

CHIRON'S DOOM



A mysterious monument. An ill-fated expedition.
A storytelling game for 1-3 explorers, by Nick Bate.

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By Nick Bate

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v1.0

Cover photo: Ian Beckley

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There is a monument at the edge of civilisation, an enigmatic object known as Chiron's Doom. Nobody knows what it does, or who made it, or why. It has defied all previous attempts at understanding. Countless expeditions have torn themselves apart trying to learn its secrets.

There's no reason to think your expedition will be any different, but here you are. Three more explorers standing before the monument, driven to try where all others have failed. How much are you willing to sacrifice to solve the mystery of Chiron's Doom?

INSPIRATION

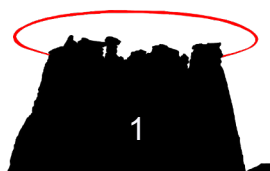
Diamond Dogs by Alastair Reynolds; *Cube* by Vincenzo Natali, Andre Bijelic, and Graeme Manson; *Alone Among the Stars* by Takuma Okada; *2001: A Space Odyssey* by Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke.

PREPARE YOUR TOOLS

1. An ordinary deck of playing cards (excluding the Jokers).
 - Separate out the diamonds. They represent hard-won knowledge about the monument.
 - Separate out the hearts. They represent tension rising between the explorers.
 - Separate out the clubs. They represent the monument working against the explorers.
 - Separate out the spades. They represent the outside world intruding on the expedition.
2. A journal to record the results of your expedition.

CHOOSE YOUR GENRE

Gothic science fiction, science fantasy, dark fantasy.



BUILD THE MONUMENT

What does Chiron's Doom look like when you first see it? Draw it, or find an image that sparks your imagination (try googling 'brutalist sculptures former Yugoslavia', 'crop circles', or 'Reuben Wu aeroglyphs').

If you like, give the monument three descriptors from the following list. Flip three random cards, or choose descriptors that sound interesting. Think about what each one means. What is it about Chiron's Doom that is blasphemous? What does the filigree look like? What is it encrusted with?

	Diamonds	Hearts	Clubs	Spades
A	cavernous	organic	pulsating	incomplete
2	concealed	twisted	damaged	tapered
3	colossal	smooth	demonic	porous
4	ossified	coarse	lush	divided
5	hollow	flooded	silent	voracious
6	seamless	sleek	transparent	moving
7	subterranean	sprawling	hypnotic	parasitic
8	fragmented	sharp	floating	gaseous
9	spectral	crystalline	phosphorescent	cracked
10	filigreed	grotesque	humming	blossoming
J	rusted	blasphemous	magnetic	soporific
Q	encrusted	baroque	cancerous	boiling
K	mechanical	loud	cold	mystical

GATHER YOUR EXPLORERS

Shuffle the diamonds and flip three cards to determine who the explorers are (or choose, if you prefer).

A	An unusual child
2	An inseparable duo
3	The eternal wanderer
4	The last survivor of a heist gone bad
5	An expert in alien intelligences
6	A practitioner of forbidden science
7	A priest of a forgotten god
8	An artist with uncanny vision
9	A trader in relics and obscurities
10	An artificial person
J	The scion of a noble family
Q	The wielder of a renowned weapon
K	A veteran of many battles



For each explorer in turn, answer one of the following questions. When you've answered a question, cross it off the list.

- What have you already sacrificed to join this expedition?
- Why is the monument hard to reach?
- How are you connected to Chiron's Doom?
- Choose another explorer. Why do you distrust them?
- What is the one thing you will never give up?
- What is the one line you will never cross?

BUILD YOUR EXPEDITION DECK

Take the following cards:

- The king of diamonds.
- Five more diamonds drawn randomly.
- The 2 of hearts.
- The 2 of clubs.
- The 2 of spades.

Shuffle these cards face down. This is your expedition deck.

BUILD YOUR DISASTER DECKS

Build three separate decks, one each for the hearts, clubs and spades. Each deck contains:

- The king of the suit.
- Three other cards of the matching suit, drawn randomly.

These are your disaster decks. Put them aside for now.

PLAY

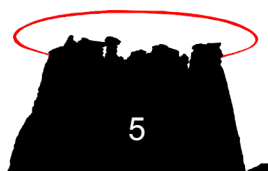
Draw a card from the expedition deck and respond to the card's prompt in your journal. Once you have responded to the prompt, make a decision: press on to tomorrow, or abandon the expedition. Each flip of a card is a new day.

Hold on to your explorers lightly. Don't be afraid to make them suffer to learn the monument's secrets.

For specific guidance on multiplayer games see page 6.

ENDING THE GAME

Abandon the expedition when it becomes too much, or when all three explorers are dead. If you push on until you draw the final diamond, the true purpose of the monument is revealed to you. Describe it, or keep the secret.



MULTIPLAYER

Use the following guidelines when playing Chiron's Doom with two or three players.

Set boundaries for safety

This game is about an expedition falling apart. Bad things will happen. Before beginning, take a moment to discuss what you're comfortable with, and what's off-limits. The explorers are likely to end up at each other's throats, so establishing boundaries and checking in on each other will keep the game fun.

During play use Brie Beau Sheldon's "Script Change": <https://briebeau.itch.io/script-change>.

Explorers

Each player is responsible for one explorer. If you're playing with two players, share the responsibility for the third explorer.

When it comes time for each explorer to answer one of the starter questions, choose a question from the list and ask it of the explorer to your left. Continue until each explorer has answered one question.

Play

Each player takes turns playing a card from the expedition deck. The player who draws the card responds to the prompt. They can ask for suggestions if they wish, but they have the final say on the response. Remember to respect the autonomy of the other explorers: set the situation, but don't force another explorer to act in a particular way, and don't describe how another explorer feels about what's happening.

Once you have decided how to respond to a prompt, you can play out a small scene reflecting the action. This is a good opportunity to learn how the explorers feel about what has occurred.

If there's any disagreement over which "you" a prompt refers to, it's the explorer who drew the card.

Losing your explorer

Your explorer may be killed, or may choose to abandon the expedition. If this happens, you do not need to stop playing. Instead, continue to draw cards from the expedition deck on your turn. Respond to the prompts by posing interesting, challenging situations for the surviving explorers. If the prompt requires a specific explorer, ask for volunteers. Then ask how the explorers respond to the situation.

When it's not your turn, stay out of discussions about what happens unless you're specifically asked by the other players. It's their expedition now.



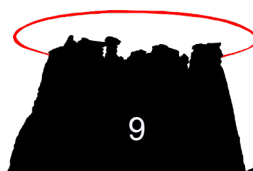
DIAMONDS - SECRETS REVEALED

Each flip of a diamond brings you one step closer to final understanding. As you respond to the prompt, think about what new information the explorers learn about the monument. How does this new knowledge build on previous discoveries? What questions does it leave unanswered? Only when you reach the final diamond in your expedition deck is the true nature of Chiron's Doom revealed.

A	The monument grants you a great and unexpected gift. What is it?
2	The monument changes, and the mystery deepens. Describe the change (perhaps changing a descriptor, or adding a new one), and shuffle an additional random diamond into the expedition deck.
3	The monument extends further than you thought. Where does this new discovery take you?
4	You find a clue left behind by a previous expedition. What is it? What does it reveal? What happened to the previous expedition?
5	You uncover a hidden inscription on the monument. What does it say?
6	You succeed a dismantling a part of the monument. What do you learn?
7	The monument does something it has never done before. What happens? How did you trigger it?
8	You experience a sudden, dramatic shift in perspective. What happened? What does your new view reveal?
9	You find a clue to the monument's makers. Who are (or were) they?
10	You take a risk and it pays off. What was the risk? Did it pay off in the way you expected?
J	The monument speaks to you. What does it say? How?
Q	You learn how to safely touch the monument. What are the necessary conditions?
K	You die in an accident, or one of the other explorers does. What secret does the death reveal?

HEARTS - TENSIONS RISE

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| A | Amidst the chaos and stress of the expedition, a moment of reconciliation or understanding between you and another explorer. What do you bond over? |
| 2 | You fall out with your fellow explorers. Describe the cause, and shuffle the hearts disaster deck into the expedition deck. |
| 3 | You disagree with the other explorers and decide to go it alone. What do you disagree over? What goes wrong? |
| 4 | Something important goes missing. You accuse another explorer of theft or incompetence. What happens? |
| 5 | You lose days arguing about how best to proceed. How do you finally resolve the impasse, and who hates the final decision? |
| 6 | A disagreement comes to blows. Who wins? Who loses? What does this mean for the expedition? |
| 7 | You make an impossible or unfair demand. What is it? How do the others respond? |
| 8 | You argue for abandoning the expedition. What does it cost to convince you to stay? |
| 9 | You fall ill. How does this change the dynamic of the expedition? |
| 10 | You have been hiding a dangerous secret. What is it? How is it revealed? |
| J | One of the explorers is not who you thought they were. What is revealed? And what does this change? |
| Q | The other two explorers grow closer, leaving you feeling spurned. What is the nature of the connection? How do you act out? |
| K | You kill another explorer, or one of them kills you. What happened? |



CLUBS - THE MONUMENT RESISTS

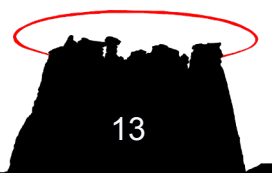
- A** Resurrection! The monument returns someone to you. Who is it?
-
- 2** The monument begins to resist your attempts to understand it. What is the physical manifestation of this resistance? Shuffle the clubs disaster deck into the expedition deck.
-
- 3** In order to carry on, the monument requires that you transform yourself. What do you become?
-
- 4** The region around the monument becomes unsafe. What happened?
-
- 5** The monument takes something from you. What was it?
-
- 6** The monument induces an unpleasant physical or emotional sensation. What is it? What does it cost you to resist it?
-
- 7** The monument moves or relocates. How does this make the situation worse?
-
- 8** You trigger a countdown. What drastic action do you take to avert catastrophe?
-
- 9** You are delayed for days or weeks by a fiendishly difficult challenge. What is it? What does it cost you to overcome it?
-
- 10** The monument's avatars attack you. What form do they take? How do you survive?
-
- J** One of your previous discoveries about the monument takes on a sinister or frightening light. What changes?
-
- Q** You have been making significant progress when the fruitful avenue of exploration is suddenly closed off. What happened?
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- K** The monument takes you, or one of the other explorers. What happened?

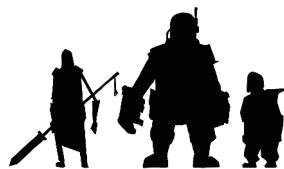
SPADES - THE OUTSIDE WORLD INTRUDES

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| A | Help arrives from an unexpected place. How does it make things easier? |
| 2 | The outside world of people, politics, money, and power intrudes. What form does the intrusion take? Shuffle the spades disaster deck into the expedition deck. |
| 3 | A new group sets up nearby. Who are they? How do they disrupt your expedition? |
| 4 | An outsider issues a challenge. What is the challenge? How do you respond? |
| 5 | An observer arrives to assess the progress of your expedition. How long do they stay? What message do they take back to their masters? |
| 6 | Part of the monument is damaged. Who did it? How did it happen? |
| 7 | Someone claims ownership over the monument. Do you recognise their claim? |
| 8 | An outside force blocks your access to the monument. What do you do? |
| 9 | An official letter arrives with bad news. What does it say? And what does it mean to you? |
| 10 | An obligation you have been neglecting becomes urgent. What is it? What do you do? |
| J | Public opinion shifts. How does this impact your expedition? |
| Q | You are offered a massive reward to sabotage the expedition. What happens? |
| K | Someone kills you, or one of the other explorers. Who was it? What happened? |

NOTES

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