have dispersed. Then he preens himself, brushes his teeth, has breakfast, listens to the news, and goes to work.

Don't get me wrong – the Beast would gladly attend a festival in Kaunas; indeed, he has nothing against festivals. But there is a very simple thing that many people don't consider: for the Beast to visit a city festival, you need to invite him to it first! You wouldn't show up at someone's birthday uninvited, would you? After all, you've spent the whole year thinking about which friends to invite and which ones not to invite, because, let's admit it, you are far from being fond of all your friends, and there are some friends you even hate a little, isn't that true? Adults even make guest lists and send out embellished invitations.

So the Beast doesn't go anywhere he hasn't been invited to. By the way, you can't say that he gets offended by not being invited. The Beast of Kaunas rarely gets offended at all. That is, unless the townspeople stop loving their city.

In short, if someone invited him, he would gladly come to the city festival.

Would you like to know what it would be like?

Just imagine: the city's residents have gathered, there are lots of lights, lots of music, all kinds of performances and stories. Everyone is happy and contented because they feel good about their city, their country, and their continent. Then someone amidst the vast crowd suddenly remembers the Beast: 'Hey, maybe he is *looonging* in Underworld Kaunas? Maybe he would like to have fun with us?' And yells out loud:

'Hey, Beast! Beast of Kaunas! Come out!'

Other townspeople like this idea and start calling the Beast together:

'Hey, Beast! Beast of Kaunas! Come out!'

The sound grows louder and louder, becoming audible across the whole city.

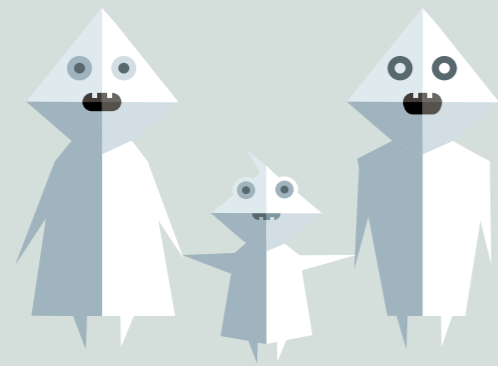
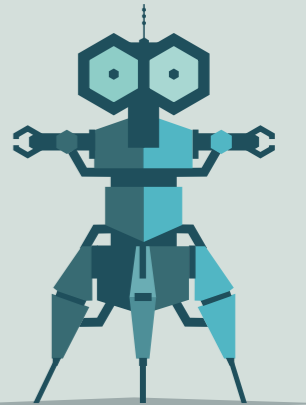
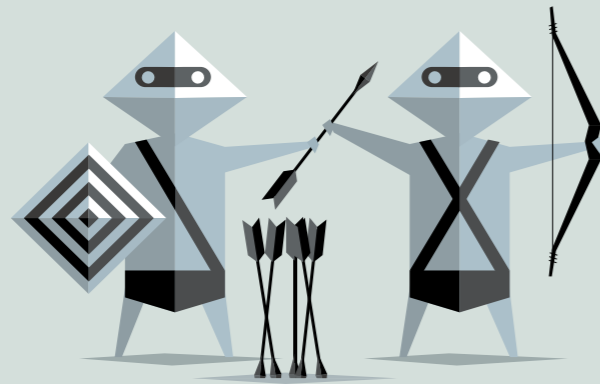
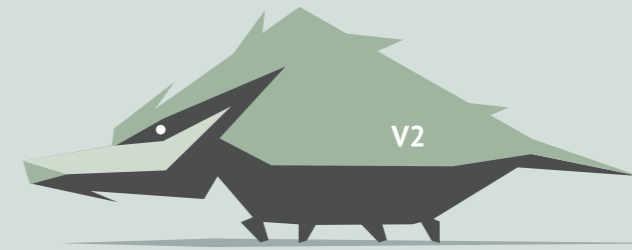
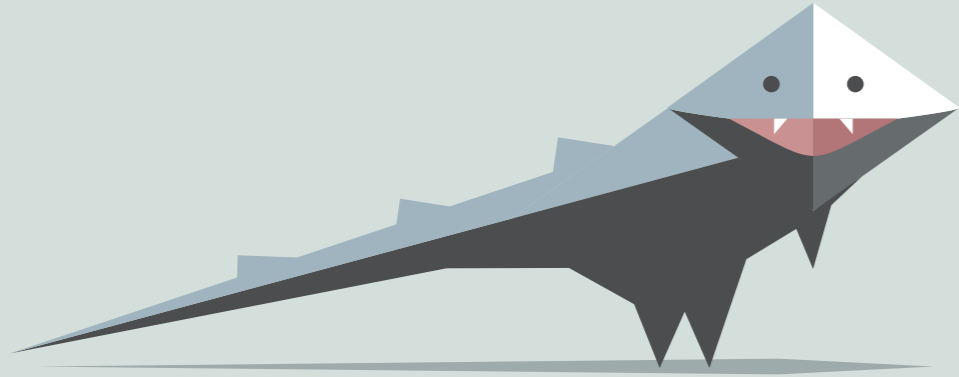
The Beast awakes, opens one eye, then the other, and is lost for words. Is that someone calling him? Indeed, it is!!! He leaps out of bed, quickly gets ready, slips underwater, and swims towards the voices.

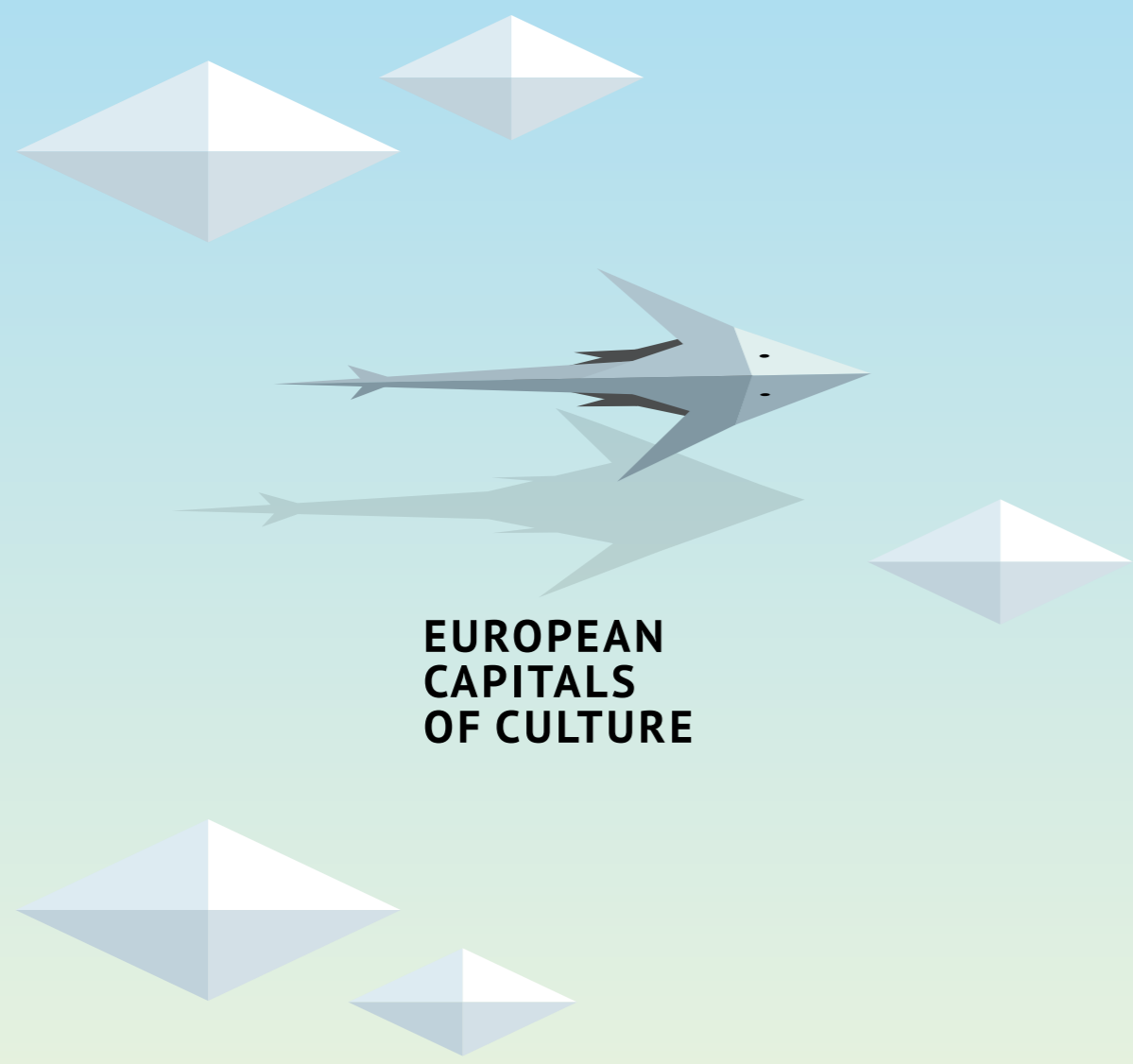
There, everyone has started counting down the seconds to the arrival of the Beast:

'Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one ... Please welcome to the stage – the Beast of Kaunas!'

Wouldn't you like for the Beast of Kaunas to turn up one day at the city's festival, and for that festival to be called 'Kaunas – European Capital of Culture'?

CAST





# EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF CULTURE



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## TALES OF THE BEAST OF KAUNAS

The fairytale book of the mythical Beast of Kaunas and his adventures. This book promotes knowledge of Kaunas, the European Capital of Culture 2022, and its values, for English speaking audiences.

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Rytis Zemkauskas

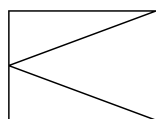
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