

The City

We like to call our city a town in order to emphasize our fondness, our affection for its concrete divisions of insulation and ventilation, its labyrinthine systems of bureaucracy, and its refutation of human character. In fact, the more ambiance and charm we use for decorations, the more individuality is extracted, escaping through the tiny holes in doilies and the semi-shellacked pores of painted wood. You may call it a city since it contains buildings and inhabitants, workers and profiteers, and echoes of intense yearning. We are particularly proud of the glistening corridors, of the hand-placed pavers and the molded concrete, the railway lines and motor conveyances. For many years, we tried to distract visitors away from the rats that run along tracks and roads, the inebriated who adorn the bases of statues, and the despondent who keep a robotic pace as they travel in and out of shops and offices. However, we have learned that these very features once thought disgraceful are advantageous as tourists claim to revel in our shadows more than in sunlight. Captivated by the rancor of the destitute, tourists focus their cameras and recording devices on urban character we define only with euphemisms.

Our city is carved of glass and steel, bent around the absences made by lost travelers. It is constructed to hide its oldest inhabitants and showcase newcomers; antiquity is carted in large rubbish bins to hollows beyond the city borders where the various incarnations of the city throughout history are reconstructed and left to ruin, as are the inhabitants who do not manage to embrace its ever-changing façades. Nowhere is it more important to highlight pure progress, and our city's by-laws require that each day a new

foundation must be begun, a new building designed incorporating the very latest technology with the very latest aesthetics. As a result, the city expands eternally, eventually encompassing the miniature old cities that must be torn down and moved outwards again. This keeps our outlook fresh and unfettered by our previous mistakes and failures and, in order to ease the town's conscience, allows us to rewrite history as often as is necessary.

Procedure I: **Certified Documents**

Procedure I requires two to seven weeks for completion. It begins with any document that must be certified to be an actual document. The document is taken by hand to the document certifiers, unless it is sent by mail, in which case, this adds an indefinite two to three weeks of extra time. The document must be handed off without any words; if words are spoken inadvertently they will be ignored, as will hand signals and facial expressions. The document is placed in a plastic sanctuary for all incoming uncertified documents. Here, it must cook for a minimum of two weeks, undisturbed. After that time, it usually requires a series of additional inquiries from the document originator to move it from the cooking device into the hands of the device's operator, "the cooker," who handles the now ready document and carries it to the employee deemed "the lackey" who must exert physical labor upon it. The lackey is required to sit no fewer than four feet from the handler at all times. The "handling" may take up to two weeks, regardless of the location of the lackey. The lackey must remove the stamp from its resting place on the surface of his desk, open an ink pad, and thoroughly wet the rubber extremity of the stamp before resting it upon the document and exerting equal and even pressure. The lackey carefully removes and replaces the stamp in its resting place. The inked impression must be exposed to air, either through the lackey blowing an even stream of breath over the surface, or shaking the document dramatically. This is the beginning of the heavy labor portion of the procedure, and thus, may take up to two weeks. Once the document is dry, it may now pass back to the cooking tray where it must recuperate quietly without being disturbed. Although it now bears the tattoo of its certification, it is, for essential purposes, merely braised. In a few weeks time, perhaps while the cooker is cleaning her desk, or searching for her lunch, the document will be recovered. At this point, it must be personally hauled over treacherous, carpeted

flooring to the imposing replicating device, where it is fed into the document feeder, and copied once.

The original document is now ready for pickup, a moment that must be intuited by the document writer, since neither the cooker, nor her assistant, the lackey, are allowed to communicate with the outside world lest they be distracted by sun and star light. The certified document can now make its way through the cornucopia of procedures to implementation, a process that requires verifying with the document copy. The document copy, in the meantime, is slated for permanent cold storage, a procedure that takes five to fifty years.