

Lesser Chortbeck

Title: Lesser Chortbeck

Players: 2

Time: 2-6 months or more

Content: letter writing, death, secrecy, building an ever more ramshackle tower of tiny house with secrets inside

Summary: Write letter as residents of a small but strange village, building their homes into an ever taller tower.

In the tiny village of Lesser Chortbeck, every house must obey one unusual architectural rule. When a family member dies, their remains are walled up within their chamber. New additions are built onto the home to accommodate their remaining living relatives. Every house in the village thus grows ever taller and more unstable.

This is the story of two households that remain in Lesser Chortbeck, over the generations.

To play Lesser Chortbeck, you and a fellow player will write letters back and forth. Each letter is written in the narrative voice of one of Lesser Chortbeck's peculiar residents. (If you prefer, you could instead write news clippings, legal documents, diary entries, poems, or other documents by or about the resident in question.)

To begin: Each player should invent the founding member of their family. Pick a eccentric doctrine that they believe, or an unusual secret that they wish to keep hidden. Write this inside your first papercraft house, decorate it as that resident would like. Assemble the tiny house and use that as the start of your house tower.

The citizens of Lesser Chortbeck are notoriously strange people, beyond the town's unique building code. Every resident has some sort of unusual obsession, unorthodox philosophy, or offbeat secret. When you write a letter to your fellow player, you must decide on an idiosyncratic secret or a bizarre belief for the current family member writing the letter. The letter writing character does not want to reveal that detail, but you as player do. So write about it elliptically. Make sure the secret is implied and conveyed, without stating it outright.

End every letter with a question. The question could be about anything: the town of Lesser Chortbeck, about the lives of the other family, about the mysterious disappearances in town or about the corruption rife in the local county fair pig

competition, etc. Make it something you are interested in hearing more about.

Once you have received a letter from the other player, make sure your next letter answers that letter's question, in addition to everything else.

When you mail the letter, include a papercraft house in it, still unassembled. Write the letter writer's secret or strange belief on the back of the paper, so that when assembled the secret is hidden inside the house.

When you receive a letter, don't look at the papercraft house until you read the letter. Once you read the letter, try to guess the writer's unusual belief or their secret. Then look at the house to find out the truth. If you guessed correctly, the house you mail next should be colored in colorfully. If you guessed wrong, leave it uncolored or color it solid black. If you were close but not exactly correct, maybe you decorate it partially. Either way, the house you mail back to the other player is a form of feedback, it tells them if they are doing a good job conveying the subtext well or not.

Take the house you receive, assemble it with the secret on the inside and attach it to the roof or side of your existing house. This might mean that the house hangs off at an odd angle, or the house grows in odd directions. That is what you want. Let your house tower grow organically, like branches of an unusual tree, reflecting the eccentric nature of its residents.

Keep writing letter until each player has written 13 letters, or until you both tire of writing.

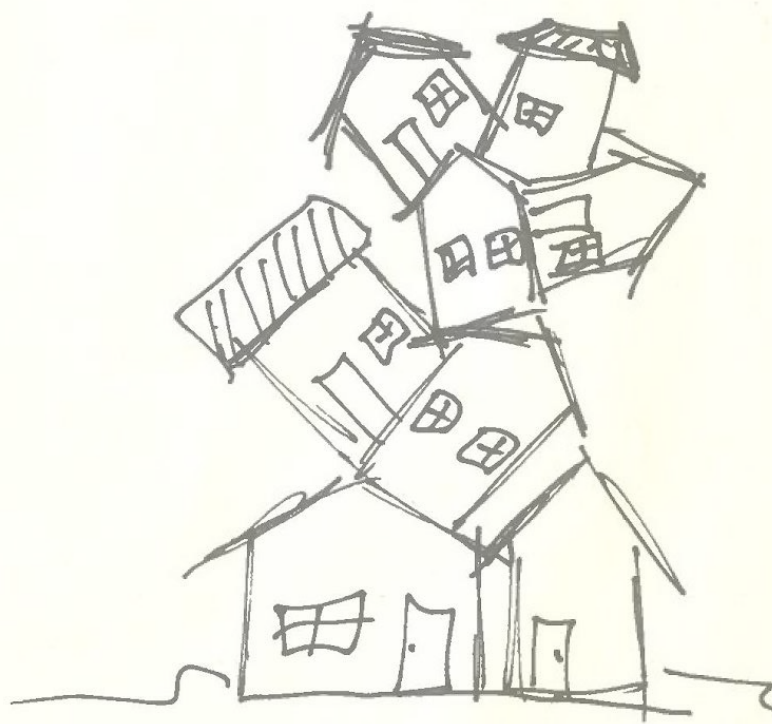
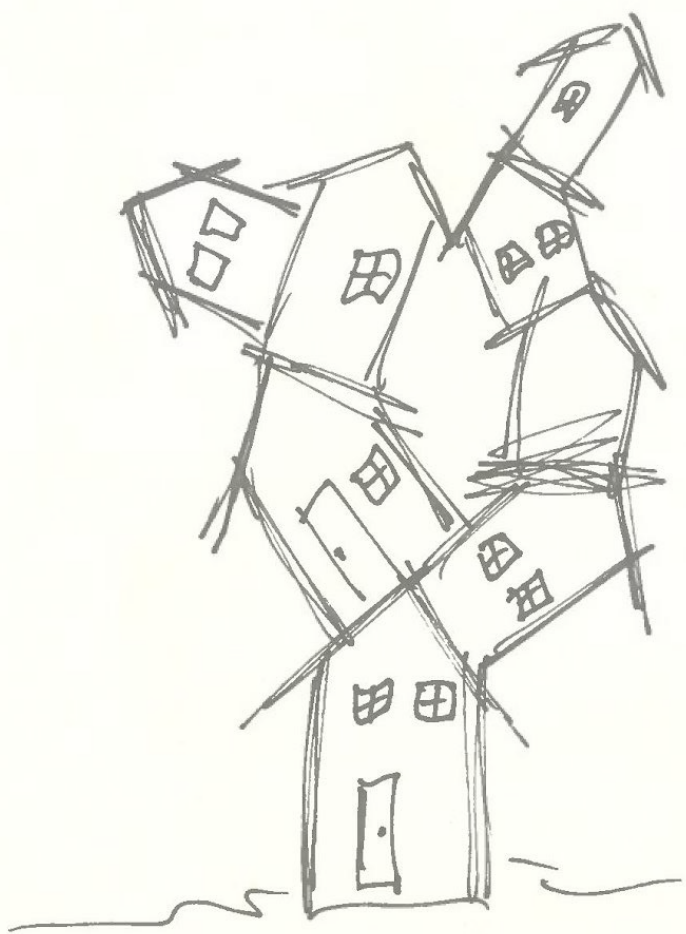


Fig. 1: Examples of houses found in the Lesser Chortbeck