

# THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT

*A series of wily modules for one GM and several players, by Côme Martin*

“Think”... offers you to confront players to wily puzzles, escape-room like, which they will have only one try to solve, in a limited time. Once their time runs out, a player will never be able to explore the same puzzle; but whatever actions they did might be useful for the next player who, maybe, will manage to reach the exit..

A module of “Think”... is a maze which can take multiple forms—three examples are given for the GM in the next pages. A suitable puzzle must, however, always follow these principles:

1. A player can explore each puzzle only one time, in limited, realish time: 10 minutes of play roughly correspond to 10 minutes for the character (short ellipses to go from one corner of a room to another are acceptable). The GM should tell the player how much time they have before the beginning of play and start the clock only once the initial situation is clear. Once their time runs out, a player will never be able to explore that same puzzle again.

2. The game’s title is a major clue to find the solution to each module.

3. Characters can do whatever action they want to; their player only has to say them out loud. There’s no randomness: if the action can realistically succeed, it does. The game’s difficulty is not in possible failure to hazardous actions, nor in solving complex physical tasks.

4. All the actions a character does during their exploration have consequences on further sessions and the next players’ explorations: a broken wall will stay broken, a message scribbled on paper will remain where it’s been dropped... The GM should take notes of what the

players do! Incidentally, I recommend giving the players drawings or lists summarizing what they can find within a puzzle once it’s been through dozens of explorations and a lot of things have been left behind.

5. At the end of a failed exploration, a player will have the opportunity to transmit a short message to the next explorers: an audio recording of 10 seconds, a text of 5 words maximum, a drawing made in a limited time, for instance. This message will easily (but not necessarily automatically) be accessible by future players.

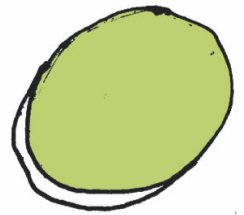
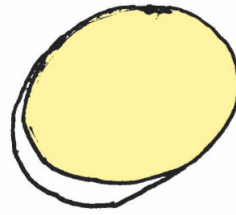
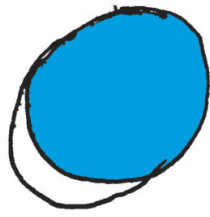
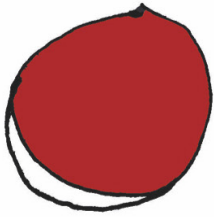
6. A puzzle’s exit is hard to reach and probably cannot be reached by the first explorer; maybe because objects must be piled to get to it, because it requires sacrifices, because it needs a number of keys impossible to acquire in one go... More generally, puzzles don’t have to be realistic—though it’s preferable players can perceive their internal logic—and it’s not necessary or even counterproductive for the players to wonder why their character is here: it’s how they will get out that is interesting, not what came before or what will come after.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

FOR PLAYERS AND GM ALIKE

# AND PUSH THE BUTTON

# THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT



## SECRET PRINCIPLES

1. There's always a button or something equivalent in each puzzle. It can be pushed only a very limited number of times and produces any object the player is thinking about when pressing it: a banana, a ladder, a rocket launcher... Anything is possible, including objects not existing in our reality if you want to. If a player thinks of something else than an object, try to interpret their wishes as so: "I want to get out of here" will give them a map, for instance, or "I want some light" will make an electric torch appear. If the player pushes the button without thinking about anything, nothing happens, unless you want a negative effect to be triggered.

2. You don't need to conceive puzzles which are too complex or too long: 2 or 3 rooms with mysterious functions, a few interconnected corridors will be more than enough for a puzzle requiring a dozen attempts to solve it. On a similar note, don't include too many elements which unjustly punish players: a trap which can kill one or two of them is acceptable if these players can then warn the next

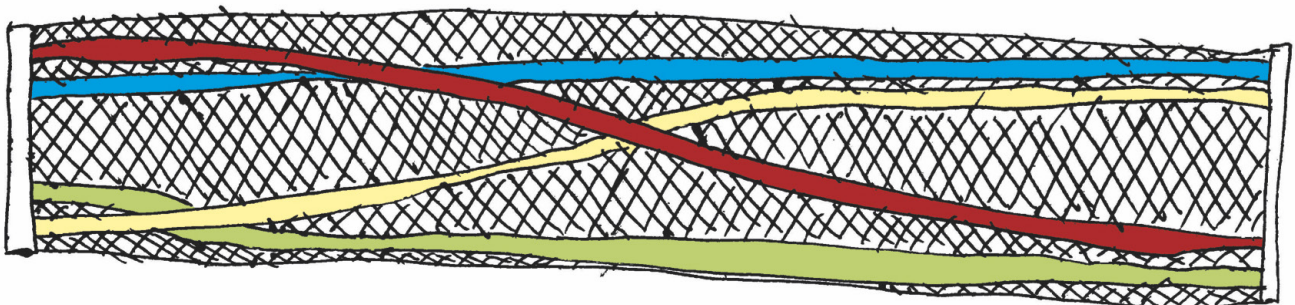
ones. Beyond that is probably unproductive cruelty.

3. Don't put enemies to be fought in your puzzles, it's not in the spirit of the game. Similarly, don't include NPCs unless you can very closely monitor what they will do and/or answer PCs and you lengthen the time available to players as a consequence.

4. Deal with real time elastically: let the clock run when you take 30 seconds to describe something, because you will also sum up the exploration of a 50-yard hallway in a few seconds.

5. When a puzzle begins to have too many elements to describe or even after each exploration, feel free to remove red herrings and distractions players might have left (un)voluntarily. Only keep useful information. Being confronted to such situations is often a sign that your puzzle is too complicated and/or difficult and that going back to its fundamentals is necessary to help players solve it.

**DON'T LET PLAYERS READ THOSE!**



# AND PUSH THE BUTTON

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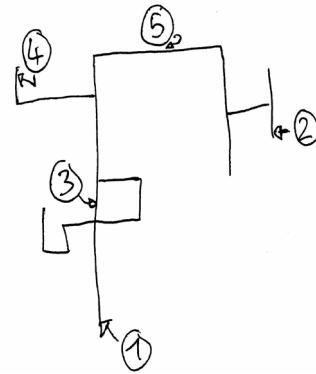
Players play robbers in a setting reminiscent of the *1001 Nights*. Tell them that they were robbing a beautiful palace full of treasures when guards forced them to run away; in their escape, they went through a hallway they hadn't seen on the way in and, perhaps because they set a trap off, they felt the ground give way beneath them. They fell from a great height, felt pain, and fainted.

The exploration begins when they wake up. Start the clock, and tell the players they have 15 minutes to try and escape. Their robber's right leg is broken and they're quite feverish; if time runs out, they die from their wounds. They're laying in a small cave, roughly 10 feet large, very dimly lighted by an unknown source 10 yards above and an Arabic sentence (which they can read) twinkling in red just in front of them. The sentence appears to be engraved on some sort of oval object (an oil lamp) and reads: "Think about what you want and rub the lamp". There's nothing else in the cave save for a skeleton in a corner and the content of their robbery spread on the ground.

Rubbing the lamp makes a genie appear in a white cloud of smoke. He asks the character what they wish for: if he can interpret it as a demand for an object, he makes it appear in the character's hands—"Get me out of here" gives a rope ladder, "Fix my leg" gives a potion, and so on. Otherwise, the genie says he cannot make this wish come true and waits for another. Once he manages to fulfill a character's wish, or when a character has wished 3 times for impossible things, the genie disappears and the sentence on the lamp stops twinkling. The genie never answers to any other prompt than a wish.

Players can try to climb the 10-yard vertical tunnel leading to the light (and they can bring the lamp with them). If they are perfectly healthy and there is a ladder present, it's not that hard; otherwise, remove 5 to 10

minutes from the clock based on their current situation. At the top of the tunnel is the hallway they were in before falling, but very large rocks block the way in. Light is coming from a barred window way above, and the rest of the hallway continues in total darkness. It leads to a maze looking like this—the length of each corridor is left to your appreciation:



1. Entrance of the maze
2. Exit to the sewers and victory (what's beyond is left to imagination)
3. A trap: when walking on a slab, sharpened spears fall from the ceiling and kill the character
4. A lever allows for deactivation of the trap in 5
5. A trap: when touching the ground on the next 5 meters, walls suddenly close in and smash the character

There's an extra trap in the darkened maze: when characters enter it, begin a 5-minute countdown. When it reaches zero, the whole floor of the maze opens and characters fall in pits filled with sharp blades, killing them.

Upon failure, a player can draw, on a sheet that will be commonly shared, anything they can manage to in 30 seconds (text is not allowed). The first skeleton of a character the next explorer finds (excluding the one in the cave) will have this paper between its ribs.

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## MODULE EXAMPLE

Players play an astronaut awaken from cryogenic sleep, who realizes they are no in their spaceship anymore: a quantum anomaly has displaced them in a spheric alien distress module. Through 4 portholes, they can see the module is attached to a ship about to explode. They don't have a spacesuit, so they can't get out; their only survival chance is to detach the module.

The astronaut is sitting on a chair at the center of the module, which is only a few spheric meters large. In front of them is a command panel with most commands burnt out, except:

- A countdown showing 2 minutes (start it when you've finished the description). When time runs out, the ship explodes and the astronaut dies.

- A red button around which runs a red sentence, in an incomprehensible alien language. Pushing it while thinking about something materializes an object; otherwise the button produces an unpleasant sound and nothing else.

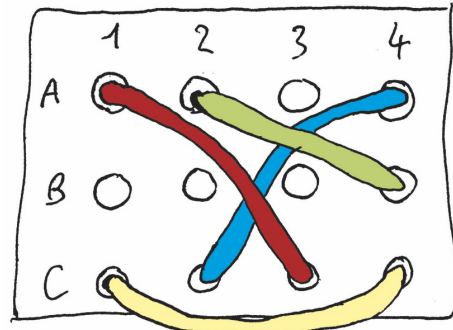
- A lever. When pulled, the whole sequence is rebooted: time resets and everything comes back as it was at the beginning of the game, with two exceptions: the player's last action and the last object they created before pulling the lever are transposed from one cycle to the next (same thing in case their character dies). A player can only go through six cycles: the lever then breaks and is unusable.

- A screen with green diodes which are all turned off except the first one. Under each diode, a small button makes a "click" and an audio message is played if it is available (the diode is then turned on to show it). The first message is available from the start of the game: it's 5 seconds of an alien dialect, a reminder of a command word (make it up and record it!). Upon failure, a player can record a 5-second audio message, after you leave them 10 seconds for thinking about it. Each message will be available when pressing on the buttons under the diodes.

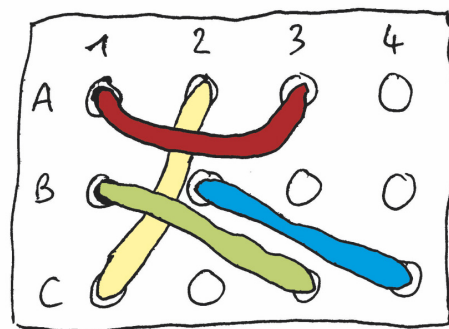
- A green button next to the red one, which only activates if the command word is said at the same time; it then detaches part of the module. Otherwise, it makes the same "click" sound as the buttons under the green diodes.

- A rectangular locked panel, next to the command panel. The key is nowhere to be found, it will need to be created with the red button. Behind this panel are 4 buttons respectively colored yellow, blue, red and green. They detach the other part of the module when pressed in the following order: Red - Green - Blue - Yellow. A button pressed in the correct order makes a sound; only three tries are possible each cycle.

- Under the command panel, there is a sliding unlocked panel which hides a battery that needs to be charged to power up the module. Four colored cables (red, green, blue and yellow) are connected to it. You can describe or show your players the following drawing:



The cables need to be plugged according to the following drawing. When one end of a cable is plugged correctly, it makes a welcoming sound.



## WELLS'S SPHERE

# AND PUSH THE BUTTON

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## MODULE EXAMPLE

Players play fictional versions of themselves or, if they prefer, perfectly regular people of the 21st century. They went to sleep as usual the previous evening and, after an eventful night, wake up in a completely unknown place. They're dressed in brown, pocketless clothes, in the middle of a very bright 50-yard square room, 6 yards tall. The characters have been poisoned, unknowingly to them. After 5 minutes of play, tell them they feel quite sick and are coughing some blood; when time runs out, they collapse on the floor and die. Why they are here and for what purpose is completely unimportant for the purposes of the game.

Every wall is immaculately white, as well as the floor and the ceiling: all mysteriously produce light. On each wall is exactly the same thing: a large timer counting down from 10 minutes (start it after your initial description), beneath which are three colored buttons, green, blue and red, about 2 yards above the ground (characters will have to tiptoe to reach them). The buttons are too much apart for someone to press two at once. Beneath the buttons is written in very large black letters: "Think about what you want and push the button".

When a character pushes a button, it disappears behind a trapdoor in the wall. If they are thinking about an object or something that can be interpreted as such, it comes out of a slit in the opposing wall. If they are thinking about a person or an animal, a drawing of the latter, printed on a business card, comes out of the slit. In any other case, the following happens:

- Green: time left on the timer is halved in two and the character coughs some more blood.
- Blue: a door vertically opens on the opposing wall, then closes 3 seconds later.
- Red: a red key comes out of a slit in the opposing wall.

Each colored button produces two different noises depending on whether they are pushed while thinking about something or not; therefore, there are 6 different noises for you to invent, to make the players understand all buttons don't have the same effect.

The slits and doors ring hollow and can be detected by knocking on walls, and that said walls are indestructible. Their grooves are visible.

S-shaped corridors come out of each door and lead to the following things:

- North: a door locked with three colored padlock (green, blue and red), behind which is the maze's exit (and victory).
- South: a pedestal with a green key on it.
- East: a pedestal with a yellow key on it.
- West: a pedestal with a red key on it.

There's no light in the corridors and they each contain a grey button which makes the doors open again for three seconds. This button doesn't disappear once it's pushed.

To get out of the maze, players will have to find a way to block the doors, with heavy objects for instance, and create at least a blue key. Playtests have however revealed that clever players will also pile up the bodies of previous characters to block the doors and generate the three keys in one go. Some have also tried to cure themselves by thinking of an antidote when pushing the buttons: it produced a vial extending their lifespan by 5 minutes. Others have wished for a map of the maze, which works, except it doesn't show what's at the end of each corridor.

Upon failure, a player can leave a message of 3 words or symbols maximum to the next explorers: it will appear on a business card, seemingly written on a typewriter. Every object which came out of the room's slits will also remain, of course.

## SHINBORU'S MAZE

# AND PUSH THE BUTTON