

DESIGNED BY WHIMSY MACHINE | POWERED BY THE APOCALYPSE



▷ FIGHT
▷ ITEM
▷ RUN

A PIXELATED TTRPG

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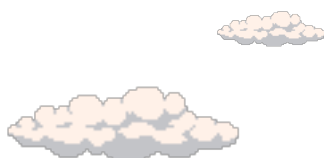
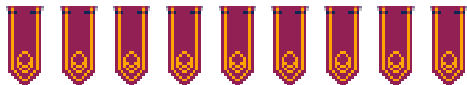
FIGHT ITEM RUN

- ▶ **INSPIRED BY CLASSIC VIDEO GAMES.**
- ▶ **DESIGNED BY WHIMSY MACHINE.**
- ▶ **POWERED BY THE APOCALYPSE.**

It's dungeons all the way down. You travel deeper and deeper into a labyrinth of chambers, monsters, and treasures, clinging to some final goal – maybe it's a climactic showdown with a big baddie, maybe it's escape. You fight your way through, use the items you get along the way, and run when it gets too tough – all so you can do it over again.

WELCOME TO FIGHT ITEM RUN.

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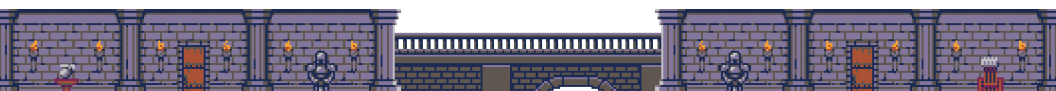
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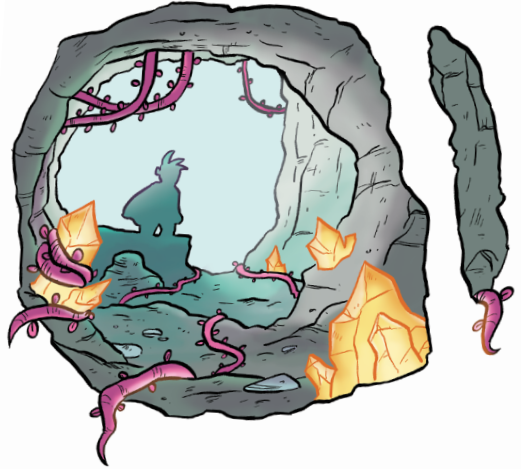
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▶ THE DUNGEON



The **DUNGEON** is the structure and sole setting of *Fight Item Run*. The party begins in a chamber and there are monsters; once they've defeated the monsters, they proceed to the next chamber where there are more monsters. Chambers also have items, treasures, puzzles, and mysteries. When the party has collected the adequate gear to advance to the dungeon's next level, they come to the chamber with the passage, staircase, portal, or alien warp pad to continue forward.

The goals for the game are as follows:

- ▶ Fight monsters, collect items, survive the dungeon.
- ▶ Tell a collaborative story of mystery and adventure.
- ▶ Plant and build upon evocative details at every chance.
- ▶ Explore the lives and relationships of characters traveling together.

▶ A DUNGEON BY ANY OTHER NAME

While the setting of *Fight Item Run* is said to be a "dungeon," said dungeon can take many forms. It could be a tower the characters must climb; each time they advance, they find a staircase that leads up to the next level. The chambers may correspond to clearings in a forest or islands on a sea. Each level advancement could even be a warp gate to another realm.

The key elements are the chambers, which feel isolated enough from each other that they are distinct locations, and level advancement, which feels like a significant and apparent level progression.

▶ SUPER BOMBS OPEN YELLOW DOORS

The party may move back and forth between previously explored chambers, each time discovering a new aspect or a previously hidden path. Even though the party is backtracking through the same chambers, their narrative progress is still linear and forward. **New abilities that can be used in creative ways are perfect opportunities to reintroduce chambers that can be interacted with in new ways.** For example, a recently gained flight power could lead to the discovery of a secret, previously out-of-reach door on the ceiling. Even though the characters have already fought monsters in the chamber, it is still considered “new” for the purposes of progression in the Combat phase.

▶ This format is similar to “metroidvania” games, but the players don’t need to keep track of an elaborate dungeon layout!

▶ DESIGNING THE DUNGEON

A dungeon has many different parts, and quite a few of them will be immediately relevant. Fortunately, the vast majority of the dungeon, the Master of the Dungeon’s plan, the characters’ eventual relationships – that is to say, the plot of the campaign – will be discovered throughout play. To begin with, players just need to know basically who they’re playing and what the first part of the dungeon is like.

▶ Deciding on what the dungeon initially looks like is a group effort. One player, often the DM, might be imagining something already, but collaboration will improve everyone’s experience playing.

▶▶▶ GENRES

Much of *Fight Item Run* implies a fantasy setting, though it is equally inspired by sci-fi games. Players will unanimously agree on where the dungeon will begin: a crashed spaceship, stone ruins, an underground labyrinth, a skyscraper in an ultramodern city. Even if play begins in a suburban cul-de-sac, environments may change as the characters progress through regions, perhaps leading them into a cave system, which opens into an infernal realm, and then into the guts of a massive leviathan.



▶▶▶ REGIONS

Related to the chosen genre, the players will decide what the world looks like immediately around the characters as they begin. This is the starting region, though the dungeon's other regions can vary. Consider the tropes of the lava level or the water level: those are different regions. Players may veto any location that links the setting to the real world, any areas that have gross living walls, or other set dressings they feel would take them out of the story or that would make them uncomfortable – or for any reason, really.

▶▶▶ CHAMBERS

The dungeon's regions are further divided into chambers, even if those chambers aren't strictly rooms. Agree on what the areas characters travel between will look like in a region and what represents the thresholds between them. Chambers will be mostly similar from one to another, but advancement or new discoveries may place the characters in with all new regions.

▶▶▶ MONSTERS

The characters encounter monsters in each chamber, unless they've retreated. As discussed in The Themes chapter, monsters are not emotional, intelligent creatures. Monsters are extensions of the dungeon itself: robot security, animated golems, shadow beings, risen undead, or other non-individual instruments of the Master of the Dungeon.



► THE THEMES



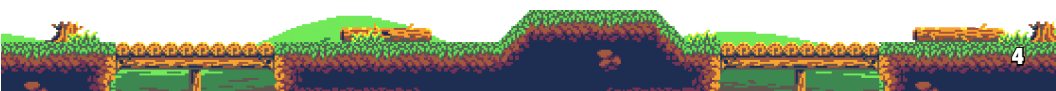
Fight Item Run sets out to accomplish several **THEMES** in a tabletop roleplaying environment. Additionally, there are several themes it is designed to avoid. Before delving deeper into the rules of character creation and monster fighting, these themes will set expectations for what *Fight Item Run* is and is not.

► First and foremost, *Fight Item Run* does not set out to recreate the experience of playing specific genres of video games from late 80s and 90s. Instead, playing is meant to capture the nostalgic feeling you might have remembering those games. Design decisions were made to be faithful to feelings more than the actual mechanics of those games.

► WHAT MAKES A MONSTER?

Within the fiction of *Fight Item Run*, monsters are extensions of the dungeon without any emotional intelligence of their own. Monsters serve as the backdrop of play; most of them lack any individually distinguishing characteristics or behaviors and they do not have established cultures. In this game, defeating a monster is not murder and, by design, is not a morally ambiguous action. When a monster is defeated, it turns to smoke, fades out of existence, blips away as pixelated data, or otherwise immediately and bodily disappears. *Fight Item Run* is not positioned to explore whether it is right or wrong to slay sentient creatures; therefore, monsters are functionally just weapons that the dungeon uses against the characters.

► The goal of the monsters is to provide opportunities for the adventurers to grow in preparedness for greater battles to come, in their own emotional journeys, and along the narrative thread of the dungeon's secrets.



Violence does feature heavily in *Fight Item Run* and, even though it's presented in an old school video game or Saturday morning cartoon format, some players may be uncomfortable with that. The group may establish certain details of their setting, such as "upon defeat, the monsters escape" or "the monsters are clearly machines." The group may even decide to not include any monsters and only use puzzles.

► While players are encouraged to modify the setting and rules to best suit their table, *Fight Item Run* might also not be the right fit, and that's completely acceptable.

► PLAY TO FIND OUT

Fight Item Run requires very little preparation and works best with the "play to find out" philosophy. Once the backdrop has been decided the story can unfold as it goes. The Stories chapter also has pre-made campaign frameworks to play from.

Characters each start out with secrets they know about the dungeon, but the players don't need to know what those secrets are starting out. The DM may have an idea for the Master of the Dungeon and their big scheme, but player input will change and shape that idea. Players will introduce new information about the world, the plot, their characters, and the dungeon from session to session. These points are akin to cinematic reveals: they've always been true even if no one knew until the moment they were relevant.

If it's not known, it's not set in stone. Any player may reveal information about their character or, within the framework of the rules, the dungeon. A seemingly contradictory fact can be contextualized as either a change in the setting or the true nature of things the whole time. For example, the DM may have in mind that the dungeon is actually an alien laboratory, but this information isn't true until confirming details are revealed. In the meantime, a player may introduce evidence that the dungeon is the creation of a technomage sent from the future. Priority goes to the precedence as set in play: strive to allow new information if the only facts that would contradict it haven't been introduced yet.

An emphatic exception to this rule are any subjects or themes players have listed in preliminary safety tools, such as **Lines and Veils**, or are vetoed by safety tools such as the X Card. While playing to find out may lead to unexpected places narratively, it does not provide an opening to cross lines players have established for content they're comfortable with.

► Refer to the Credits section for the link to the TTRPG Safety Toolkit, which has many resources relating to safety tools for roleplaying.

► AN ONGOING STORY

Consider the runtime on many RPG video games, including the classics.

The average is around thirty hours, give or take a few depending on how much of a "completionist" you are. Side quests, secret unlocks, getting stuck, remembering where you left off—there are countless factors that will further affect that runtime. *Fight Item Run* also expects players to spend a good amount of time in it. Especially during the first few times playing, when everyone is getting used to the controls.

The chambers of *Fight Item Run* are filled with possibilities. With no predetermined win condition, all that potential branches into more and more opportunities. The pace of the narrative is up to the players: if it feels like the party's only been grinding for a while, break up the action. Players can lean more into affinities and cutscenes, skip ahead or relive a memory, take risks and build towards revealing secrets from your character's past.

Even if a game is designed to be played over a certain length of time, let's not forget the thriving community of speedrunners. This book doesn't feature a speedrunning mode, though I invite hacks and mods of all kinds, including ones that would streamline everything down enough to fit a whole dungeon in a single session. Otherwise, a one-shot of *Fight Item Run* will feel like hopping into a slice of life vignette of adventurers.

► The party may not fill all their Gear slots or encounter a Boss, but they all still have the space for character arcs and profound discoveries within the dungeon.

► RULES A LA CARTE

All games, roleplaying or otherwise, have explicit and implicit rules. The written rules of *Fight Item Run* are included in this book. Common implicit rules include (but are not limited to) **"don't talk over someone else at the table"** or **"if it's not fun anymore, stop."** Furthermore, you may choose to play with some of the written rules and omit or change others. So long as you move forward with the enthusiastic consent of all players at the table, safety tools are actively understood and used, and your play is not used to reinforce systemic or circumstantial bigotry or prejudice against less privileged peoples, you have this author's blessing in doing so.

The **Schools of Magic**, as a key example, can offer a wealth of character abilities, but they may also be too much for players to keep track of. If you like the playable character options, you can pluck them out and turn them into playbooks for another game. If someone forgets the rules or gets something wrong, they can be forgiven and play can move on. Players are responsible to each other and themselves first and to these rules second.

You will encounter many rules in *Fight Item Run* that seem like they're only thematic and not mechanical – without crunchy numbers and math to back them up. All elements included in this game are meaningful. Soft mechanics, like keywords associated with monsters or flavorful adjectives to describe gear, have real impact within play even when not made explicit. These rules don't cover every combination of elemental effects and creative problem solving, but if it makes sense for a fire blast to be super effective against an ice wall then it is.



The rewards of play lie in the adventure: the mysteries of the dungeon that the players will mostly make up along the way, the interpersonal drama that unfolds between the characters, and the epic actions undertaken by questing adventurers. Ask "does this interpretation of soft mechanics detract from other players' fun?" and if the answer is "no," then foster that interpretation.



► THE FRIENDS MADE ALONG THE WAY

A goal of *Fight Item Run* is to "explore the lives and relationships of characters traveling together," which may encompass camaraderie, deep familial bonds, butting heads and clashing opinions, blossoming romance, or all of the above. **Discuss before and during play what everyone's comfort and interest levels with character relationships are, since not every player will be open to every type of relationship.**

Characters may know each other at the beginning of play. This will be broadly addressed when discussing the story, whether the characters are a group of friends, strangers hired for the same job, or aware of each others' reputations. Affinity prompts, backstory reveals, and cutscenes are excellent moments for characters to establish their histories together.

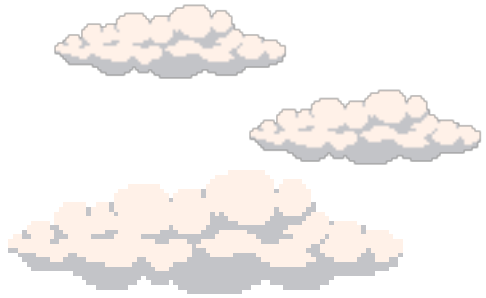
The endless monsters are tools in the characters' progression that create prompts for dramatic character interactions. Danger, bravery, fear, and adrenaline are ample catalysts of emotional development. Treasure and clues found are interesting steps in the larger mystery, but how the characters talk about, share, or hoard the treasures and clues is what creates compelling scenes.

► If you're interested in your character becoming romantically involved with another player's character, let them know and – if they're on board with it – you can both create opportunities for romantic tension to build. If two characters argue frequently, discuss out of character the reasons why, if it's a point of stress for the players, and whether or not to explore reconciliation between the characters.

►►► **The most rewarding chambers to explore, after all, are the ones of the heart.**



▶ THE ADVENTURE



Those souls stuck in this seemingly endless dungeon – the characters players assume the role of – are sturdy, intrepid, capable adventurers, which is true even when they're desperately lost and in over their heads. They are fundamentally good at what they do and continue to grow, but are beset by increasingly difficult challenges. Characters have a few tools, both in and out of the fiction of the game, to help them through this adventure.

Players use moves to advance through the dungeon and the narrative. Players identify an action they want their character to undertake and see if it triggers a move. If a player's description of their character's action corresponds to a "when..." statement in the listed moves, then the character acts on one of their four Stats (and the player rolls dice). At the beginning of play, the player sets two Stats to 0 and two Stats to 1.

Those Stats are the following:

ACC

Perceptiveness, cunning, and deftness.

▶ Moves that use ACC:

Use Item, Search Enemy or Chamber, Rummage About, Catch a Monster, Manipulate Components, Chart the Dungeon, Determine Starting Items.

DEF

Evasiveness, protectiveness, and self-preservation.

▶ Moves that use DEF:

Disengage from Combat, Help a Fleeing Ally, Take Time to Feel Better, Navigate Danger, Give Away a Dream, Determine Starting HP.

DMG

Strength, endurance, and survival skills.

▶ Moves that use DMG:

Attack a Target, Execute a Combo, Unleash Burst Drive, Train Up, Apply Force, Determine Starting HP.

SP

Magical aptitude and knowledge.

▶ Moves that use SP:

Draw Magic from Target, Study Magic, Interact Magically, Find Another Vacant Chamber, Summon a Monster, Trade Dreams with Target.

► CHARACTER GROWTH

The characters face grueling challenges, fight fearsome monsters, travel great distances, and gather legendary gear – all without a single stat boost. This is intentional, but it also doesn't mean the characters are static. The characters do grow, perhaps subtly and slowly or significantly and dramatically, but the dungeon grows with them. The monsters early in the dungeon will likely be small slimes and phantom bats, but the party will face bigger, more bizzare enemies the deeper they go. What stays relatively constant is the party's chance of success: their current skill compared to the dungeon around them.

Fight Item Run doesn't intend for a party to head backwards to fight weaker monsters or accidentally end up in an area they're not supposed to be in yet. The accumulation of Gear and Techniques from Bosses unlocks new options for the characters; however, if the players are itching to give their characters a bump up, a defeated Boss can hand out a permanent +1 to a stat or +3 HP instead of a Technique.

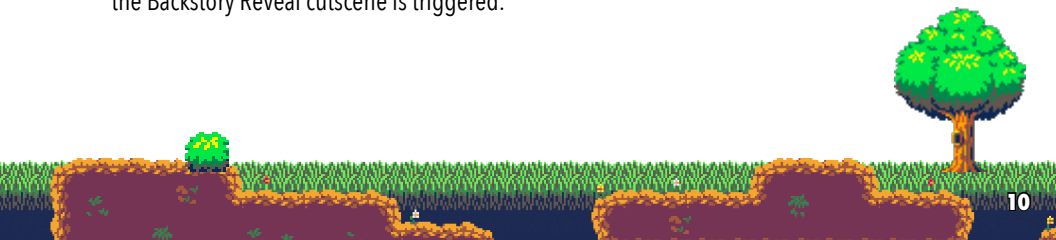
► USING MOVES

When characters attempt important actions in play, **those actions trigger moves**. The player describes what the character attempts, rolls **two six-sided dice**, and then adds the listed Stat to the result. That result will help determine how the action unfolds and its consequences.

Moves include "**roll + Stat**" to note which Stat is added to the value of the dice roll.

- **If the total number equals 7 or above**, the move is considered a Hit: it is successful in accomplishing what is intended.
- **When it is 10 or above**, the move is a Hit that either goes off without much complication or has an added benefit.
- **When a Hit is a 7, 8, or 9**, then there's a catch or a cost to the success.

When the result is 6 or less, the move has not accomplished what the character intended; this is called a Miss. On a Miss, the player marks a tick on their character sheet next to their Secret and the DM may make a DM move. On the fifth mark on a character's Secret, the Backstory Reveal cutscene is triggered.



▶▶▶ **ROLL EXAMPLE**

Nephele is fighting a monster with an interesting mimicry ability, so she tries to Draw Magic from Target. Nephele's player rolls two dice and adds Nephele's SP, which is 2, to the result.

▶ **If the total is 10 or higher:**

Nephele pulls the magical essence from the target and will gain a piece of Gear once that target is destroyed. She also learns that the monster is weak to attacks it can't see coming. Sneak attacks are particularly effective against monsters with the ability to copy their foes. Nephele swirls her staff in the air and pulls magical light from the monster, which then projects hologram-like visions that only she can see.

▶ **If the total is 7, 8, or 9:**

Nephele still draws the essence and will get Gear, but she doesn't learn about a particular weakness for that type of monster. Nephele ducks in close to the monster, pulling away magical light into her staff, and then rolls out of the way before getting into danger.

▶ **If total is 6 or less:**

Nephele does not draw the essence of the monster and the DM will be able to use this opportunity to use a Combat Miss Reaction. Nephele ducks in close to the monster, but before she can pull magic from it, the monster lunges and gains an Engagement on her. As she rolls out of the way, she realizes she's been cornered by the monster. Nephele's player also marks the character sheet next to Nephele's Secret.

▶ **HP & HARM**

When characters face monsters in Combat, they tend to get hurt. Wounds, exhaustion, and sickness are represented by Harm. A character's HP is the amount of Harm they can take before being incapacitated. **HP is determined during character creation by selecting the better of roll +DEF and roll +DMG (roll two separate times).**

When a character reaches 0 HP, they aren't dead, but they do faint and then become incapacitated. They can't make any moves that require rolls and can only speak and trade Items. A character stays in this state until Recovery or until they can receive a Restore Item. The character may be fading in and out of consciousness, magically paralyzed, or struggling to keep a bad wound from getting worse. Incapacitated characters are considered as Fleeing for the sake of leaving Combat.

A player may agree to have their character permanently die at a narratively important point in conjunction with a DM move and a Cutscene, but this is unrelated to their HP. If all characters reach 0 HP, they are forced into Recovery, lose some of what they've gained thus far, and play through the Game Over cutscene.

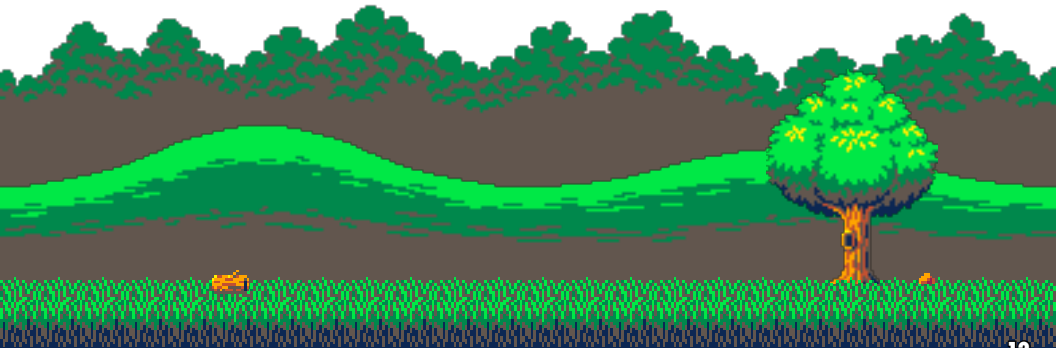
Fight Item Run is played in two phases: Combat and Recovery. **Combat is forward motion**, and **Recovery is retreating**. When there are monsters and danger, the characters are in Combat. If all characters run from Combat, then they are in Recovery until they advance forward again.



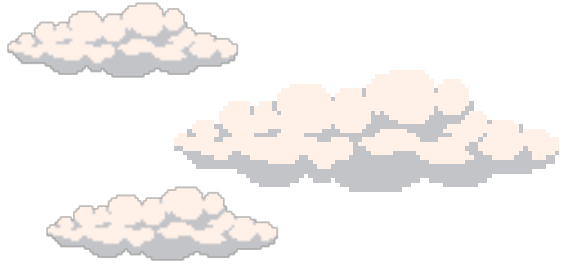
► **PRESS START**

Not every player needs to know everything that lies within this book in order for the group to start playing. So long as each player has enough information to make their characters, play can begin with the Tutorial cutscene.

► Once each player has followed the character creator steps (consider excluding Schools of Magic if playing for the first time), everyone can take turns introducing their characters. Describe their name, pronouns, Class, starting Gear, and general aesthetic. The important elements to convey at this time are the impression someone would get from their character art, what their battle animation will look like, and a couple descriptive sentences in a game manual but nothing much beyond that. The finer details will be discovered during the game.



► THE FIGHT



Each new chamber the characters enter (unless they're retreating) has monsters. When characters are in Combat, they are progressing forward – the actual direction they're heading isn't important because the story is always forward. Once moving forward becomes too difficult, the characters can try fleeing to a previous chamber to begin the Recovery phase. "Chamber" refers to a distinct area, but could be anything from cells in a dungeon to cloud platforms around a castle in the sky.

► ROUNDS OF ACTIONS

Combat is taken in rounds; each character acts once per round using the moves listed below. The order the characters act in isn't important; **the players can decide how they'd like the action to unfold** and, if it would make more sense, the results can be described in a different order at the end of the round.

For example: a character attempting to draw from a monster may act before the character attacking that monster in case it gets defeated.

Monsters act in response to character actions and not within the same round structure as characters. The DM uses moves to accumulate Engagements for monsters in response to characters' misses and choices. As soon as a monster gains three Engagements on a target, it immediately executes a combo per DM move rules. Boss monsters are an exception and act differently; see The Monsters chapter. When characters make a successful action and the monster doesn't gain an Engagement, the monster still lunges forward and snaps or swipes, but fails to connect with the character.

Once all characters have taken an action, the Combat round is over. A new round begins, all Burst Timers count down by one, and the players declare their characters' actions again. Once all monsters are defeated, the Victory Theme cutscene is triggered.

► ENGAGEMENTS & BURST

Combat includes two currencies: Engagements and Burst Timers. Engagements measure the intensity of a battle and gauge who has the upper hand. Burst Timers are independent clocks that count down to a limit breaking display of power.

▶▶▶ ENGAGEMENTS

Engagements represent the character and their target being locked in intense combat, but not necessarily inflicting wounds; having more Engagements means having more of an upperhand in battle. As characters gain Engagements, their exchange of blows, dodges, and parries intensify until they execute a combo. A combo is a big attack that inflicts damage against the target. A character must have at least three Engagements on a target to execute a combo and, when they do, those Engagements are reduced by three.



▶▶▶ BURST TIMERS

A Burst Timer represents a character's internal power, unrelated to their current success in combat. **Each character has their own Burst Timer**; the Burst Timer starts after the first attack a character makes and counts down by one at the beginning of each round. When the Burst Timer reaches zero, the character's Burst Timer is ready and they may unleash their Burst Drive as their action for that round. The Burst Drive is a powerful signature attack that breaks the limits of their usual abilities.

A Burst Drive deals an exceptional amount of Harm (three +DMG) compared to Attacking a Target (one Engagement). While a character's normal attack may be a majestic lunge and a hearty swing of a sword or a precise shot from their crystal beam rifle, the Burst Drive will see the character strike a dozen times with their sword in under a second or charge a beam so wide and bright the entire room lights up. This move is the character's Special, and the player is encouraged to really have fun with the description of it.

▶ COMBAT MOVES

▶▶▶ ATTACK TARGET

When you Attack a Target, roll +DMG to do them harm. **On a 10+**, gain an Engagement on that target; **on a 7-9**, either miss or both you and your target gain an Engagement on each other.

After making an attack in a chamber, hit or miss, begin your Burst Timer if it is not already active. Set the Burst Timer by rolling two six-sided dice and leaving the higher value face up. At the beginning of each round, rotate the die to the next number down. When the die is at 1 and a new round begins, remove the die: the Burst Drive is now ready.

▶▶▶ EXECUTE COMBO

When you have at least three Engagements on a target and you want to Execute a Combo, remove three Engagements and roll +DMG. **On a 10+**, pick three options from the list. **On a 7-9**, pick two options; **on a 6 or less**, pick only one option. Harm and Drop can be picked multiple times, but Stun can only be picked once.

▶ For each HARM:

Inflict a Harm on the target as you land a devastating blow.

▶ For each DROP:

Roll for an Item on the **ITEM CHART** as it falls from the target to be picked up and immediately added to your Inventory.

▶ For STUN:

The DM gives up the target's next chance to move because the target has been slowed, knocked back, or otherwise confused and disadvantaged. The next move made against this target by any character receives +2.

▶▶▶ BURST DRIVE

When your Burst Drive is ready, you may **Unleash your Burst Drive** instead of attacking a target per usual. Your Burst Drive is an impressive display of force unique to you. Inflict three +DMG Harm on present enemies, divvying it out or inflicting all on one enemy. A new Burst Timer will start after you next Attack a Target. See **Attack a Target** for rules on beginning the Burst Timer.

▶▶▶ DRAW MAGIC FROM TARGET

When you **Draw Magic from a Target**, roll +SP. On a hit, you pull the magical essence from the target and reshape it into a piece of new Gear. You may gain a piece of Gear when the target is finally defeated. Each character can only gain one piece of Gear per target. On a 10+, you may also learn a Trait and a weakness of the target. Information about a monster will usually be relevant to all monsters that share a Trait.

▶▶▶ USE ITEM

When you dig around in your Inventory to **Use an Item**, roll +ACC. On a 10+, pick and use up to three Items currently in your Inventory or use one from a willing character's Inventory. On a 7-9, pick and use one Item currently in your Inventory or receive an Item from a willing character; alternatively, Give an Item.

▶ When you Give an Item to another character, take an action to do it, but no roll is necessary.

▶▶▶ SEARCH ENEMY OR CHAMBER

When you **Search an Enemy or Chamber**, roll +ACC. On a 10+, you find three Items and add them to your Inventory (selected from the Item Chart). On a 7-9, you find two Items, but they distract you. Describe what about them holds your attention and take -1 to your next roll. These Items may be used immediately. Describe the significance of the Items found and the process of collecting them from a monster or the chamber.

▶ See the "Dungeon Discovery" DM move.

▶▶▶ DISENGAGE FROM COMBAT

When you **Disengage from Combat**, roll +DEF, remove all Engagements you have on enemies, and stop your Burst Timer. On a hit, you may begin Fleeing. On a 10+, all enemies act as if they had one fewer Engagement on you until you enter Recovery.

▶ While FLEEING:

While Fleeing, you can still use Items on yourself and continue Fleeing by staying disengaged from combat (which does not require additional rolls), however any other action will stop you from Fleeing. You can still be targeted while Fleeing. If all members of the party are Fleeing, then the party escapes the chamber and retreats to safety – which puts them in the **Recovery phase**.

▶ When you HELP A FLEEING ALLY:

After they roll a 6 or less to disengage from combat and you're already Fleeing, roll +DEF to help in their escape. On a 10+, you are both Fleeing; on a 7-9, they are Fleeing, but you have reentered combat.

▶ THE FICTION OF FIGHTING

The Combat phase of play will take up the majority of time spent with *Fight Item Run*. To get the most out of it, encourage creativity in yourself and your fellow players. Think of your favorite old video games with characters lined up in a row, taking turns to leap forward and slice, punch, or shoot the enemies. Spend time developing your character's "battle animation," the cool way that their attack is uniquely theirs, and consider how their new Gear will change it.

The Burst Drive is a perfect opportunity to revel in what it means to be an awesome adventurer. Whether suplexing a train or exploding jagged crystals of ice out of the floor, the Burst Drive is a brilliant display of might. It might not totally take out its target, but that's alright: the character still accomplished something big and significant.

Combat is often only life-threatening for the characters when they're already very run down. The goal of any given encounter is usually to draw as much magic as possible, take moments to investigate the monsters and the chamber, and to create opportunities for Affinities and Cutscenes. While strategy and tactics are important and can be taken full advantage of with descriptive actions, the Combat phase is just as much a stage for character and story drama to unfold.

▶▶▶ EXAMPLE COMBAT

Tozio, Xiaoyan, and Wisp enter a chamber in the catacombs of an ancient cathedral. A skeleton, a gargoyle, and a phantom emerge to menace the adventurers.

(Skip to pg. 23 to head to "The Recovery" chapter)

▶ ROUND ONE

▶ Tozio and Xiaoyan attack and Wisp draws magic. Xiaoyan leaps forward with her staff, spins it aloft, and brings it down on the gargoyle; Xiaoyan's player rolls two dice and adds Xiaoyan's DMG of 1 resulting in 8. Xiaoyan and the gargoyle each gain an Engagement on the other as they exchange blows. Since this was Xiaoyan's first attack of the round, her player rolls two dice and keeps the higher value (which is 3) face up to serve as her Burst Timer.

▶ Tozio is a Swordbreaker and ze wields a thorny vine whip and a lightning sword. Tozio's player says that the electric energy from Tozio's sword negates the -1 penalty physical weapons usually suffer when attacking a phantom, whom the players know to have the Incorporeal trait. Tozio's player rolls a 10 and Tozio gains an Engagement with no consequence. Zir Burst Timer begins at a count of 6.

▶ Wisp pulls his shadow top out of his cloak and sends it spinning, creating a little cyclone of darkness that draws magical essence from the skeleton; Wisp's player rolls +SP and gets 7. Wisp's Burst Timer does not begin since he did not attack. He will be able to collect Gear from the skeleton once it's defeated.

▶ ROUND TWO

▶ Xiaoyan and Tozio's Burst Timers count down to 2 and 5 respectively. They both decide to attack again. Tozio gets a 9 and his sword crackles with lightning as the phantom sweeps through Tozio, reeking of death; both gain an Engagement on the other.

▶ Xiaoyan misses her attack against the gargoyle, so the DM makes a Combat Miss Reaction move. The DM chooses to have the gargoyle gain an Engagement on Xiaoyan and also reveals an ominous development: this gargoyle was recently animated, implying that the Master of the Dungeon is moving more hastily now than before. Xiaoyan says this aloud to her companions as she regains her footing. Xiaoyan's player marks a Miss by her Secret on the character sheet.

▶ Wisp, who hung back to see how the monster fighting would shake out, decides to look for more clues. Wisp's player rolls an 8 to search the chamber, so Wisp finds two Items but becomes very distracted. Rolling against the Item Chart, Wisp gains an Antidote and an Elixir. Wisp's player describes Wisp becoming overwhelmed by the number of graves in this catacomb—if they don't act fast, the whole place could come alive. When Wisp's player rolls next, that roll will suffer -1.

▶ The DM uses the Dungeon Discovery move to further elaborate on Wisp's discovery. The DM asks how this discovery relates to Wisp's Secret. As a Tripshadow, Wisp knows someone who was lost in the dungeon. Wisp's player has been thinking about who that person might be since the beginning of the game and now decides that they were a close friend and colleague on a research expedition. Wisp makes the connection that his colleague must've been researching this spike in necromantic energy. The DM asks what this implies about the near future and what can the party do about it. Wisp addresses his companions, telling them if they start looking for the right clues they might find his old colleague and learn from their research.

▶ ROUND THREE

▶ Xiaoyan and Tozio's Burst Timers count down to 1 and 4 respectively. Xiaoyan brings a fearsome swipe of her staff down on the gargoyle as the gargoyle lashes out with its tail—both gain an Engagement on each other. This is the gargoyle's third Engagement on Xiaoyan, which means it would normally deal Harm, but Xiaoyan is a Sentinel which means enemies need one extra Engagement to get an attack through.

► Tozio draws magic before finishing zir battle: after a result of 8, ze plants zir sword into the ground and arc lightning reaches out to pull magical essence from the phantom. Wisp sends his shadow top spinning to draw magic again, this time targeting the gargoyle; with a result of 10 (after the -1 from before), he also learns that the gargoyle has the "stony" trait and the crack down its side is its weak spot. Wisp tells Xiaoyan about the weak spot; by helping another succeed, Wisp triggers the corresponding Affinity prompt.

► Xiaoyan catches her breath, thanks Wisp, and assesses the gargoyle. She closes her eyes and says, "I'm tired, but I'm not giving up. My wife is back home, keeping our village safe. She has my back and I will return to her. She's the one who drives me." Xiaoyan's player may add +1 to any future roll as Xiaoyan internalizes her resolve. Her grip on her staff tightens and she nods at Wisp.

► ROUND FOUR

► Xiaoyan's Burst Timer counts down to 0, which means she can use her Burst Drive this round. Xiaoyan twirls and then launches her staff like a javelin to land directly into the gargoyle's weak spot and knocking it over. She leaps into the air and, with a flip, lands on the end of her staff and sending it deep into the gargoyle's stony bowels. Since Xiaoyan has DMG 1, her Burst Drive does 4 HP of damage; the DM reveals the gargoyle only has 3 HP. The gargoyle shatters in a concussive blast and then the rubble dissolves away into smoke. Xiaoyan lands next to her staff, pulls it from the ground, twirls again to launch it through the skeleton, breaking a few of its ribs, and then summons the staff back to her hand.

► Tozio's Burst Timer counts down to 3 and ze attacks again, but tries something new. Tozio's player recalls the accessory Gear gained a couple chambers back, a Wormcrawler Pendant. Tozio wraps the rusty chain around zir whip hand, letting the calcified coil pendant dangle against the hilt of the whip. Tozio's player says the Wormcrawler Pendant will allow Tozio to shoot zir whip into the ground and have it shoot back up underneath the phantom. The DM agrees, but reminds Tozio's player that the Phantom is still incorporeal. Tozio's player, undeterred, describes Tozio plunging the whip into the ground and spiking it up behind the phantom as a distraction and then using the opportunity to strike the back of its ever-screaming skull with zir lightning sword. The DM says this maneuver plays to the traits of the Gear and the phantom well enough to get a +1. Tozio executes the attack as planned, gaining zir third Engagement on the phantom.

► Wisp digs in his bag for an Item to help resolve the situation; rolling with ACC, the result is 7. Wisp grabs the Elixir from earlier and, stepping forward, uncorks it with a beautiful light. He tosses the bottle to Tozio with a quick "Here ya go!" The Elixir spills as liquid light over Tozio and quickly sinks in. Tozio will receive +1 to zir next roll.

▶ ROUND FIVE

▶ Tozio executes a combo against the phantom. Tozio's player removes the three Engagement ze had gained against the phantom, then rolls +DMG and adds another +1 from the Elixir. The result is 10, so Tozio can perform three actions. Tozio's player chooses Harm, Drop, and the Swordbreaker ComboPlus ability of reducing zir Burst Timer by one. Tozio swings zir whip around and then lashes it at the ground; the thorny vine shoots up and wraps around the phantom's skull and pulls it swiftly to the ground. Tozio holds zir lightning sword aloft as it crackles and charges with electric power and then brings it down in an arc against the phantom.

▶ The phantom receives 1 HP of damage and, as the vine whip retracts, drops a globe of Fast Gas. Tozio radiates with power and zir Burst Timer counts down from 3 to 1. Tozio's player remarks that Wisp's Elixir made the difference in the level of success and Tozio notices—the Affinity prompt “help another succeed” is triggered. Wisp's player marks his character sheet next to Tozio's name and Tozio will receive +1 to a future move.

▶ Tozio reflects on their Secret, that ze know of a truly unique beast that lives in the dungeon, and what ze gains from that knowledge. Tozio remembers being a young child, chasing chickens with a wooden sword, and then seeing something truly unbelievable: in the distance, hazily visible through the atmosphere, an impossibly long dragon swirling in the air just above the horizon. After a moment that lasted a lifetime, the dragon disappeared behind the very mountain underneath which Tozio now battles. Tozio levels zir lightning blade towards the phantom and says, **“I'll end this quick. You will not stand in my way, foul creature.”**

▶ Since Affinity cutscenes are meant to provide characters—not just players—with new information, Wisp's player asks if Wisp can build on the moment. Tozio's player agrees, so Wisp remarks, “Hey Toz, you're doing that scary thing again where you get those flickery afterimage wings. You okay?” Wisp and Tozio share a conversation about what the memory of the dragon means to Tozio.

▶ Wisp, inspired by Tozio's dragon, decides to search the chamber again. With an 8, he finds two more Items: a Potion and a Great Fang. Wisp's player, also inspired, makes up the following on the spot: Wisp exclaims that the Great Fang, found in a grave long since vacated by a zombie, is like the relics worn by an old faith he'd heard of that worshipped dragons. Potions were commonly buried with important figures, but the Great Fang especially could be evidence that there could be something more to Tozio's dragon. His distraction will cost him -1 to his next roll.

▶ The DM asks a new question from the Dungeon Discovery move: **How does this discovery relate to the last discovery made?** Wisp recalls his colleague and, specifically, their fang necklace he'd always overlooked. Wisp turns self-deprecating, ashamed to have known so little about his colleague. Tozio places a firm hand on his shoulder and reassures him that you can never truly know others—just trust them to know themselves. Wisp nods, encouraged if a bit confused.

▶ Tozio offering comfort to Wisp triggers another Affinity prompt; Tozio's player marks the character sheet and Wisp's player notes the +1. Wisp briefly shares something that haunts him: whether he could've done more to help his colleague and if he's too late now.

▶ Meanwhile, Xiaoyan attempts to draw magic from the skeleton, but she misses. The skeleton swung fiercely with its jagged sword and she couldn't get close enough to draw its essence into the head of her staff. This is her fifth Miss, so Xiaoyan has a vision relating to her Secret per the Backstory Reveal cutscene. As a Sentinel, she knows of something worth protecting in the dungeon.

▶ Xiaoyan says, "I don't know about dragons, but I know there's more to this place than graves and the restless dead. Deep, deep in these mountains grow the crystal hearts that my ancestors revered." She tells a story of the crystal shard her mom kept as the focal point of a shrine in the corner of their home and how, when the undead began attacking her village, it was her mother who urged her to seek out the crystals that lay within the mountain. "We're all looking for something down here. It might just be deeper than we expected." Feeling like Xiaoyan is becoming more magical in her thinking, Xiaoyan's player changes her initial point in ACC over to SP.

▶ ROUND SIX

▶ Tozio's Burst Drive is now ready, but Tozio's player suggests that Xiaoyan act first if she's going to try a draw again. Xiaoyan successfully draws magic from the skeleton and Wisp searches for more Items, this time finding another Fast Gas, another Potion, and a SmokePlus. The Potion was another relic of a long since disturbed grave; the Fast Gas and SmokePlus are dark concoctions carried by these sepulchral monsters.

▶ Tozio unleashes zir Burst Drive. While it's been previously described as a stream of light and energy coming from zir crossed arms over zir chest, Tozio's player decides to elaborate. Tozio strikes the pose with legs wide and zir arms in an X and the powerful stream of energy coils out like a dragon. Tozio's DMG is 2, so the Burst Drive deals 5 HP of damage between the phantom and skeleton, vaporizing them both in a crackling wave. Wisp remarks, "Ha, that's new."

▶ CHAMBER COMPLETE

▶ **Before starting the Victory Theme cutscene,** the characters all gather Gear from drawing magic.

Xiaoyan drew from the skeleton, gaining the Accessory Gear **“Bone Gauges,”** which fit into the wearer’s earlobes and increase in size in proximity to the undead.

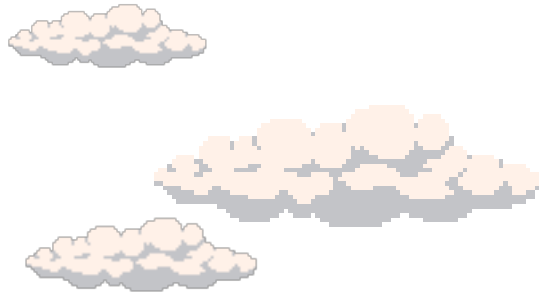
Tozio drew from the phantom, gaining the Legs Gear **“Wraith Wraps”** which allow the wearer to float briefly on a spectral mist.

Wisp drew from both the skeleton and the gargoyle, respectively gaining the Body Gear **“Ribbed Cage”** and the Arms Gear **“Grotesque Gloves.”** Since Wisp already has new Gear in his Body slot, he gives the bony armor to Xiaoyan, who hasn’t equipped new Body Gear yet. Wisp keeps the Grotesque Gloves which look like open mouths with stony fangs.

- ▶ For more on Gear, see **THE ITEMS** chapter.
- ▶ For more on the Victory Theme cutscene, see **THE CUTSCENES** chapter.
- ▶ For more on Affinities, see **THE RELATIONSHIPS** chapter.



► THE RECOVERY



When the party flees from Combat, they retreat to the previous chamber which is now empty of monsters. They have a few options to recuperate before ultimately moving on. The party can only retreat by one chamber; the dungeon is such a great labyrinth that, no matter which direction the party leaves the safe chamber from, they find themselves heading deeper into danger.

RECOVERY is also a vital moment of relative calm the characters and players may use to reflect on the battles they've fought thus far. While the characters may muse over mysteries and swap stories, the players discuss their own needs before moving on to the next Combat. It is important during Recovery to hold discussions both narratively, as the characters, and metanarratively, as players.

When Recovery begins, before any Recovery moves are made, each player takes a turn sharing something they felt they did well, something they felt another character did well, something they found frustrating or too difficult, and something they hope to interact with in the next Combat phase.

► This discussion format is inspired by *Stars and Wishes* by Lu Quade, which was in turn inspired by “*Roses & Thorns*” and “*Two Stars and a Wish*,” both well established discussion models in education and play. For more info, refer to the *TTRPG Safety Toolkit* linked in *The Credits*.

Additionally, this discussion is an explicit opportunity to talk about any difficult feelings players may have, but aren't sure how to bring up to the group. For example, if a player was made uncomfortable by the description of a particular monster or how a certain action was described, they can feel welcome bringing it up. This is also an opening to talk over narrative plans as players, such as two players noticing their characters have good chemistry and then deciding that their characters will fall in love soon. Conversations such as these can absolutely happen at any point during play – especially as they come up – however Recovery specifically creates the space for them.



If play has been going on for over forty minutes or so, consider taking a ten minute break after Recovery and before reentering Combat. Walk around, stretch, get water and snacks, talk about your day with the other players.

▶ RECOVERY MOVES

▶▶▶ RECOVER IN A PREVIOUS CHAMBER

When you **Recover in a Previous Chamber**, all Burst Timers and Engagements are erased and everyone heals one Harm; no roll is needed. Each character may take one other action before moving on. Recovering in a Previous Chamber is only triggered when all characters successfully flee from Combat. If all characters are reduced to 0 HP, then refer to the Game Over cutscene.

▶▶▶ RUMMAGE ABOUT

When you **Rummage About** in an empty chamber, roll +ACC. On a hit, you find one Item amongst the debris. The Item may be a Key Item or selected from the Item Chart without rolling. On a 10+, you also discover a clue about the dungeon.

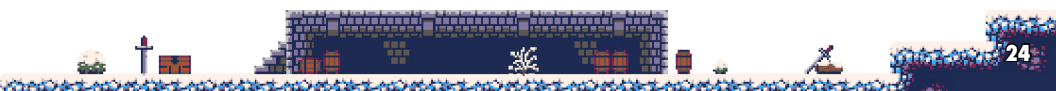
▶ See the "Dungeon Discovery" DM move.

▶▶▶ STUDY MAGIC

When you **Study Magic**, roll +SP. If you are not in a School of Magic: on a hit, you can perform one supernatural feat while in the next chamber; on a 7-9, decide to control either when or how the magic will manifest and the DM will decide the rest. If you are in a School of Magic, you may choose instead to use the effects specific to your School.

▶▶▶ TRAIN UP

When you **Train Up**, roll +DMG to strengthen, fortify, and toughen your body. On a 10+, you may re-roll up to three Missed rolls until the next time you can train up; on a 7-9, you only get one re-roll. When a Miss is re-rolled, the player rolls the dice a second time and keeps the better result. The character begins to falter, but calls on their strength and will to persevere.



▶▶▶ TAKE TIME TO FEEL BETTER

When you **Take Time to Feel Better**, roll +DEF. On a 10+, heal up to three Harm from yourself or allies, in addition to the default one; on a 7-9, you only manage to heal up one more Harm. Either way, you feel refreshed and more ready to continue the mission.

▶▶▶ USE ITEM

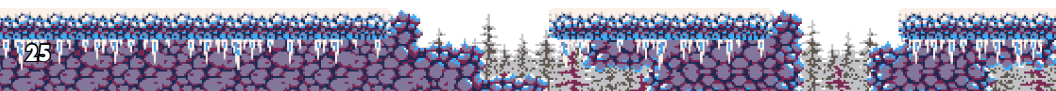
When you **Use an Item**, benefit from its effects. No roll is necessary. This move does not count as your one Recovery action and may be made multiple times, including before your Recovery action. Items that interact with Engagements have no effect in Recovery. Items that grant bonuses are not cumulative; characters may only benefit from one effect at a time.

▶▶▶ EXAMPLE RECOVERY

Nephele, Folke, Maddergard, and Arctury defeated the Boss of the Flame Canyon region, and are now trudging along the Saline Coast region.

(Skip to pg. 28 to head to "The Relationships" chapter)

- ▶ Beaten and battered, the party decides to flee from a set of particularly angry giant crabs. With the help of a couple of Fast Gases, the adventurers escape back into the previous sea cave. Amidst the debris of their battle with a seaweed monster, a couple driftwood automatons, and a poisonous swarm of anemones, they rest.
- ▶ The players each share their thoughts on the recent leg of the adventure. Nephele's player was happy with how conscious they were about Affinity prompts and playing into them. They really appreciated how well Maddergard's player was using support Items on the other characters to help them achieve their goals. Nephele had a lot of Misses and her player was frustrated by how the story was shaping around the other characters taking the "fix another's mistake" prompt so much. They're excited that Nephele is very close to triggering the Dialogue Options cutscene with both Folke and Arctury, which is a bonus too because they're each only one new Gear away from completing their set.
- ▶ Folke's player was proud of all the unique ways they were able to use Gear in the last couple chambers. They second Nephele being so on top of Affinity prompts. Folke and Maddergard got into an argument over conflicting clues they found; Folke's player was rattled by the intensity of it, but thanked Maddergard's player for pausing play to check in and deciding together to resolve the argument out of character. Folke's player is looking forward to finding more clues to build out the significance of the Saline Coast.



▶ Maddergard's player is still pleased with a snarky quip they made at the Boss and cite Arctury's battle tactics as a consistent inspiration. Even though it was beaten, the anemone swarm's poison ability was frustratingly punishing. Maddergard's player would like to fight some flying monsters, like evil seagulls, so Maddergard can draw some flight Gear.

▶ Arctury's player speaks to Arctury's battle tactics and Folke's creative story ideas, battles that go on too long, and the more liberal use of time skip cutscenes in the future. Even though each player has a turn to speak, all the players share in conversation around all the ideas presented. This is an organic conversation which eventually turns into describing cool scenes in the cartoons everyone's been watching recently. The group decides to take five or ten minutes to wander away, go to the bathroom, and refill water bottles—often called a “bio break.”

▶ MAKING RECOVERY MOVES

▶ All characters heal one Harm as they rest, set up a tent, and bandage their wounds. The Engagements and Burst Timers from the chamber they just fled no longer count towards anything. A small fire is lit, Maddergard slips off his Barnacled Boots, and Arctury hums a lilting tune to herself as she cooks a pot of soup. Folke starts tinkering with their recent Gear finds and Nephelē begins meditating. The players, speaking as their characters, have light conversation about what seafood is in the pot and how gross that seaweed monster was. None of these actions trigger moves or require rolls.

▶ Folke considers the magical properties of the Gear and begins taking notes in their journal. They study magic, so Folke's player rolls +SP and gets an 11. Folke isn't in a School of Magic yet, but their player takes this opportunity to let the DM know it's something they'd like to do and soon; one supernatural feat is prepared. Folke's player doesn't have to decide what it is now and will instead define it in the moment (even though Folke, in play, has a pretty good idea what will happen).

▶ After a meal, Maddergard looks for new Items to replace the ones he used up. He rummages about, so his player rolls +ACC. The result is 8, so Maddergard's player will select any one Item from the Item Chart without having to roll again. Maddergard finds a roughly scraped X in some rocks and, digging underneath it, unearths a rotted old chest—inside is a CureAll. That'll be a hearty extra boost for the battered team.

▶ Arctury has dished up meals to her companions and immediately starts deadlifting driftwood logs. She is training up, so Arctury's player rolls +DMG. Unfortunately, it's a Miss so the DM picks a couple Recovery Miss Reactions. Inspired by Maddergard's treasure chest find, the DM describes a human-looking, eyepatch-wearing skull that suddenly shouts at Arctury (combining the options of an interrupting Extra and something unsettling). The skull barks, **“I hope you like curses!”**

▶ All of the characters participate in a conversation with the foul mouthed pirate skull, though Arctury takes a central role. The skull explains of a haunted shipwreck along the coast and promises plenty more pirate bones full of curses. It threatens great harm if the party attempts to steal any of the ship's treasure. The skull isn't a monster and no combat happens here. If Arctury decided to punt the skull into the distance, ae could do so without a roll; however, Arctury decides to keep it. Ae puts the skull into aer bag and aer player marks it as a Key Item. The DM also explains that the pirate treasure hunt could be a fun way to play into the players' aforementioned wants for this region. The DM clarifies that, because this was the consequence of a Miss, the "curse" may pop up in the next chamber as a complicating factor, but only once.

▶ Since Folke was active in and described to be next to Arctury during the pirate skull conversation, Folke's player suggests that they had witnessed something truly strange together. Arctury tucks the skull away and then ae and Folke talk about larger mysteries at play. Folke mentions the ominous words of the Flame Canyon Boss, that they "won't stop us all" and wonders if they'll find another Boss here in the Saline Coast. After a flame monster and a water monster, could an air monster and earth monster be next? Would that mean the Master of the Dungeon is a void or aether monster? Nothing firm is set, but these are ideas all of the players will build on in the story ahead. Arctury's player will add +1 to a future roll of their choice from the Affinity and Folke's player makes another mark on their character sheet next to Arctury's name.

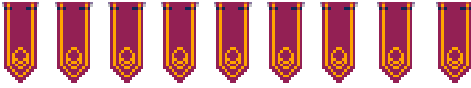
▶ Nephele is a Folkwitch and has the RecoveryPlus move allowing two Recovery moves. She enters a deep meditation, breathing steadily until a magical, spice-smelling smoke swirls up from her hands—this is her taking time to feel better. Her player rolls +DEF and gets a 10. The smoke wafts around the chamber, snaking into her and her companions' nostrils. Nephele heals one Harm and Arctury, who was the most damaged, heals two Harm.

▶ For her second action, Nephele takes a closer look at the chest Maddergard found and the spot Arctury found the pirate skull. Her player rolls +ACC to rummage about, gets a result of 7, and selects Future Juice. Nephele finds a stash of smashed bottles, labelled only with Xs, however one is intact—and faintly glowing. Since using Items doesn't count as an action, Nephele drinks it on the spot. The pirate skull shouts from Arctury's bag not to, but Nephele's vision has already begun.

▶ RECOVERY COMPLETE

▶ The DM and Nephele's player collaborate on a quick cutscene about finding the first traces of the pirate treasure in the next chamber: Key Item amulets that allow the characters to breathe underwater. With a laugh, the players agree that they're about to enter an infamous water level.

▶ THE RELATIONSHIPS



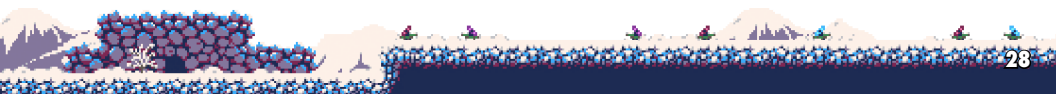
The adventurers are not alone or independent in this journey: they are a party and party members all share an Affinity with each other. As their bonds grow, characters can rely on those bonds to help them through thick and thin.

AFFINITY is represented by exchanges of action and information, doing and feeling. These actions are not intentionally performed for their own sake, but are conditions which may be met in the course of play. They may occur during Combat or during Recovery, functioning as prompts for conversation and opportunities to introduce or explore story and character development. It only takes an instant for action to become very real and switch battlefield banter into a dramatic confession.

▶ AFFINITY PROMPTS



- ▶ When you **Help Another Succeed**, learn something that character gains from being in the dungeon or something that drives them.
- ▶ When you **Prevent Another from Being Harmed**, learn something that character is afraid of or something they have at stake.
- ▶ When you **Fix Another's Mistake**, learn a weakness that character has or something they are keeping hidden from the party.
- ▶ When you **Sacrifice for Another**, learn how that character feels about you, or something that character values dearly.
- ▶ When you **Act Heroically Alongside Another**, confess something about your past knowing it will be received with understanding.
- ▶ When you **Offer Comfort to Another**, learn something that character is haunted by from their past or something they feel is a liability for them.
- ▶ When you **Witness Something Truly Strange with Another**, discuss how it connects to larger mysteries of the dungeon or share some revelatory new understanding of the dungeon.



▶ THE BENEFITS OF BONDS

When an Affinity is triggered, the answering character is emboldened by the connection and receives a bonus to an action they take later. The player may add +1 to any single roll of their choice; they can hold this +1 for so long as they like, including through Recovery, however they cannot have more than one such bonus at a time. The bonus may be combined with a bonus received from an Item or Gear. The player describes how the moment triggered by the Affinity emboldens the boosted move.

The acting player, the “you” in the Affinity prompts, also marks a tick on their character sheet next to the answering character’s name. When the player marks the fifth Affinity for a character, the Dialogue Options cutscene is triggered which allows them to forge a new Gear for the answering character out of their feelings. **All marks for that character are then removed.**

▶ AFFINITIES IN PLAY

Two characters can only experience one Affinity at a time, so if a single action could trigger multiple prompts for two characters, the acting player must choose only one to act on. If a separate Affinity includes different combinations of players, those Affinities may also be resolved. For example, the whole party may Witness Something Truly Strange together, but it will affect certain pairings of characters differently and not always reciprocally.

▶ Most options also include two results separated by “or;” the answering character decides which result to give to the acting character. The result must be truthful, but not necessarily explicit; it must be adequate, if not thorough.

Players might not know the answers to the questions asked in an Affinity. The player is encouraged to invent their truth in the moment; all players, including the DM, work together to incorporate these details into the narrative as they come up. Character conversations before and after these reveals are absolutely welcome, as are metanarrative discussions between players about the implications of the reveal.

Affinities have the potential to be triggered frequently in the course of play, but not every instance needs to be acted upon. If an Affinity would disrupt the current flow of play in a way the players don’t want, it may be ignored. If an Affinity is triggered in the heat of battle, it may also be resolved at a quieter moment, such as during that brief reprieve after defeating monsters, but before moving to the next chamber. If a player realizes later that a trigger occurred but no one noticed at the time, the Affinity may still be shared as the characters reflect back.

► THE CHARACTERS



The **CHARACTERS** in *Fight Item Run* are skilled adventurers from a variety of backgrounds and with a plethora of motivations. Regardless of how they met and what brought them here in the first place, they are a party now out of necessity. There is strength and security in teamwork, whether it's fueled by a deep bond of friendship or a begrudging acceptance for the sake of survival.

With a party, too, comes a mix of abilities and knowledge; specifically, there are types of adventurer the characters may be, called Classes. Classes grant basic and Plus abilities, as well as a modification to the character's Stats (which start at 0, 0, 1, & 1).

Each character also has a **Secret**: something only they know about the dungeon. What this Secret is, and whether the character is here because of or despite it, is up to the player. The theme of "play to find out" applies to character Secrets: they are not canonical until introduced, but begin vague and then develop through the adventure. A character's Secret may be a factor in the results of Searching an Enemy or Chamber or Rummaging About. Each time a player rolls a Miss (6 or less), they mark a tick on their character sheet next to their Secret; on the fifth mark, the Backstory Reveal cutscene is triggered and the ticks are removed.

► CREATING A CHARACTER

The adventurer each player will take the role of is a multifaceted, unique individual, both in terms of characterization and by rules on the character sheet. Here are the steps that go into making a character (whatever order you take them in is entirely up to you):

- **Name your character**, and get a sense of their personality and aesthetic. The character's backstory (i.e., their history before the first session begins) remains vague and will be developed during play.
- **Add Stats**. The player assigns the following values to each stat: 0, 0, 1, & 1.
- **Select a Class**. Mark down the Class' unique abilities and note how the Stat Bonus affects the assigned Stat values. Begin thinking about what your Secret may be; the Secret will be defined later through play.

- ▶ **Select starting Gear.** Starting Gear is all basic and does not have an Effect, but it does set the tone for the type of Gear the character uses, whether that'll be armor, robes, or street clothes; swords, staves, guns, or instruments; rings, pendants, pocket watches, or glasses. The character's beginning handheld Gear will help define what their attack and Burst Limit will be.
- ▶ **Add starting Items.** Each character begins with three +ACC Items, each individually rolled on the Item chart.
- ▶ **Add a school of Magic.** If your campaign includes Schools of Magic as a starting option, note all the unique abilities and currencies included in your character's School of Magic.



▶ CHARACTER CLASSES

▶ SIMPLE CLASSES

▶▶▶ THE SENTINEL

A tactical guardian who navigates the battlefield with bravery and deftness. Their keen defenses can be counted on to keep their allies safe – or, at least, themselves alive.

▶ FEINT & PARRY

Once per round, the Sentinel may choose to have an Engagement that would've been gained on an ally apply to themselves instead. Monsters must have four, not three, Engagements to execute a combo against the Sentinel.

▶ COMBOPLUS

When the Sentinel executes a combo, they may also remove all Engagements gained on an ally or themselves as an option, which can be taken multiple times (once per target character).

▶ STAT BONUS:

+1 DEF

▶ SECRET:

The Sentinel knows of something that's worth protecting in the dungeon.

▶▶▶ THE ELEMENTALIST

A gifted maestro of magic, independent of any School of Magic; whether by arcane teachings, abhorrent lineage, or a fae or fell bargain.

▶ MAGIC TWIST

The Elementalist may always add a basic elemental effect to DMG-based rolls using keywords, such as “fiery,” “freezing,” or “slimy.” The player and the DM decide how these effects help or hinder any given situation.

▶ COMBOPLUS

When the Elementalist executes a combo, they may use their SP instead of DMG and may apply more advanced keyword effects, such as “fiery storm,” “freezing armor,” or “slimy pit,” to the combo options.

▶ STAT BONUS:

+1 SP

▶ SECRET:

The Elementalist knows of a bizarre phenomenon that only occurs within the dungeon.

▶▶▶ THE LANCER

A keen and fierce fighter, named not for the weapon they wield, but for the deadly accuracy with which they wield it.

▶ STRIKE TRUE

The Lancer gains an extra Engagement on a target whenever a move would give them at least one.

▶ COMBOPLUS

When the Lancer executes a combo, they may always pick one Harm for free.

▶ STAT BONUS:

+1 DMG

▶ SECRET:

The Lancer knows of a legendary weapon that’s been lost somewhere in the dungeon.

▶▶▶ THE COLLECTOR

Sharp eyes, quick fingers, and an encyclopedic knowledge of all things useful and/or valuable are the Collector’s tools of the trade.

▶ STICKY FINGERS

Whenever they gain any amount of Items or Gear, they may also gain one extra of the same type (Item or Gear) by rolling on the Item Chart or Gear slots. This also includes gaining one extra starting Item (for a total of four +ACC).

▶ COMBOPLUS

Deeply familiar with their own Inventory, the Collector may always choose 1–3 Items as an option when executing a combo.

▶ STAT BONUS:

+1 ACC

▶ SECRET:

The Collector knows of a special treasure to be found in the dungeon.

▶ ADVANCED CLASSES

▶▶▶ THE FOLKWITCH

The Folkwitch is in tune with natural magic, and their heart and mind are open to the flow of fate. Their immense magical proficiency allows for strong bonds with their comrades, but weakens their physical strength.

▶ SYMPATH'S RITE

The Folkwitch may take an action to meditate and grant +2 to any single move they or an ally within sight makes.

▶ RECOVERYPLUS

The Folkwitch takes two Recovery actions, which may be the same action twice.

▶ STAT BONUS:

+2 SP, -1 DMG

▶ SECRET:

The Folkwitch knows why someone else in the party is destined to be in the dungeon.

▶▶▶ THE TRIPSHADOW

A master of silent movement and the art of disappearing, the Tripshadow wields dark arts for unrivaled stealth. This unique practice comes at the cost of other magical aptitude.

▶ VANISH

When the Tripshadow Disengages from Combat, they may immediately allow for another willing character to begin Fleeing as well.

▶ COMBOPLUS

When the Tripshadow executes a combo, they may choose to become Shadowed. Once Shadowed, Tripshadows cannot be targeted by any enemy until they next Attack a Target; they gain a +1 to their next attack, benefitting from the element of surprise.

▶ STAT BONUS:

+2 DEF, -1 SP

▶ SECRET:

The Tripshadow knows someone who was lost to the dungeon.

▶▶▶ THE ARCHSMITH

A highly skilled and efficient artisan, the Archsmith is capable of fashioning their opponents into wondrous equipment. Their reliance on Gear, however, makes the Archsmith otherwise less capable of defending themselves.

▶ SOULFORGING

Their genius at the craft is such that they may Draw Magic from a single target multiple times. On a 10+ when Drawing Magic from a Target, the Archsmith gains a second Draw on the target. The Archsmith must still wait for the target to be defeated to collect the drawn Gear.

▶ COMBOPLUS

When the Archsmith executes a combo, they may collect all Draws immediately as if the target had been defeated as a free option, forming Gear on the spot by shaping the essence into (randomly selected) equipment.

▶ STAT BONUS:

+2 ACC, -1 DEF

▶ SECRET:

The Archsmith knows the truth behind a legend about a certain region in the dungeon.

▶▶▶ THE SWORDBREAKER

A brutal master of weaponry, if a bit reckless with their tools. What they lack in finesse, they more than make up for in force.

▶ DUEL WIELDING

Their hectic fighting style includes a weapon in each hand, meaning two Gear in the Handheld slot. They may benefit from both to their full ability, but if they roll 6 or less when using their weapons, one of their weapons breaks when it clatters too hard against something other than its target. The Swordbreaker only needs one new Handheld Gear to satisfy leveling up requirements.

▶ COMBOPLUS

When the Swordbreaker executes a combo, they may choose to count their Burst Timer down by one as an option; this option may be taken multiple times and may reduce the Burst Timer to a minimum of 1.

▶ STAT BONUS:

.....
+2 DMG, -1 ACC

▶ SECRET:

.....
The Swordbreaker knows of a unique beast that lives in the dungeon.



▶ SPECIAL CLASSES

▶▶▶ THE ASCETIC

Having lived either in total seclusion or a secluded community, the Ascetic has been enlightened by their time alone and their rigorous training regimen. The Ascetic could be someone who willingly left society, or was forcefully ostracized.

▶ ANCIENT ART

Select one specific move; the Ascetic will always receive +2 when rolling for this move. The Ascetic receives +1 for all other uses of this Stat. For example, if the Ascetic has trained to Draw Magic, they'd gain +1 to SP.

▶ COMBOPLUS

When performing a combo, the Ascetic may choose to gather energy: be it willpower, supernatural power, or favor with their higher power. This energy can be expended when using a move to set the result of the dice rolled to 7. Bonuses are still applied normally. This energy must be used before the end of the next recovery, otherwise the energy is lost.

▶ STAT BONUS:

.....
(See Ancient Art)

▶ SECRET:

.....
The Ascetic knows of a great power sealed away in the dungeon.

▶▶▶ THE BEASTWHISPERER

Beasts are beautiful: the abilities of an animal, the intelligence of a person, and the loyalty of a friend. The Beastwhisperer fosters a mutual respect with beasts (which are distinct from monsters) like none other, to work collaboratively with them and even borrow their abilities.

▶ BEAST FRIENDS FOREVER

The Beastwhisperer is accompanied by three loyal beast companions. To represent each beast, select three verbs from below, or use your own: **bite, burrow, charge, claw, fly, lash, leap, mimic, scavenge, scurry, swim.** When the player makes any move, they may include their beasts' actions when considering what they're capable of. For example, if a Beastwhisperer Searched a Chamber with the help of a bird companion, they may find Items hidden high up where they'd be otherwise unable to reach.

▶ AFFINITYPLUS

The Beastwhisperer may trigger Affinity prompts with their beast companions, which all share one track for Affinity marks; any player may suggest the beast's response to the Affinity prompt. When The Beastwhisperer triggers the fifth Affinity prompt for their beast companions, they may shift into a beast form, in which they gain attributes based on one or more of their companions. This form lasts until the Beastwhisperer chooses to end it or they reach OHP. The beast form may be treated as a specialized set of Gear in addition to the Beastwhisperer's currently equipped Gear.

▶ STAT BONUS:

+++++
+1 DMG, +1 SP,
-1 DEF

▶ SECRET:

+++++
The Beastwhisperer knows what flora and fauna within the dungeon are safe, useful, or edible—and, more importantly, which ones aren't.

▶▶▶ THE UNDYING

A psychic sorcerer with a knack for the necromantic, the Undying is named such not because they cannot die, but because they already did once and it didn't stick. Their impossibly old body is a mighty vessel of magic, if frailer than it was in life.

▶ NIGHTMARE FORCE

The Undying has a powerful psychic aura that lunges like a giant set of jaws. When the Undying rolls 10+ on any move, the psychic force can strike to launch the Undying into a powerful leap, throw a monster around (this does not add nor remove any Engagements), or to otherwise move something with brief, but powerful force.

▶ AFFINITYPLUS

When the Undying would gain +1 from an Affinity prompt, they can instead choose to heal 1HP from the positive flow of psychic energy.

▶ STAT BONUS:

+++++
+2 SP, +1 ACC,
-2 DMG

▶ SECRET:

+++++
The Undying knows the origin of the dungeon and its history from before the Master of the Dungeon occupied it.

▶▶▶ **THE DRUMLINE**

The Drumline provides tactical direction and boosted morale to their teammates. Whether or not the Drumline wields an actual instrument, rhythm and beat are intrinsic to their power.

▶ **STEP IN LINE**

Whenever the Drumline gains an Engagement, the musical nature of their Gear emits an invigorating tune. All party members, including the Drumline, may make a significant tactical movement, such as closing a distance, sliding to a difficult spot, or diving behind cover. These movements do not count as a character's action for a round, and may place that character in a more advantageous position for the next round.

▶ **COMBOPLUS**

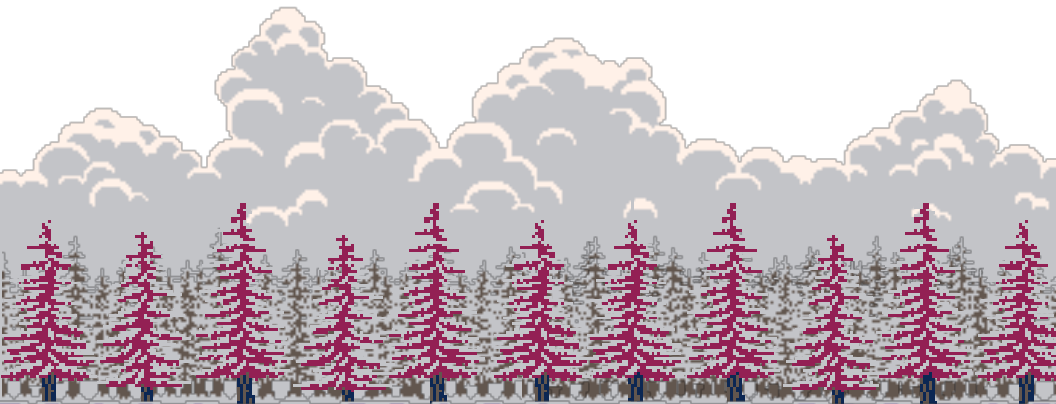
When The Drumline executes a combo, they may allow one other character to make an additional move this round as a free option.

▶ **STAT BONUS:**

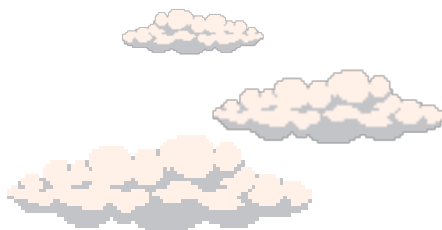
+1 ACC, +1 DEF,
-1 SP

▶ **SECRET:**

The Drumline knows the old songs of the area and, particularly, how they differ from the current knowledge of the dungeon.



▶ THE MAGIC



There are several distinct Schools of Magic that adventurers of any Class may study. It is very difficult to begin studying under a School and doing so requires a mentor. Mentors are, of course, hard to come by in a dungeon, but some disgruntled warlock may be bartered with or ancient scrolls could be uncovered. These hooks can be included throughout play, giving players an opportunity to explore this option for their character.

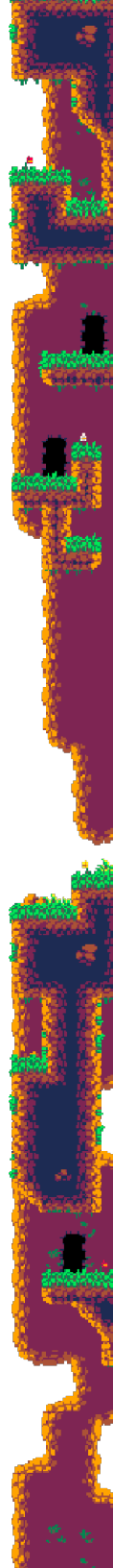
If there is a specific School a player would like for their character, they can discuss that intention with the DM to be incorporated organically into the unfolding story. Even though the character's journey in joining a School of Magic may be arduous, the player still has narrative agency to initiate it.

▶ Players may also choose for their adventurers to begin in a School of Magic at the start of play, which includes the Nonpractitioners of Magic. It's also completely valid to not use Schools of Magic, with or without the Nonpractitioners, at the beginning of the game to avoid the extra level of complexity they add. Magic still exists outside of these Schools and can be prepared with the Study Magic move during Recovery.

▶ ALCHEMY

ALCHEMY is the science of transmuting Items into raw magic and fusing that magic into new ethereal materials. When an Alchemist studies the magic of Alchemy during Recovery, roll +SP to break down Items and store them as magic within the soul, queued as spells ready to be cast. On a 10+, up to three spells can be queued; on a 7-9, up to two spells can be queued, but an extra item is destroyed in the process.

A spell is made by combining up to two Items, though rumors say that the old masters could create great power with complex recipes of many Items. All Items within a category count as the same for making a spell. **Spells can be cast at any point with no cost and do not require a roll.**



The known spells (which have consistent effects, but situational rules) are the following:

- ▶ **HEALING RAIN:** (1 Heal Item) a raincloud refreshes everyone in a small area.
- ▶ **FIREBALL:** (1 Harm Item) a blast of fire hurts everyone in a small area.
- ▶ **BARRIER:** (1 Buff Item) a shield of shimmering magic protects everyone in a small area.
- ▶ **SILENCE:** (1 Affect Item) all sound and the power it carries is neutralized in a small area.
- ▶ **QUAKE:** (1 Hinder Item) the ground shakes in a small area.
- ▶ **WATER OF LIFE:** (2 Heal Items) a wave of rejuvenating water rushes through an area.
- ▶ **VAMPIRE DRAIN:** (1 Heal & 1 Harm Item) the Alchemist takes in the life force of an enemy.
- ▶ **PLANT SHIELD:** (1 Heal & 1 Buff Item) plant life erupts from the earth to protect allies.
- ▶ **HEART SENSE:** (1 Heal & 1 Affect Item) the Alchemist can sense the presence of nearby life.
- ▶ **BODY CRAWL:** (1 Heal & 1 Hinder Item) the Alchemist can partially shift inside a target.
- ▶ **METEOR:** (2 Harm Items) a rain of fire is brought down over an area.
- ▶ **MONSTROUS FORM:** (1 Harm & 1 Buff Item) turns the target, whether Alchemist or an ally, into a powerful, instinct-driven monster for a short time.
- ▶ **METAMORPH:** (1 Harm & 1 Affect Item) turns an opponent into an unfortunate, if still somewhat functional shape.
- ▶ **HANDS OF THE DEEP:** (1 Heal & 1 Hinder Item) earthen claws reach from the ground to grapple foes – or whoever wanders too close.
- ▶ **FINAL FORM:** (2 Buff Items) turns the target, whether Alchemist or an ally, into a brilliant and ideal version of themselves for a single action.
- ▶ **SWIM IN THE EARTH:** (1 Buff & 1 Affect Item) the target, whether Alchemist, ally, or enemy, moves through solid mass as if it were viscous.
- ▶ **POWER STEAL:** (1 Buff & 1 Hinder Item) temporarily gain a unique ability from a target.
- ▶ **PUZZLEBOX:** (2 Affect Items) alter the immediate surroundings into a confusing, difficult, or otherwise paradoxical arrangement.
- ▶ **ANIMATE:** (1 Affect & 1 Hinder Item) bring something inanimate to a facsimile of life.
- ▶ **TIME WARP:** (2 Hinder Items) temporarily flex and distort time in the area.

Alchemy is the manipulation of form, and thus manipulates the user accordingly. Alchemists invariably discover their hands and tongues stained with the materials they work with, and magic swirls from their eyes like bubbling cauldrons. Whenever the player rolls a miss (6 or less) while interacting with Items in any way, they describe a way in which some part of the Alchemist transforms.

For example, a misuse of a Great Fang might cause a single large tusk to grow from the Alchemist's mouth or Stink Grass might sprout out of the Alchemist like body hair; the alteration has no positive effect, though may incur up to a -1 penalty to a single roll per chamber. The Alchemist may undertake the painful process of reverting the alteration, removing any negative effects and taking one Harm.

▶▶▶ BECOMING AN ALCHEMIST

An Alchemist mentor will often instruct a student through trial and error, encouraging them to mix and match ingredients and then sample their effects. Experienced Alchemists declare that one must not fear the Method in order to have true mastery of it. A mentor will rarely spare their own ingredients and will be stingy with their hard-earned recipes, preferring to guide self-discovery. Alchemy can also be discovered in books and scrolls left behind by Alchemists, forcing the character to decipher confusing symbols. Either way, the process has a high cost in Items.

▶ THE FELL HEART

THE FELL HEART is one of the least formalized Schools of Magic, but divination from the carnage of battle can still prove to be powerful. During combat, when a Disciple of the Fell Heart destroys a monster—and they must be the one to deal the final blow—they may ask a unique question. Their own racing heart will answer it for them with images they feel coursing through their veins. These answers grant knowledge, but also lend strength, as the essence of the fallen foe imbues the Disciple's body with borrowed muscle memory and other unusual power manifestations.

When a Disciple studies the magic of The Fell Heart during Recovery, roll +SP.

On a 10+, they may come up with a new question and add it to the list of queries they may ask of the Fell Heart; on a 7-9, they may still add a new question, but The Fell Heart causes their subconscious to pour forth and the Disciple inadvertently provides information about themselves to the other characters. The other players may collectively select one of The Fell Heart questions (including new additions) as the information their characters learn, replacing "present foe" with the Disciple.

The questions a Disciple begins with are the following:

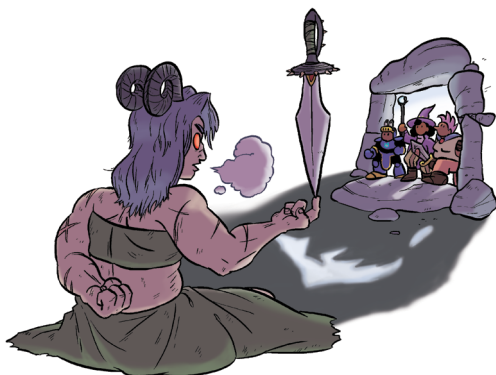
- ▶ What is a present foe's **weakness or resistences?**
- ▶ What are a present foe's **special strengths?**
- ▶ What are a present foe's **most important memories?**
- ▶ What around me is **the source of the most danger?**

The Disciple's player and the DM may get inventive with the type of information the Disciple of The Fell Heart may learn from their questions as the Disciple kills, meditates, and kills some more. Asking about a foe's memories may reveal information about the dungeon itself or even of the Master of the Dungeon. These questions can provide a balance of immediately relevant battle tips and ongoing clues to the mystery of the dungeon.

Finally, the Disciple also has access to the special question, "**Fell Heart, will you lend me your strength?**" which The Fell Heart will always answer in the affirmative. Whatever currently relevant information the Disciple has gained so far becomes the fuel that shapes – or disfigures – the Disciple into a form more suitable for acting on that information. For example, if a foe is weak to fire, then flames will bubble up from under the Disciple's skin and wreath them in a blaze; if the nearest danger is a distance away, the Disciple will slosh into blood and rush like a wave directly to that danger and then reform. The player works with the DM to decide what effects, positive and negative, these transformations will have on the Disciple.

▶▶▶ BECOMING A DISCIPLE

A grizzled and mysterious warrior sits alone in a chamber the party expected to be full of monsters, her eyes flaming red and her breath eerily calm. She terrifies the party except for one, who understands. They wordlessly shake hands, spar, and – after a crushing defeat – the Disciple begins having visions which eventually reveal themselves to be the secrets of battle. The mysterious warrior is never seen again. The Fell Heart is awoken from within, but is never comfortable or easy to adjust to.



▶ CARTOGRAMANCY

Unbound from geography, CARTOGRAMANCERS have transcended the study of terrain, and instead map the ley lines of conceptual direction and chart the intangible space between space. When the Cartogramancer studies the magic of Cartogramancy during Recovery, they may make one of the following two moves instead: **Find Another Vacant Chamber** or **Chart the Dungeon**.

When the Cartogramancer wants to Find Another Vacant Chamber, roll +SP; on a 10+, the party may take another Recovery phase in a new empty chamber (during which the Cartogramancer may attempt this move again) and on a 7-9, the party finds a chamber where the monsters are already half-slain, making for an easier combat but also raising a few troubling questions.

When the Cartogramancer wants to Chart the Dungeon, they set to their non-Euclidean charts and fractal compasses and roll +ACC. On a 10+, the player describes a symbolic theme, like “trial by fire,” “cold and ancient tomb,” “leap of faith,” “light of hope,” or “bottomless pit,” and **also picks one of the following options for what this information represents:**



- ▶ A nearby area
- ▶ An area of great danger
- ▶ An area with great rewards
- ▶ The Master of the Dungeon



The DM will interpret and explain how the theme relates to the selected option. On a 7-9, they only pick either a theme or what it represents and the DM will provide the rest of the information. Not even the Cartogramancer knows if they are reading objective truths or inventing what the future holds; either way, the player helps shape what lies ahead.

Cartogramancy requires great focus on the world as it isn't, as it could be, and outside of immediate relevancy. While this grants amazing insight that allows for the creation of their incredible maps, it also splits their concentration – not as a distraction might split a fighter's concentration, but in the way a prism splits light. Whenever a Cartogramancer rolls 6 or less on any move, the DM may declare that they Wander. They discover a door that wasn't there, stairs to nowhere, or some other space outside of space likely to cause more trouble than good – especially if they wander off on their own.

When a Cartogramancer Wanders, they leave the chamber and will rejoin the party once they enter the next chamber, whether by Combat or Recovery. From the Cartogramancer's perspective, an indeterminately long amount of time has passed. Unfortunately, this takes

a toll on their relationships: the player rolls 1d6 and erases an equal number of Affinity marks from their character sheet. The player may invent stories from the time away, but given the transdimensional nature of the Wander, this information isn't guaranteed to be relevant to the narrative in the same way searching for clues or charting the dungeon is.

▶▶▶ BECOMING A CARTOGRAMANCER

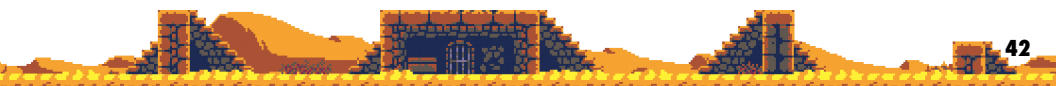
An experienced Cartogramancer alone in a dungeon is a cryptic figure. They reference events that haven't happened yet and places beyond understanding. They share their nearly indecipherable maps and, just maybe, one among the party gleans the insight. Before too many questions can be asked, the mysterious figure has disappeared beyond a dead end, leaving enough tools for their legacy to continue. More likely, though, is the discovery of maps and tools curiously abandoned that a character may self-teach from.

▶ CATCH-SUMMONING

The magic of CATCH-SUMMONING is a deft skill: the Summoner reflects the power of monsters back at the very dungeon which manifests them. Monsters, which are not sentient or sapient creatures, are little more than obstacles for most adventurers. However, Summoners can capture the essence of a monster and wield it as their own. Catch-Summoning is performed in two parts: Catching, in which the Summoner creates a copy of the monster's essence, and Summoning, in which the Summoner conjures the monster forth from its essence to act.

When the Summoner has at least three Engagements on a target and they want to Catch a Monster, remove three Engagements and roll +ACC. On a hit, the monster's essence is caught; on a 7-9, it replaces a previously caught monster; on a 10+, the monster is added to the Summoner's collection. A monster remains on the battlefield after its essence has been caught. How Summoners store their caught monsters varies: some use small bottles or locket, while others use cards or pages of a book (the monster's image appearing as a sketch on the surface). There is no limit, besides the Summoner's own recordkeeping, to the number of caught monsters a Summoner can have.

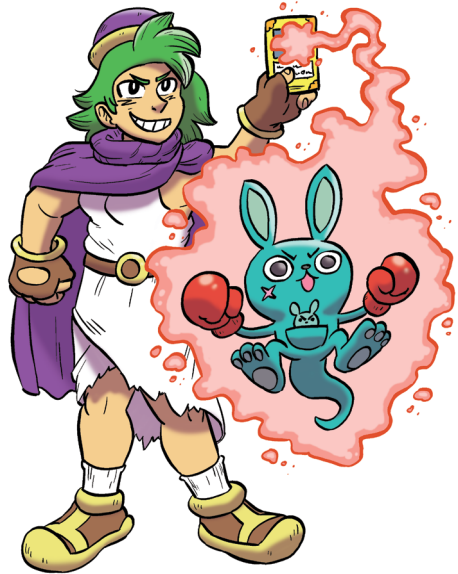
When the Summoner studies the magic of Catch-Summoning during recovery, roll +SP to combine the essence of caught monsters to create stronger summons. On a hit, two monsters of the same level can be combined to create a single monster of a level one higher. On a 7-9, the player selects one of the two monsters' Traits for the new monster; on a 10+, the player and the DM may come up with a new single Trait which combines the two original monsters' Traits. On a miss, one of the monsters doesn't survive the attempt and the other remains at its level.



A monster caught in Combat is level 1. Only monsters of the same level can be combined: a level 1 and a level 1 make a level 2, a level 2 and a level 2 make a level 3, and so on. Level doesn't factor into a newly caught monster replacing a previously caught monster. If the player does not want to replace any existing monsters, they may choose to not catch the new monster; their Engagements on that monster are still lost, however.

When a Summoner wishes to Summon a Monster in Combat, roll +SP. On a hit, the monster appears and performs a special action based on its Trait. On a 7-9, this monster cannot be summoned again until the next Recovery; on a 10+, it may be summoned again. The player describes how the monster's Trait influences the monster's action and may distribute up to a total combined Engagements and/or +1 bonuses between allies equal to the monster's level. An icy level 1 monster could create a platform to give a ranged character +1 from their higher ground. A fiery level 3 monster could ignite two melee character's weapons, giving them each +1 and one of them an Engagement on their current target. Engagements function per Combat rules; +1 bonuses apply to the receiving character's next move and then go away.

► Keeping so many monsters captured has its difficulties. Whenever the Summoner misses (rolls a 6 or less) on any move, the DM may choose to have one of the caught monsters escape and inflict a Harm number equal to its level on the Summoner. Fortunately, it's far more likely for a lower level monster to escape than a higher level. The DM must also recognize that the Summoner's player puts in a lot of work to combine their monsters and only use this disadvantage when narratively beneficial and not beyond anyone's point of fun.



▶▶▶ BECOMING A SUMMONER

The secrets of Catch-Summoning can spill in many ways: a chance encounter with a Summoner generous enough to share knowledge (and perhaps looking to benefit from a trade), a magically sealed chest of caught monsters, or a powerful Draw that goes wrong in the right way. Once the character is on the path to becoming a Summoner, it's mostly trial and error to see how monsters can act and combine with each other.

▶ THE BAZAAR OF DREAMS

The strange School of Magic practiced by those called the **MERCHANTS OF THE BAZAAR OF DREAMS** is taught only at a location one accesses in sleep. The Bazaar of Dreams, which may or may not be real, is a bustling marketplace that exists within dreams, subtly different to each dreamer and shrouded in that cloudy way half-remembered dreams always are. The Merchants trade and barter in sleep, dreams, and visions, often unbeknownst to their customer. This allows them to bewilder and subdue the monsters they encounter.

When a Merchant wishes to trade in the metaphysical currency called "Dreams" with a target, they roll +SP. The Merchant gains one Dream, which the player marks on their character sheet. On a hit, the target falls into a troubled sleep. On a 10+, the target also loses any Engagements it has on any characters. Sleeping monsters stay asleep until interacted with (including by another monster). A sleeping target is not defeated, but is otherwise unable to act.

Dreams are a risky currency to carry in bulk. When a Merchant Gives Away a Dream, roll +DEF and lose one Dream. On a hit, the Merchant has a positive vision and gives a single ally +1 to their next roll. On a miss, a nightmare is unleashed: the Merchant and all allies suffer -1 to each of their next rolls. The player describes how the Dream manifests and how it is helpful or harmful to the party.

Immediately upon Recovery, before any move can be made or any benefit received, the Dreams the Merchant has gathered in their trades thus far take effect. Roll +Dreams as the Merchant is overcome with waking visions and pick one choice from the list below. On a 10+, the DM also picks two; on a 7-9, the DM picks one; and on a 6 or less, the DM doesn't pick any. A high result is not necessarily a good outcome.

The following options describe visions that fill the Merchant's mind:

- ▶ An omen of impending doom
- ▶ A glimpse of the world outside of the dungeon
- ▶ The Merchant's greatest fear
- ▶ Waking visions that haunt the Merchant until their next Recovery
- ▶ The overwhelming feeling of the Merchant's wishes coming true
- ▶ A dramatic fate, good or bad, set to befall another memory of the party
- ▶ Mysterious clues and riddles about the nature of the dungeon
- ▶ A symbolic representation of the Master of the Dungeon and their plans
- ▶ A troubling fact from the dungeon's history
- ▶ A lead or an obstacle relating to the Merchant's Secret
- ▶ Hints about another character's Secret

The player begins by describing the vision from the prompt they picked. The DM then describes the rest of the vision (if applicable) and may also elaborate on the prompt the player picked. The DM does not have to state what options they picked, nor do they need to explain the specific meaning behind the visions. The Merchant is familiar with the types of images they might receive (as in: the above list) and will know the nature of the information picked by the player.

▶▶▶ **BECOMING A MERCHANT**

.....

A character becomes a Merchant before they even realize it: they venture into the Bazaar of Dreams during fitful nights and, eventually, their first trade in Dreams is like *deja vu* to them. Most memories of the Bazaar itself, or who there might've taught them, are lost, but the new Merchant will become increasingly aware of cryptic visions preceding the realization of their power.

▶ **NONPRACTITIONER OF MAGIC**

Those outside the Schools of Magic have innate abilities and, without the rigid teachings and high costs of ritual magic, pursue other strengths. Characters who begin play **without a School of Magic** have **Passion**: a concept, belief, or action that drives their pursuits, holds their deep interest, and is integral to their history or identity. Passions are limited by the setting (honing one's hacking skills wouldn't be appropriate for an old-timey campaign) and other players may weigh in with suggestions or concerns. Passions are abstract goals, tangible enough to act towards, but complex enough to not be easily achievable.

Once per chamber, when the character acts on, for, or because of their Passion, they may treat their move as a 10+ without rolling. In the next chamber, whether Combat or Recovery, the DM will introduce some complication for the character relating to their Passion or their boosted action.

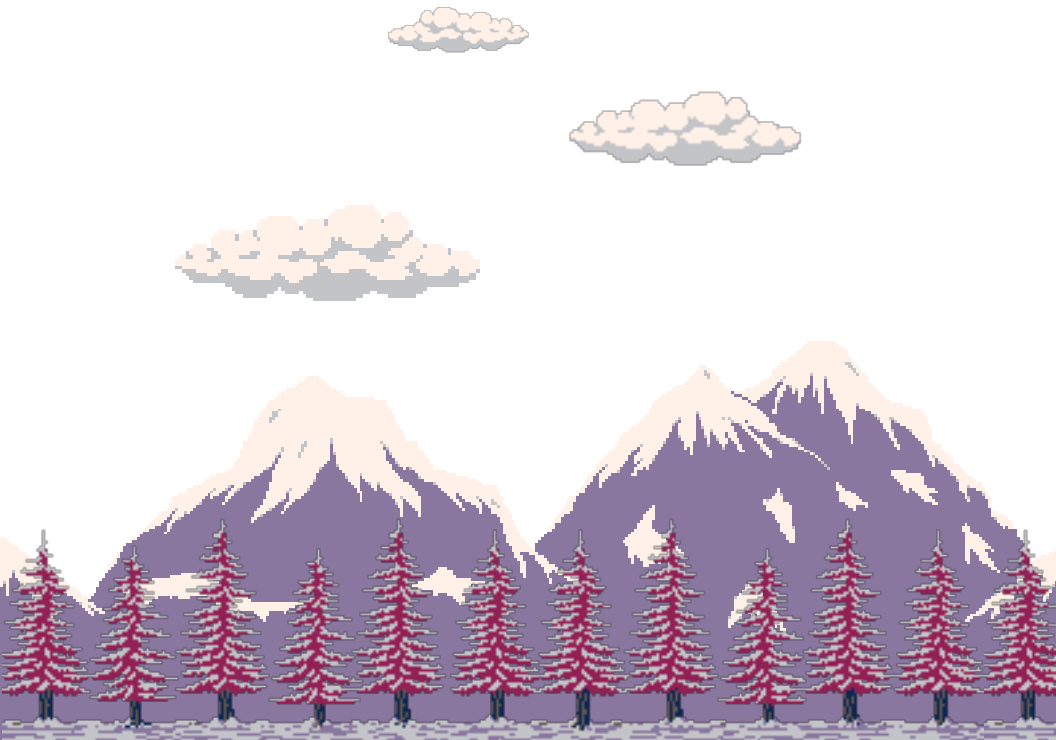
Consider the following options as consequences:

-
- ▶ The character receives Harm
 - ▶ The character is put into a high-stakes situation
 - ▶ The players learn of something bad happening elsewhere in the dungeon
 - ▶ The character learns of something bad that will likely happen in the future
 - ▶ The character temporarily loses access to their Gear Effects
 - ▶ The character temporarily loses access to their Techniques

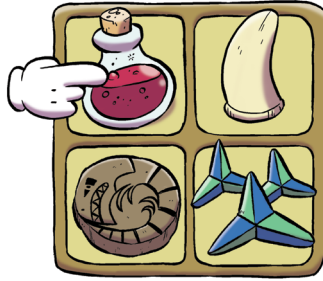
- ▶ The character loses an item
- ▶ The character gains a Trait (like a monster Trait) that hinders more than it helps.
- ▶ Hints about another character's Secret
- ▶ The character has a difficult decision to make



If no Schools of Magic are in play, Nonpractitioners can also be omitted. Characters who are not in other Schools of Magic do not have to be a Nonpractitioner by default. All characters are able to Study Magic and perform supernatural feats without being in a School of Magic. Being a Nonpractitioner of Magic is meant to be an exciting character option like the ones offered in other Schools of Magic, but on the character's own terms.



► THE ITEMS



The titular **ITEMS** feature prominently within *Fight Item Run*. The term “Items” refers to potions, trinkets, or objects of power with a single use. Items are stored in individual characters’ inventories until they’re used and then removed. There is no limit to the number of Items that may be carried in an Inventory. “Gear” refers to equipment the characters gain to get stronger, learn special abilities, and advance in the dungeon.

When an Item is gained, however it’s gained unless stated otherwise, the player rolls two separate dice and consults the Item Chart: the value of the first die determines the category, and the second die selects the specific Item within that category. The player describes details about an individual Item, such as appearance or specific description of its effect. Some circumstances will limit the results of the chart to only certain categories of Items.

► ITEM CHART

The **ITEM types** are as follows:

[1] COMMON

[2] HEAL

[3] HARM

[4] BUFF

[5] AFFECT

[6] HINDER

♣ COMMON ITEMS

NOTE: items listed are [per type] from previous categories

♣ **[1] POTION:** (Heal)

♣ **[2] TWO POTIONS:** (Heal)

♣ **[3] FANG:** (Harm)

♣ **[4] ELIXIR:** (Buff)

♣ **[5] FAST GAS:** (Affect)

♣ **[6] SMOKESCREEN:** (Hinder)

HEAL ITEMS

- ☞ [1] **POTION:** Remove one Engagement on the recipient.
- ☞ [2] **MEGAPOTION:** Remove one Engagement on each ally.
- ☞ [3] **ANTIDOTE:** Remove any bad conditions from recipient.
- ☞ [4] **CURE:** Remove one Harm from recipient.
- ☞ [5] **CUREALL:** Remove one Harm from each ally.
- ☞ [6] **RESTORE:** Return a fallen recipient to consciousness with 1/2 (round up) HP.

HARM ITEMS

- ⚔ [1] **FANG:** Any ally may gain one Engagement on the recipient.
- ⚔ [2] **GREAT FANG:** Any ally may gain two Engagements on the recipient.
- ⚔ [3] **BATTLE HORN:** All Allies gain one Engagement on the chosen recipient.
- ⚔ [4] **POISON:** Allies gain an extra Engagement against recipient when they attack.
- ⚔ [5] **GOLIATH FANG:** Give one Harm to the recipient.
- ⚔ [6] **HOLY WATER:** Give one Harm to each recipient; affects all present monsters.

BUFF ITEMS

- ☞ [1] **ELIXIR:** +1 to the recipient's next roll.
- ☞ [2] **MEGALIXIR:** +1 to next roll for all recipients.
- ☞ [3] **STRONG TONIC:** +2 to the recipient's next DMG roll.
- ☞ [4] **SPEED BEV:** +2 to the recipient's next DEF roll.
- ☞ [5] **THINK DRINK:** +2 to the recipient's next ACC roll.
- ☞ [6] **SPECIAL BREW:** +2 to the recipient's next SP roll.

AFFECT ITEMS

- ☞ [1] **GOOD SCENT:** Present enemies target receiving ally at least half the time.
- ☞ [2] **STINK GRASS:** Present enemies will not attack the recipient unless attacked.
- ☞ [3] **FAST GAS:** Recipient starts Fleeing as if they had rolled a 10+.
- ☞ [4] **FUTURE JUICE:** Receive a premonition about the next chamber.
- ☞ [5] **EYE DROPS:** Temporarily gain a special type of sight, such as dark vision, x-ray, etc.
- ☞ [6] **BEAST STONE:** Briefly take an animal form.

HINDER ITEMS

- ☛ **[1] SMOKESCREEN:** Remove one Engagement recipient has on an ally.
- ☛ **[2] SMOKEPLUS:** Remove one Engagement each recipient has on an ally.
- ☛ **[3] DARK HAZE:** Remove all Engagements each recipient has on any ally.
- ☛ **[4] CONFUSE STAR:** The recipient will attack its own ally once.
- ☛ **[5] PARALYZER:** Inflict Stun on one recipient.
- ☛ **[6] PARALYZEPLUS:** Inflict Stun on all recipients.

► **GEAR**

In addition to the Items in the chart, characters also gain **GEAR** along their journey through the dungeon. When a character Draws Magic from a Target, they extract the magical essence of their foe; when the foe is defeated, the draw is complete and the character converts that energy into a piece of Gear.

Each character has SIX GEAR SLOTS:

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| [1] HEAD | [4] ARMS |
| [2] BODY | [5] HANDHELD |
| [3] LEGS | [6] ACCESSORY |

The Gear type a character receives is determined by a roll, with 1-6 corresponding to the types in the order listed here.

If a character gains a type of Gear they already have a new version of, it does not advance: they can either give the item to a character who has not yet gained that Gear type yet or break it down into Glow (**see section on Glow**).

Gear may also be obtained through special circumstances in addition to being drawn from monsters. When a player has marked five Affinities towards another character, the Dialogue Options Cutscene is triggered. The bond between those characters is crystallized into a piece of Gear of the receiving character's choice and gifting player's creation.

►►► **GROWING WITH GEAR**

The characters begin play with only basic Gear, which has no Effect; once all characters in the party fill all six slots with new Gear, they are finally ready to advance deeper into the dungeon. The next chamber the party discovers will contain a pathway to the next region of

the dungeon, where they'll need to gain all new Gear before advancing again. They'll likely encounter the final incarnation of a Boss at this point as well.

In the fiction of the game, the Gear itself isn't what unlocks the passage. Instead, it's that the party is finally ready to advance; Gear serves as a metanarrative meter for the party's progress and advancement.

▶▶▶ GEAR EFFECTS

As the characters advance, their Gear gets better, but the monsters get stronger. Comparatively, they stay evenly matched, so Gear doesn't actually increase Stats. Gear has Effects, however, which are based on the monster the Gear was drawn from. When a character replaces a Gear slot with a new piece of equipment of the same type, they may choose whether to keep the current Gear Effect or take the new one; whichever one they pick stays and the other is gone for good. If the character retains the previous Gear Effect, the Gear is still considered new for the purpose of advancing in the dungeon.

The special descriptions of Gear affect the fiction of the game and allow the character to act in new and different ways. These Effects are primarily based on the Traits of the monster the Gear was drawn from, but can incorporate outside influences for variety.

EXAMPLE GEAR

The following are examples of Gear and their Effects; they may be used as written (or as inspiration):

- [1] HELM OF HEARING:** A metal helmet that grants a heightened sense of hearing.
- [1] JEWELLED CROWN:** A beautifully ornate crown that lends an air of regency.
- [1] FEATHERED CAP:** A plain hat with a brown feather that slows its wearer's fall.
- [2] WOOLLY ROBE:** A thick robe that keeps the wearer warm and comfortable.
- [2] SHIMMERING PLATE:** A well-forged plate armor suit that inspires nearby allies.
- [2] SILK WRAPPINGS:** Dyed silk strips that wrap comfortably around the wearer.
- [3] BOOTS OF HASTE:** Fine boots that put an extra spring into the wearer's step.
- [3] CLUTCHING SABATONS:** Iron pointed shoes that flex and grip onto most surfaces.
- [3] WINGTIPS:** Fancy dress shoes that can step with exceptional delicacy.
- [4] FANGED BRACERS:** Leather arm guards with sharp little teeth along the edges.
- [4] STRIPED SLEEVES:** A fashionable sleeve that extends the wearer's reach.
- [4] FINGERLESS GLOVES:** Black gloves that make the wearer very cool.
- [5] IRON CLEAVER:** A massive butcher knife with a thick, heavy blade.

- [5] PHANTOM WHIP:** An ethereal whip that connects with intangible targets.
- [5] TWIN FALCHION:** A sword that can be split into two blades and come back together.
- [5] ECHO BUCKLER:** A small, sturdy round shield with a particularly bouncy quality.
- [5] SILVER CHIMES:** A set of chimes that play magical music.
- [5] SHATTERSTAFF:** An ice crystal staff that amplifies the elemental power of cold.
- [6] LANTERN MEDALLION:** A light-producing necklace that resembles an oil lantern.
- [6] FIRE RING:** A ruby-encrusted ring that can heat whatever the wearer holds.
- [6] SPECTER SPECTACLES:** Bent bifocals that allow the wearer to see ghosts.

Gear grants a wide variety of unique Effects, but it doesn't convey static bonuses to stats. If an Effect is very helpful in a specific situation, then it can offer +1 to the player's roll. For example, a fire sword would be extra useful against a wood golem. Effects are intended to be positive much more frequently than negative, but certain Effects may impede a character. For example, that same fire sword would be very ineffective against a fire sprite; in these situations, the roll might have -1. Multiple pieces of Gear may be helpful in a situation and their combined Gear Effects may be described in creative ways within the fiction and in order to accomplish special feats. A roll can only be modified to a maximum of +2 or a minimum of -1 from Gear alone.



LEGENDARY GEAR

There are legends of unique Gear that may be found in the dungeons, in treasure chests, gifted from rogue adventurers, or hard won from monster bosses.

- [5] DREGAN'S BLADE:** Once used by a famous necromancer on dungeon-delving expeditions, this sword is shrouded in shadow magic. Each strike is infused with dark, necromantic power.
- [5] MYSTERIOUS HURDY-GURDY:** A beautifully elegant instrument of uncertain origins—the only clue being the initials M E R engraved into the keybox. It's always in tune, and sturdy enough to clobber someone with in a pinch.

[2] REALLY COOL YELLOW TROUSERS: A cheery pair of bright yellow legwear. Anyone can wear them, but only really cool adventurers can pull them off! A small llama carved out of marble can be found in the pocket.

[ANY] EXPLODING TAROT: A single card is rare enough to find that the legends of an entire deck existing are nearly impossible to believe. When the character discovers a card, it assigns itself to a specific Gear slot. The player draws (or randomly selects) a card from a tarot or oracle deck to determine its effect.

[6] COMMEMORATIVE BAD DECISION PLAQUE: A gold-plated letter "A" mounted to a piece of scrap wood. Engraved on the back is the cryptic phrase: "Make them jealous of your poor choices. The A is for Enabler."

[4] DRAGON BUSTER: A pair of mechanical dragon heads that fit over the wearer's forearms, covering their hands when closed. Each dragon is emblazoned with rare gold, lined with teeth, and crowned with horns. They are capable of shooting goutts of flame.

► GLOW

While not used very frequently, characters carry with them **GLOW** for more universal trading. Glow, or **G for short**, is a magical currency made of small, colorful, glowing orbs that can be infinitely contained within a small bag and can be spent in various circumstances.

If a character receives a duplicate Gear type or an Item that they don't want to keep, they can either pass it to another character or break it down into G. One piece of Gear can be converted into 100G; one Item can be converted into 10G. Small amounts (10G or 20G) of Glow may also be discovered throughout the dungeon, stumbled upon through exceptionally successful searching.

► KEY ITEMS

Buried at the bottom of characters' Inventories are **KEY ITEMS**: rusty keys, arcane sigils, dragon hearts. Key Items are selective and unique. They can't be broken down into Glow and they don't affect a character's ability to fight, but they might be just the right thing for a certain situation. Found in treasure chests unlocked by elaborate puzzles, lifted from an eerily lit pedestal, or surrendered by a defeated boss, Key Items are rewards well won. While they may never come back into play, other than to serve as a reminder of past victories, there may just be the right color-coded lock, statue with a missing piece, or enthusiastic hermit to receive a Key Item in exchange for a new, more tangible reward.

▶ THE MONSTERS



The dungeon is full of all sorts of **MONSTERS** that constantly spawn in chambers and attack the adventurers. When the characters slay a batch of monsters in a chamber, the chamber is empty, but won't be for long. Monsters are extensions of the dungeon itself, separate from whatever other critters and creatures might be living there. Monsters are generated for each chamber from two factors: HP and Traits. Monsters have HP, which is the amount of Harm it must receive to be defeated. Monsters with only 1 HP are the weakest monsters and only provide Common Items.

Monsters have TRAITS that affect how they interact with the characters and how they can be interacted with. When the characters enter a new region of the dungeon, either determined by advancing a level or some other narrative milestone, the DM describes the new region and writes down a numbered list of six Traits the monsters of this region could share (see chart below for examples). No matter the region, the sixth Trait is always "Large." A Large monster has twice the HP and represents a bigger version of other monsters. If regions gradually transition from one type to another, Traits may be replaced one or two at a time.

▶ AQUATIC	▶ CRYSTAL	▶ GRAVEYARD	▶ FOREST	▶ INDUSTRIAL
Amphibious	Armored	Burrowing	Antlered	Combustion
Poison	Blinding	Incorporeal	Clawed	Electric
Slimy	Light Magic	Necromancy	Pack Hunter	Heavy Weapon
Swarm	Shielded	Stony	Plant Magic	Long Range
Toothy	Winged	Undead	Stealthy	Metal

Traits allow monsters to perform special actions ("burrowing" could mean it can hide underground and be inaccessible for a round) and have certain advantages or disadvantages against other keywords ("necromancy" is more effective against life or plant magic, but weak against holy or light magic).



The DM is encouraged to prepare these Trait lists ahead of time, but it's not necessary to plan out all the possible interactions of those Traits. All players are encouraged to be creative in how any character's abilities might interact with monster Traits.

▶ When a character Draws Magic to collect the essence of a monster, the resulting Gear type is determined randomly, but its Effect is primarily based on the monster's Trait.

▶ MONSTER MAKING STEPS

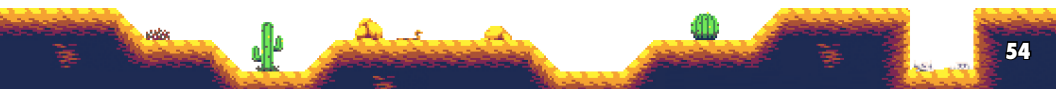
When the party enters a new chamber, the players make the following steps:

- ▶ **Each player, including the DM, rolls one die.** The DM records all results except for one of their choice. The results represent the HP of individual monsters in this chamber.
- ▶ **The DM rolls one die for each monster to assign a Trait.** If the stat is "Large," the monster's HP is doubled and a second trait is assigned.

The DM may also combine results from the first step to create fewer monsters with higher HP or split results to create more monsters with lower HP. The more math the DM has to do at the start of the chamber, the longer the pause is before the action. Consider only combining a maximum of two results or splitting one result to keep the process streamlined. This also lets the DM take a more hands-off approach to monster creation; more combining and splitting translates to more planning and deliberation on the DM's part. Trust the dice: the probability will shake out over time.

▶ BOSS MONSTERS

Some monsters are much more significant than the rest. They have powerful and unique abilities, an exceptional amount of health, and/or advanced intelligence. Most of all, they have narrative importance.



The DM generates a Boss with the following steps:

- ▶ **Roll one die and add 6 to calculate the Boss's HP.**
- ▶ **Roll two dice to assign two Traits;** reroll a duplicate result to generate two different Traits.
- ▶ **Choose an immunity;** such as to attacks made with blades, a certain element, or from a specific angle; the Boss cannot receive Harm from their immunity.

If a Boss will have minions, follow the standard monster making steps except replace one generated monster with the Boss. For that monster, use the last two steps of Boss monster making steps instead of the second step of making regular monsters. Bosses use a variation of the "Monster Attack" DM move that all other monsters use.

▶ See The Moderator chapter for more information on monster and Boss moves.

When a Boss is reduced to 0 HP, they escape instead of being defeated. When a Boss escapes, the encounter is successfully completed and any drawn Gear is rewarded, but the Boss will return later and even stronger than before. A Boss may only use this move up to three times, depending on the length of the campaign, before being defeated for good.

When a Boss is defeated for good, their soul is converted into special permanent Techniques for each character, related to the Boss defeated and the player's Class. Bosses are exceptions to the simplicity of all the other monsters. If a Boss has sentience, motivations, and personality, consider as a group how to feel about their death. A Boss may meet their final defeat by surrendering or even redeeming themselves, giving them the chance to return (only rarely) to serve as a dubious ally or uncertain resource. Whether destroyed, redeemed, banished, or something in between, a Boss who is defeated for good will always grant Techniques.

▶ See the Boss Music: Overture and Boss Music: Finale cutscenes.

▶ **TECHNIQUES**

The following are examples of **Class-specific Techniques**, to be used as written or as inspiration:

- ▶ **MIRROR STRIKER (SENTINEL):** The Sentinel parries with a magically reflective barrier, gaining one Engagement on their target each time they receive Harm.

- ▶ **ROLLING SHIELD (SENTINEL):** The Sentinel may choose to interrupt any monster who would inflict Harm on an ally and receive the same amount of Harm instead.
- ▶ **SPARK OF LIFE (ELEMENTALIST):** The Elementalist can conjure tiny elemental sprites to perform minor tasks on their behalf.
- ▶ **CHROMATIC MAGE (ELEMENTALIST):** The Elementalist can apply a simply effect keyword to any roll they make, if it would make sense, instead of just DMG rolls.
- ▶ **BEAM OF LIGHT (LANCER):** Any weapon the Lancer wields can be used magically as a ranged weapon.
- ▶ **MULTITHRUST (LANCER):** In addition to any other move made in Combat, the Lancer may also Attack a Target as a free move, however they cannot benefit from the 10+ result on the free attack.
- ▶ **SECRET INGREDIENT (COLLECTOR):** Once per Item per Recovery, the Collector may change an Item into a random different type within the same category by rolling a die.
- ▶ **LOREKEEPER (COLLECTOR):** When the Collector gets 10+ while Searching an Enemy or Chamber or Rummaging About, they may recall the history of what they found and share new information with the party. The player may replace one regional monster Trait with a keyword of their choosing, related to the new information.
- ▶ **DECIMATOR (SWORDBREAKER):** The Swordbreaker can purposely destroy one of their weapons against an opponent during a combo, allowing them to double the number of options they can select.
- ▶ **INFINITE ARSENAL (SWORDBREAKER):** The Swordbreaker may store Handheld Gear in their Inventory with no limit. The Swordbreaker can still only benefit from the Effects of two Handheld Gear at once.
- ▶ **FINE TUNING (ARCHSMITH):** Once per chamber when creating Gear, the Archsmith may adjust the value of the Gear type die by +/- 1, including moving 1 to 6 and vice versa.
- ▶ **GLOWSMITHY (ARCHSMITH):** When the Archsmith lays the final blow on a monster, they convert a small amount of the monster's essence into Glow, gaining 20G.
- ▶ **SILENT SHROUD (TRIPSHADOW):** When Shadowed, the Tripshadow emits absolutely no sound and can extend this uncanny silence to their immediate surroundings.
- ▶ **SHADOW'S EMBRACE (TRIPSHADOW):** The Tripshadow heals 1 Harm the first time they begin Fleeing in a chamber.
- ▶ **FUTURE MEMORIES (FOLKWITCH):** When the Folkwitch chooses to Study Magic, they may ask for a vision of the future instead of the normal benefits. The vision is a vague collection of symbolism at best, but allows the character to take, up to three times, +1 to any roll when the situation can be matched to the vision somehow, per the player's interpretation. Any unused bonuses go away at the next Recovery.

- ▶ **EMOTIONAL RESONANCE (FOLKITCH):** When another character marks an Affinity for the Folkwitch, the Folkwitch may also mark an Affinity for that character.
- ▶ **STEPS TO PERFECTION (ASCETIC):** Select a second move to receive +2; this move must use the same Stat as the Ancient Art.
- ▶ **SELF-DENIAL (ASCETIC):** The Ascetic may, at any time and as a free action, gather energy by removing one point of Affinity they've marked for another character.
- ▶ **IN SYNC (DRUMLINE):** When at least two other characters are performing the same move in the same round, the Drumline may forego their action to give those characters each +1 to their rolls.
- ▶ **SONG OF SHARING (DRUMLINE):** When the Drumline consumes an Affect Item, they may choose to channel the Item's magic through song to share with willing party members. All willing allies benefit from the Item as if they were the recipient, however the effect only lasts one full round.
- ▶ **BONDS OF KINSHIP (BEASTWHISPERER):** When the Beastwhisperer marks the fifth Affinity for their beasts, they may trigger the Dialogue Options cutscene. Another player assumes the role of the beasts for the cutscene, but it's the Beastwhisperer who gains a piece of Gear.
- ▶ **SAGE'S CIRCLE (BEASTWHISPERER):** The Beastwhisperer befriends an additional beast and may choose an additional action word to describe its ability.
- ▶ **RAISE THE DEAD (UNDYING):** After a monster has been defeated, the Undying may resurrect it to act on their behalf. The resurrected monster has 1HP and can only Attack an Enemy and Execute a Combo; it cannot benefit from any Items. The monster may be commanded to take actions not covered by moves, such as standing in a certain spot to allow a character to climb on its back. The Undying may still make moves in addition to giving orders to the monster. The monster will return to its defeated state once the chamber is completed.
- ▶ **SOUL STEAL (UNDYING):** When the Undying executes a combo, they may choose to regain 1HP as an option so long as they also select Harm as an option.

▶ THE PACING OF MONSTERS

Bosses are introduced in a rhythm separate from level advancement (which is based on Gear) and are key instruments of the plot, mostly by contextualizing clues thus far unsolved. They may have a personal vendetta against the characters, serve under the Master of the Dungeon, or simply be a bigger brute than the rest.

Bosses will appear multiple times throughout play due to their unique moves. The amount and frequency of these appearances is wholly based on what will suit the particular campaign. Consider having the Boss appear early on in the region, after a key moment in that region, and then for a final time after all characters get their six Gear Items, but before they advance. Each time a Boss returns, they can have a new or different aspect (including a Trait or immunity) to them to keep their interactions unique.

▶ **EXAMPLE MONSTER ENCOUNTERS:**

▶▶▶ **MONSTERS DROPPING GEAR**

Nephele, Arctury, Folke, and Maddergard face off against monsters in an aquatic region. The five players each roll one die, resulting in 1, 3, 3, 4, and 5. Keeping in mind player feedback about the difficulty of previous chambers, the DM discards the 5 and generates four monsters from the remaining results. The DM rolls four dice to assign Traits: 4, 2, 1, and 2.

▶ **BOTTOM FEEDERS:** 1 HP with the swarm Trait. This small school of tiny fish are nasty nibblers with a knack of slipping into adventurers' Gear to bite bare skin. Though bottom feeders easily evade brute attacks, they don't have much fortitude and are quickly defeated by burst attacks.

Bottom feeders may drop Gear similar to the following:

.....
[1] TOOTHY TOQUE: A comfortable hat knit with tiny biting teeth on the outside.

[2] RETRACTING MESH: Thin armor that can quickly transition from being inside or outside of clothing.

[3] SLIPPING SLIPPERS: Stylish flats that allows the wearer to slip quickly this way and that.

[4] PARTICLE DEFLECTORS: A network of floating armor particles that expand to help parry brute attacks.

[5] SWARM BLADE: A melee weapon that can swiftly shapeshift between different bladed weapon shapes.

[6] SAFETY BELT: A belt snug enough to make it difficult for a foe to remove any of the wearer's Gear.

.....

▶ **SLINGCOD:** 3 HP with the poison Trait. A fish-person that flings poison stingers with a sling. Slingcod are deadly at a distance, but basically chum once cornered.

Slingcods may drop Gear similar to the following:

.....
[1] STEELHEAD HELM: A durable, incredibly hydrodynamic helmet.

[2] FISHSCALE MAIL: Shimmering armor, a moderate balance between flexibility and durability.

[3] FINICKERS: Tall boots seamed with fins and flippers for easy swimming.

[4] QUICK HARNESS: An arm-mounted harness for anything held in the hands to keep the wearer's hands free.

[5] POISON SLING: A sling with which to fling poison stingers. A successful poison may cause additional damage or paralyzing effects.

[6] ANTIVENOM PENDANT: A thick, opalescent spine that hangs from a chain and prevents the effects of poison.



▶ **OCTERRORPUS:** 3 HP with the stealthy Trait. Since this region is underwater, the DM swapped "amphibious" out for "stealthy." The octerrorpus is a master of disguise, able to change color, shoot ink, and fit into surprisingly small spaces.

Octerrorpus may drop Gear similar to the following:



[1] WIDE-BRIMMED HAT: An impressively wide-brimmed hat with an octopus motif on top; it's very useful for disguising the wearer.

[2] INK CLOAK: A cloak with a beautiful pattern that adapts to its surroundings.

[3] GRAPPLE LEGGINGS: Form-fitting legwear that allows for secure footing on slippery or wet surfaces.

[4] EIGHT-FINGERED GLOVES: Gloves with long, extra tentacular appendages that mostly cooperate with the wearer.

[5] SUCTION WHIP: A long whip lined with super-strong suction cups.

[6] DEPTHFINDER RING: A dark purple ring that extends a wearer's senses so that they can tell how deep whatever they touch reaches.



▶ **ARCHERFISH:** 4 HP with the poison Trait. A slightly bigger, meaner cousin of the slingcod, the archerfish fires off poison-tipped arrows from its bow.

Archerfish may drop Gear similar to the following:



[1] LATERAL SPINE: A bony headdress that runs from center forehead, along the wearer's head, and terminating in a spine-like tail, which increases the wearer's sense of navigation and direction while underwater.

[2] POISONPROOF PLATE: As advertised, this plate armor prevents the wearer from being poisoned.

[3] BURST BOOTS: Fishy-looking boots that allow for short bursts of speed, especially underwater.

[4] SCOPE SLEEVES: Detached sleeves with small, water-damaged telescopes mounted on the forearms.

[5] FISHBONE BOW: A fishbone set of bow, quiver, and endless supply of arrows.

[6] POISON SAC: A gooey pouch that any weapon can be dipped into to be made poisonous.



▶▶▶ **DEFEATING A BOSS AND MINIONS**



Tozio, Xiaoyan, and Wisp encounter a Boss and minions in a crystal cavern. All four players roll dice, resulting in 1, 2, 4, and 4. This is meant to be a tough battle, so the 1 gets dropped and one of the 4s will become the Boss.

The characters are up against the following:

▶ **BRIGHT BAT:** 2 HP with the blinding Trait. This crystal creature may be blind itself, but the light that beams from its football-sized body might just blind everyone else around it. Wisp, with his shadow powers, is particularly vulnerable to this monster's magic: when it attacked, the DM chose to have it deal 2 Harm against Wisp. Xiaoyan is currently wielding a Superheavy Staff which has gravity powers; she attacks with +1 when she pulls the Bright Bat down to the ground.

▶ **CRYSTALOS:** 4 HP with the armored Trait. This big chunk of crystal and rock may be slow and lumbering, but it packs a tough punch and is even tougher to bring down. Tozio struggles with -1 everytime ze attacks with zir Crooked Hook Sword and the Black Ichor Lantern in zir off-hand is just refracted by the crystal armor. Xiaolan got in a combo that damaged and stunned the monster, but it was Wisp's Burst Drive—that he's come to call Midnight Tempest—that ultimately destroyed it.

▶ **THE OBSIDIAN EXARCH:** 10 HP with the armored and light magic Traits and immune to attacks against its armor. The Obsidian Exarch looks like a bigger version of a crystalos wearing a shiny black suit of ornate armor. Its seven brilliant eyes strike with explosive beams of light. Tozio is the one who figures out that the armor is indestructable, but there are gaps they can target. Xiaoyan discovers that the Exarch's eyes are particularly vulnerable. Wisp took a couple heavy hits from the light beams, Tozio smashed zir sword, and Xiaoyan was knocked through a wall, but the adventurers persevered. A touching

moment between Tozio and Xiaoyan manifested a new piece of Gear for the latter. She equipped her new Wallbreaker Boots and kicked off of the Exarch's helmet, leaving it exposed for Tozio's final blast.

The Obsidian Exarch falls to its knees and **the Boss Music: Finale cutscene begins**. It tells the group they're near the final destination and bestows the following **Techniques**:



- ▶ **ARMOR AWARENESS (SENTINEL):** Xiaoyan may learn her target's weakpoint when rolling 10+ on either Attack a Target or Execute a Combo.
- ▶ **FLASHPOINT (SWORDBREAKER):** Tozio's Burst Timer counts down by 1 each time ze receives Harm.
- ▶ **HIDDEN LIGHT (TRIPSHADOW):** Wisp may choose to become Brilliant instead of Shadowed, which grants the same benefits, but manifests as blinding light instead of darkness.



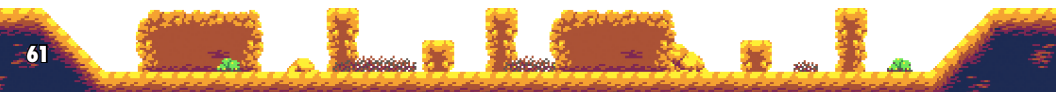
▶▶▶ A DIFFICULT BATTLE

Efemena, Baker, and Ollala fight a pack of monsters in an industrial tunnel system. The four players roll and the DM keeps 3, 5, and 6 and generates the following monsters:

▶ **HAMMER TROOP:** 3 HP and the metal Trait. A mid-sized humanoid steel construct with hammers for hands. It's tough and packs a heavy punch, but is an easy and predictable target. Ollala found that, with the right elemental combinations, they could render the monster brittle. Baker was able to draw a pair of Steel Bracers from the Hammer Troop. Unfortunately, this would be the only monster defeated before the party flees.

▶ **EXTERMINATOR:** 6 HP with the heavy weapon Trait. The Exterminator is a machine originally designed for construction but was radically remodeled into a war machine. Its powerful scooping claw arm deals extra damage and its higher HP makes it a sturdy foe. Even after being hit by a Fang and the whole force of Baker's Burst Drive, it was still holding on with 1 HP left.

▶ **EXTERMINATOR MK II:** 10 HP with the large Trait. As the bigger, enhanced version of the Exterminator, the MK II is practically a mini-boss. If the party had come into this battle with more HP or more healing Items, they would've triumphed, but it's been a long time since they've rested. Efemena almost went down, but Ollala used their last Cure on her. Baker did go down and the party was out of Restores. Efemena started running and Ollala used a Fast Gas; together, they all fled.



► THE PUZZLES



Not every chamber needs monsters, despite what some other rules in this book might have you believe. **PUZZLES** are an inherent part of any dungeon, whether it's moving this block over there or shooting that target with the right color of magic. Any given chamber may have puzzles in addition to (or instead of) monsters. Puzzles typically only appear during Combat phases of play.



► PUZZLE TYPES

Puzzles are themed to match the region they appear in, which may correspond with the monster Traits of the region. For example, an infernal region will have puzzles as spiky and flaming as its monsters. While a region's Traits set the theme, puzzles primarily have Types which, unlike monster Traits, are generic for all puzzles in any region. Types represent the sort of problem the puzzle poses and how it might be solved. There are six Types of puzzles, listed below, though each includes a multitude of variations and some overlapping of the other Types.

►►► 1. ANGLE

Try looking at it from another perspective. **Angle puzzles require the characters to creatively reimagine their surroundings.** Dungeons are tricky and unusual things: a leap of faith may reveal a disguised pathway, a side-step may reveal an obstacle has less dimension than as it first appeared, a carefully positioned point of view may connect the unconnected or eliminate the unseen.

Chambers won't be described in photographic detail and the players won't likely have specific visuals to work from. Players may get inventive with what elements exist in the chamber, so long as they don't contradict established facts, and how they might be seen from a different angle or in a new light.

▶ Dozens of columns are spread around the room, each wrapped with a seemingly nonsensical phrase, however when all the characters stand in the right spot, the visible sides of the columns spell a full message.

▶ A room is full of stairs going in every direction; the characters must pay close attention to how the goblin king moves about the room to learn where each stairway can lead and how to access it.

▶▶▶ 2. KEYHOLE

Keyhole puzzles, at their most simple, **require a specific object to be put in a specific spot**. They can, of course, become increasingly obtuse. A keyhole puzzle may require discovering the specific object or set of objects, such as color-coded keys or uniquely shaped amulets, which are hidden; the objects may be hidden in plain sight as something otherwise completely mundane. The goal spots can range from similarly color-coded literal keyholes to unique indents hidden behind a curtain of vines to another completely mundane object.

▶ Find a rusty key buried in rubble. Since the lock is electrified, only the character who recently obtained the Furry Mittens (Handheld) is able to open it without getting shocked.

▶ Twist the small metal object obtained from a sage a few chambers back in just the right way so it opens up into a star shape. Fit the star shape into the clasp on the old tome recovered from the skeleton in the current chamber to open the tome. Read the incantation to open the treasure chest... just don't read the wrong incantation.

▶▶▶ 3. ORDER

To solve **order puzzles**, certain elements, such as colorful crystals or musical keys, must be interacted with **in a specific sequence or arranged in a certain pattern**. The puzzle may require a short tune to be played, pictures to be put in order, or a broken design to be repaired. The solution to the puzzle may be hidden somewhere in the decor of the room or only further revealed as incremental steps of the puzzle are complete.

▶ Three crystals lay on the ground, one red, one blue, one yellow; there are three slots for the crystals above a locked door. The monsters in this chamber always attack in a short burst of three elemental blasts: ice (which is blue), lightning (which is yellow), then fire (which is red). Placing the crystals in that order, blue then yellow then red, opens the door.

▶ After rescuing a yellowish dog-like creature, he raps a short list of verbs repeatedly. If those actions are performed in order along with the dog-like creature, you earn his trust and he leads you to a secret.

▶▶▶ 4. PLATFORM

A physical chunk of the chamber, such as a walkway or a large block, **must be moved to solve a platform puzzle**. In the new position, the piece becomes a stepping block or reveals something previously obstructed, like a door or a chest. Multiple steps may represent incremental movements of one large object or moving several objects in the correct configuration.

- ▶ Push over the segmented column and then roll the large stone cylinder segments to the lava pool; drop them in with a flat side up, so the rest can be rolled over to create a bridge, one stepping stone at a time.
- ▶ The chamber stretches upward through the core of a tower—no windows or walkways. The ground is tiled with large, loose pavers which can be targeted with the recently unlocked hovering Technique. As the pavers are sent hovering up, they'll need to be retargeted to create a tall enough staircase.

▶▶▶ 5. REFLEX

Timing is everything in reflex puzzles, however – given the format of this game – the solving lies in understanding how the character must time their actions. Before the player can roll to execute the triple jump, dash, wall jump through the spinning blades and through the smashing pistons, the character must analyze the factors at play and how to avoid them or work with them.

- ▶ The pulsating arterial tunnel constricts with a rolling wave of crushing tightness going the wrong direction. Brute force causes the artery to cough the character back out, so cast cold magic to numb the clenching walls as they approach and then reinforce with a blunt polearm to keep the constriction from closing on the characters.
- ▶ Rows of conveyer belts alternate direction, covered in large crates and ending in garbage chutes. The character must time their crossing to not get stuck behind a crate or dumped down the chutes, all while dodging the robotic arms that interact with the crates.

▶▶▶ 6. TARGET

An object or device, such as a button, lever, or other interface, **must be activated in order to solve a target puzzle**. The target may be in a difficult to reach spot or only receptive to certain applications, such as brute force, a specific element, or a small projectile. Multiple steps may represent multiple targets or obstructions that must be cleared before the target can be accessed.

- ▶ Remove the dusty curtains from the window and stand up mirrors scattered throughout the store room; by arranging them just right and removing any obstructions, the moonlight will ricochet off them until illuminating the moonstone at the far other end.
- ▶ A chandelier hangs in the center of a large chamber; just off center is the secure trapdoor to the basement. Shoot the chandelier to get it swinging and then shoot the rope to send it crashing down onto the trap door.

▶ PUZZLE GOALS

In addition to its Type, each puzzle also has a Goal which equals the number of steps needed to solve it. Characters will attempt to solve puzzles by using various methods, some more effective than others. Each successful interaction brings the character one step closer to solving the puzzle and unlocking its rewards.

▶ PUZZLE MAKING STEPS

Puzzles are generated in a similar manner as monsters. Fewer or more puzzles may be generated depending on the presence and amount of monsters in the chamber.

- ▶ **Each player, including the DM, rolls one die.**
- ▶ **The DM pairs the results to create puzzle Types and Goals;** they may roll an additional die to get an even number of results. Separate puzzles may still interact with or be related to each other.

▶ EXAMPLE PUZZLE CRAFTING

There are four players at the table, including the DM. The party enters a new chamber full of puzzles, so each player rolls one die. The results are 3, 5, 6, and 6. The DM decides to pair the results into the following puzzles: **A target (6) puzzle with a Goal of 3, and a reflex (5) puzzle with a Goal of 6. The DM introduces the two puzzles:**

- ▶ The target is an unlit torch mounted next to a strange symbol on the wall. This puzzle will take three steps to complete, perhaps lighting the torch with three different elements to activate separate sections of the symbol.
- ▶ One section of the room has no floor, exposing lava beneath, but strong updrafts of hot air erupt periodically. On the opposite side of the large chasm is a platform with a chest on it. This puzzle requires six steps: the characters must use some kind of glider and time the spouts of hot air to perfectly to fly over the lava.

This example continues at the end of the chapter.

▶▶▶ PUZZLES, BIG & SMALL

Most puzzles are confined just to the chamber they're in, with all their components resolved before the party moves on. Other puzzles, however, span multiple chambers, or even throughout the entire region. A larger scale puzzle might involve a lever that's pulled in one chamber that opens the locked door in the previous chamber. In this situation, the previous chamber is treated as a new chamber because it is a forward step of narrative progression. A puzzle may flood the region so that chambers are underwater, allowing access to new areas. Other times, solving a puzzle is as easy as finally using that Key Item you've been carrying around since the beginning of the region.

▶ PUZZLE MOVES

When puzzles are present, the following moves are available to all characters. It's the player's responsibility to justify how their approach is capable of completing a step of the puzzle. The DM may incur -1 or -2 penalty to the roll depending on how appropriate that justification is.

▶▶▶ MANIPULATE COMPONENTS

When you manipulate the smaller components of puzzle with precision, roll +ACC. On a hit, complete one step of the puzzle. On a 7-9, the DM additionally selects an option from the Combat Miss Reaction DM Move. On a 10+, complete one additional step of the puzzle.

▶▶▶ NAVIGATE DANGER

When you navigate dangerous aspects of the puzzle, roll +DEF. On a hit, complete one step of the puzzle. On a 7-9, the DM additionally selects an option from the Combat Miss Reaction DM Move. On a 10+, complete one additional step of the puzzle.

▶▶▶ APPLY FORCE

When you apply force to a component of the puzzle, roll +DMG. On a hit, complete one step of the puzzle. On a 7-9, the DM additionally selects a reaction from the DM Move. On a 10+, complete one additional step of the puzzle.

▶▶▶ INTERACT MAGICALLY

When you interact magically with a portion of the puzzle, roll +SP. On a hit, complete one step of the puzzle. On a 7-9, the DM additionally selects an option from the Combat Miss Reaction DM Move. On a 10+, complete one additional step of the puzzle.

▶ PUZZLES IN PLAY

Even if a dungeon is filled with only puzzles to solve, it's still no walk in the park. Puzzles can be just as dangerous as monsters if not given their due respect. Puzzles can be harmful, but they can also be helpful in the right situations.

▶▶▶ AGGRESSIVE MONSTERS

Just because a character is attempting to slide blocks into the correct pattern to open a secret wall doesn't mean monsters will ignore them. **All results below 10 on a puzzle move prompt a DM reaction, which can include monsters gaining Engagements on the character.** A group of characters must strategize how to go about both fighting monsters and solving puzzles when both are present.

▶▶▶ PAINFUL CONSEQUENCES

Even if there are no monsters in the chamber with the puzzles, the puzzles themselves may pose a threat. The consequences of a miss while interacting with a puzzle could be Harm from a jolt of electricity firing from a mechanism or a spike snagging a character who moved too slow. **On a 7-9, the consequences may instead be Engagements that a puzzle gains on the character:** a box was successfully moved in the right direction, but it sits precariously on the edge; one more wrong move and it could come crashing down. Puzzles, in this way, may gain and spend Engagements just as a monster would. Bottomless pits, lava rivers, and massive stone blocks falling from the ceiling could very well vanquish a hapless hero.

▶▶▶ EXPLOSIVE REWARDS

At this point, an opportunistic adventurer might consider how to use the deadly qualities of a puzzle against those pesky monsters that won't leave them alone. When a puzzle is solved, the player who completed the final step may declare that the reward is an offensive action against any remaining monsters. That puzzle's Goal equals the amount of total HP the puzzle inflicts in damage, distributed as evenly as possible against all remaining monsters. Perhaps the character broke the right latch that collapsed a platform that dropped barrels on the monsters below. It could've been the right fuse lit with the right elemental charge that detonated the strange vats in the back of the room. However it happened, the monsters were worse off for it.

▶▶▶ VALUABLE SOLUTIONS

When a puzzle is solved, it results in something positive for the characters. At the very least, the character who actually solved it benefits, but ideally everyone who participated will benefit; the best case scenario is that all characters benefit, because those who didn't

participate likely did something equally important. The player who solves the puzzle may decide whether the reward is an attack against present monsters or treasure. Consult the treasure chart or determine a narrative revelation as a group.

TREASURE CHART: (Roll + Puzzle Goal)

- ▶ **2-3:** Common Item
- ▶ **4-6:** Two Items, from Chart and/or Key Items
- ▶ **7-9:** Three Items, from Chart and/or Key Items
- ▶ **10-12:** One Gear



▶ **EXAMPLE PUZZLE JOURNEY**

▶ The three characters, Efemena, Baker, and Ollala, enter the chamber. Efemena and Baker begin fighting monsters, while Ollala attempts to solve the first puzzle: the torch by the symbol. During the first round, Ollala (the Elementalist) conjures a small flame to interact magically with the puzzle. Ollala's player rolls +SP and gets 9. Ollala completes one step of the puzzle by lighting the torch and one of the monsters gains an Engagement on Ollala.

▶ In the next round, Ollala removes the torch to light up key elements of the wall symbol that she recognizes from a previous chamber. Since Ollala is manipulating specific components in a precise way, Ollala's player rolls +ACC and gets 11; Ollala completes the last two steps of the puzzle. Ollala's player decides this puzzle can be used as a weapon against the monsters. Since the puzzle's Goal was 3, the monsters receive a total of 3 Harm distributed evenly; there are three monsters, so they each take 1 Harm. The symbol lights up and energy beams blast out to hit the monsters. When it's all over, there's only a scorch mark where the symbol was and the torch has burned down to just a stub.

▶ Efemena and Baker thank Ollala and continue fighting. Ollala studies the next puzzle and the area surrounding it, so Ollala's player rolls +ACC to Search Chamber and gets 7. Ollala finds two Items: a Potion and a Dark Haze, but becomes distracted by the scale of the lava pit and the evidence of adventurers who've failed before.

▶ The DM takes this opportunity to use the DM move Dungeon Discovery and asks "how will this discovery benefit the party and at what cost?" Ollala's player reflects and answers that the lava pit is too dangerous for the party to cross at this time and they'll be spared hardship by ignoring it for now.

▶ Baker notices Ollala is disappointed by giving up the opportunity for treasure and offers them comfort. This triggers the corresponding Affinity prompt, so Ollala responds with what they think makes them a liability. Ollala's player explores in a short cutscene that Ollala is self-conscious about not being very physically strong, doubting that they'll be much use to Baker and Efemena as the dungeon becomes more dangerous.

▶ A bright light glows between Baker and Ollala: this was Baker's fifth Affinity marked for Ollala, so a new piece of Gear materializes from their bond with each other. Baker hands over a pair of crystalline goggles with clock hands on each lens and thanks Ollala for always watching over their group. Ollala equips the goggles in their Head Gear slot.

▶ Efemena destroys the last monster and collects the Gear from drawing magic. This flying monster dropped a Torso Gear, so it's determined to be a feathered cape. Ollala comes up with a plan: using their new goggles, they interact magically with the puzzle by detecting and enhancing the bursts of hot air coming up from the lava. Efemena will use her new cape to navigate the treacherous air currents across. Ollala's player rolls +SP and Efemena's player rolls +DEF; both rolls receive +1 as a bonus from their respective Gear. Efemena gets 10 and Ollala gets 9. Meanwhile, Baker searches the chamber for Items.

▶ Efemena completes two of the six steps of the puzzle as she leaps partway across and perches on a ledge. Ollala completes one step, but there's a consequence; with no more monsters present, the danger instead comes from the puzzle itself. The edge of the lava pit beneath Ollala's feet starts crumbling away. This round concludes.

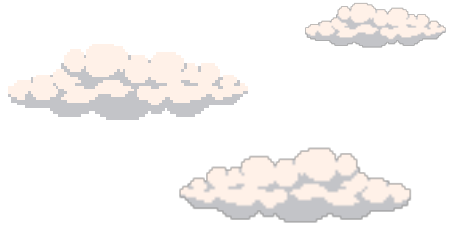
▶ Ollala insists Efemena continue; her player rolls +DEF again to navigate the treacherous pit and gets 11. Efemena is just short of her final leap and hangs onto the edge of the platform that holds the chest. Baker rushes to help Ollala and pulls them up; there are no rolls here, but it does prompt another Affinity. Ollala shares what they have at stake: a generation-spanning curse afflicting their home town that they sought out to find a way to break. The other characters didn't know about this (in fact, Ollala's player just made it up), so there's a cutscene to explore it further.

▶ Ollala's player brings in Ollala's Secret, revealing that they'd heard of a cloud that swirls in this dungeon and rains upward. If they can learn the mystery of what lies at the center of this strange phenomenon, they can become powerful enough to break the curse and save their town. Baker takes Ollala's hand, and promises to help them break this curse.

▶ Efemena's player rolls +DEF once more and gets 8. Efemena opens the chest and grabs the objects floating upwards on a pillow of light. The treasure is a Fang (a Harm Item) and a Bone Key (a Key Item). The DM introduces the complication: The platform crumbles away and Efemena falls into a troubled glide. This time, Ollala comes to her aid with elemental magic to carry her the rest of the way. As part of the consequence, Efemena takes 1 Harm from falling too close to the lava but, again, no rolls are made and Efemena lands safely on top of Baker and Ollala, knocking them to the ground.

The Victory Theme cutscene begins because all monsters and puzzles in the chamber have been solved.

► THE EXTRAS



Monsters are not the only things that dwell in the dungeon and the characters might just encounter those **EXTRAS**: individuals with more complex motives than wanting the characters dead. These extras may be lost souls, wandering traders, ancient masters, or any other type of peculiar folks and creatures.

► TRADERS

Traders are few and far between in the dungeon, but will sometimes cross paths with the party during times of Recovery. **Traders specialize in specific Item types; roll one die to determine the category of Item the Trader carries (or pick if the party has a specific need).** Characters can purchase an Item of their choice from that category for 50G or in exchange for another Item. Traders are often critters of some type, with enough sense to live a life of commerce to survive. While mostly simple creatures, Traders can have valuable local knowledge and are aware of helpful rumors – at a cost, of course.



► SAGES

Hidden away within the dungeon as hermits too powerful to be messed with by monsters, Sages are individuals with a great deal of magical prowess and ancient knowledge. **Sages can introduce characters to new Schools of Magic, though often at a steep cost—especially if the character is already practicing a different School of Magic.** This cost might be something immediate, like 500G or all the character's current Gear, or something ongoing the Sage will follow up on, like the collection of relevant components for the School to be delivered to the Sage at a later date. If the Sage is not appeased in the moment, they will appear again soon after, when the party is ready to pay the price.

► Sages have a great wealth of knowledge of the world, but it's rarely current, due to their hermit lifestyles, and it's never cheap. A Sage who has been crossed, cheated, or taken advantage of may very readily become a fearsome villain.

► RIVALS

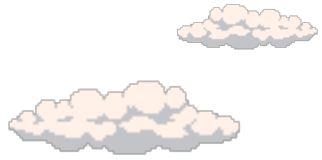
There may be other adventurers trapped in this dungeon, perhaps on a similar mission as the party or traveling the opposite direction. They are as in the dark regarding the nature of the dungeon as the party, but their experience may be complementary. **Rivals may be necessary, if reluctant allies in difficult battles or challenges, but their motivations are self-driven enough that they're more often in conflict with the party.**

► Just like the player characters, other adventurers don't die when reduced to 0 HP. A Rival who loses all HP is defeated and will likely take a knee or faint. If the other Rivals don't flee and take their fallen ally with them, a defeated Rival will be available for exposition. To kill a fellow adventurer, even in battle, would be an act of murder.

► CRITTERS

Somewhere between animal and monster are the strange Critters who live in the dungeon. They are not inherently malicious, though they may be discovered attempting to steal rations and tasty-smelling items from a character's Inventory. They can be skittish, impish, affectionate, feral; they might look like smaller, weaker versions of that region's monsters (perhaps the very creatures those monsters were based on). While mostly serving as features of the setting or the casual nuisance, Critters may be tamed and trained as a simple companion to a patient adventurer.

▶ THE CUTSCENES



Punctuating ongoing sections of play are **CUTSCENES**. These are very much still roleplay, but are formatted more cinematically. Any player may suggest or request a cutscene and a consensus among the players will begin it. Cutscenes may fast forward through or skip time in the dungeon, introduce key reveals or discoveries, allow for emotional or narrative interactions between players, or include content that may not otherwise fit into Combat or Recovery. Affinities may still be triggered during cutscenes.

Cutscenes are also helpful opportunities to take a break from play. If a session has been going for an hour or more and then a cutscene is triggered, take ten or so minutes after to get up and stretch, use the bathroom, get a snack, and check in with your fellow players.

▶ MAJOR CUTSCENES

▶▶▶ TUTORIAL

When play begins, the tone and setting of the dungeon are introduced. The players describe their characters engaged in an impressive battle with monsters, but without making any rolls. The players decide whether or not the party succeeds, but there are no mechanical benefits or consequences to this Combat. This cutscene allows each character to perform as their player expects them to and introduce themselves at their full potential. If the players decide the battle was a success, the characters may advance into the next chamber of Combat. If the players decide the battle was lost, then the characters may move into Recovery.

▶▶▶ VICTORY THEME

When a chamber is complete, whether defeating all monsters, solving all puzzles, or otherwise removing all dangers in a way previously agreed upon to count as “completing a chamber,” all characters perform their victory animations. This is a brief celebratory dance or gesture.

Before proceeding to the next chamber, all characters may do any of the following:



- ▶ Use and trade Items freely
- ▶ Equip or trade Gear freely
- ▶ Resolve any potential Affinity prompts
- ▶ Suggest a time skip cutscene
- ▶ Discuss mysterious clues and riddles about the nature of the dungeon
- ▶ Reflect on the experience they gained from this chamber and their hopes for future chambers. This option is an explicit opportunity for players to also express their opinions on the previous chamber, upcoming chambers, and the flow of play so far. Players may have opinions on, for example, whether they'd like harder/easier challenges, more/fewer monsters or puzzles, more discoveries, or an encounter with an Extra.

▶▶▶ BOSS MUSIC: OVERTURE

When the party **encounters a Boss for the first time**, the Boss introduces themselves and their intentions to the party. Any combat that occurs during this exposition requires no rolls. The Boss's full HP, once calculated, is the Boss's health after any damage taken during exposition. After the Boss has displayed their power, all characters may collect any Draws and equip any new Gear from monsters in this chamber before the Boss arrived.

▶▶▶ BOSS MUSIC: FINALE

When the party **defeats a Boss**, the Boss shares parting words as their soul is released, either revealing important information or bestowing a respectful blessing. All characters receive a Technique based on the Boss's Traits and related to their Class, Passion, or School of Magic. If the group has decided to avoid death, a defeated Boss still bestows gifts and leaves the chamber.

▶▶▶ GAME OVER

When all characters in the party reach 0 HP, the characters are forced into Recovery, losing half of all their Items and their G. The characters awake from the darkness of defeat, with bodies and egos bruised. Monsters have raided them, leaving scars from gnaw marks. However, the party has slept off all Harm and now has a moment to talk about their defeat, their weaknesses, their strategies, and their path forward. Each character prepares their own guide to collect these strategies, which they can access once at any point during play and then discard.

A strategy guide may be consulted at any time to accomplish any of the following goals organically within the current chamber:

- ▶ Obtain 500G
- ▶ Obtain a piece of Gear
- ▶ Resolve any potential Affinity prompts
- ▶ Treat a Miss (after the roll has been made) as if it had been a 10+
- ▶ Safely begin Fleeing/become untargetable until leaving the current chamber
- ▶ Introduce an important plot point that leads the party into a new, different region (if selecting this option, be conscientious about what other players have introduced and may be invested in for this region).

▶▶▶ CHARACTER DEATH

When a character would die, the DM asks the player if they would like their character to live or if they are comfortable having them pass on. **If they choose to live**, it is for an important purpose. The player and the DM decide why the character has been spared, establishing a prophecy, quest, or debt that only they can help achieve.

If the player chooses for their character to pass on, it's for a narrative purpose and the player will specify that reason, giving a prophecy or quest that only the surviving characters can achieve. When a character dies, the immediate situation is resolved (whatever the danger may be) and the surviving characters are automatically brought to Recovery at the end of this cutscene. The surviving characters react to the death of their companion and the reality of the dungeon; this may be disheartening, emboldening, or some complicated combination thereof. The party gains access to all the Items, G, and Gear the now deceased character held. Even after a character has died, their story – past, present, and future – may still be relevant to the rest of the narrative.

▶ See the “Character Death” DM move.

▶▶▶ LEVEL UP

When the party **advances to the next level of the dungeon**, they gain a moment to appreciate the scope of their recent accomplishment, reflect on their accomplishments thus far, and gain an understanding about what lies ahead of them. Players may take this opportunity to introduce elements of a new region, if entering into one, such as new monster Traits.

▶▶▶ DIALOGUE OPTIONS

When a character **marks their fifth Affinity for another character**, they share an important moment and remove the five Affinity marks. The Affinity the acting character has is crystallized into a piece of Gear for the receiving character. The Gear's Effect is based on the gifting character's strengths and the context of the moment. The receiving player may choose the type of Gear their character receives.

▶▶▶ BACKSTORY REVEAL

When a character **marks their fifth miss**, they have a vision relating to their Secret. The player describes a scene from the character's past (they may invent this history on the spot), incorporating their motivations for being in the dungeon. This glimpse may explain or introduce an aspect of the nature of the dungeon. The player may also choose to reallocate one of their starting Stat points (not including the bonus from their Class).

▶▶▶ FINAL BOSS

When the party **confronts the Master of the Dungeon**, the players may tie together any loose ends or lingering clues from the plot. The Master of the Dungeon may monologue or engage with the characters for as long as narratively needed; while attacks may be made, they do not function as Combat moves. The Master of the Dungeon may also offer any final, grand story reveals.

Once the exposition has concluded, the characters enter into Combat or a different mode of play to resolve the present issues with the Master of the Dungeon. Alternate modes of play may ask the characters to rely on the unique strengths they've gained to solve puzzles or use their Stats in unprecedented ways. The final confrontation may be saving the Master of the Dungeon as the dungeon collapses around the characters or destroying key elements of the chamber to depower the Master of the Dungeon while dodging waves of attacks. At this point in play, the players will be much more comfortable with the rules and their characters than they were starting out, so consider adapting the form for a memorable finale.

▶▶▶ CREDIT ROLL

When the party beats the game, a brief epilogue is collaboratively told and then the players share in a credits sequence by giving each other credit for the moments they created together. Players take non-ordered turns sharing moments throughout the course of the whole campaign that were important to them, elaborating on elements of the scene specific to them or musing over what might've been. Once the campaign has been retold, growth has been appreciated, and all the what-ifs have been explored, the game is over. Good job.

► MINOR CUTSCENES

In addition to the major cutscenes, smaller scenes may be fit into play for a variety of reasons and towards several ends. These cutscenes are narrative tools that are just made explicit: pause, fast forward, skip, rewind. More important than remembering the names and specific triggers for these cutscenes is having the confidence to direct the narrative in a way that best suits the campaign.

►►► STOP TO TALK

When at least **two characters engage in meaningful conversation**, the current phase can be paused or narratively resolved in order for them to more deeply explore their feelings in conversation.

►►► MONTAGE

When at least **one character has the opportunity to improve themselves**, such as when training with a Sage, the story may fast forward to account for changes that occur over time. The other players may also provide vignettes for what their characters got up to, if they waited or continued on, and how they receive their changed ally.

►►► TIME SKIP

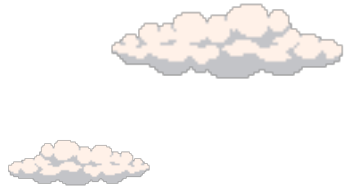
When the party **accomplishes a significant and daunting feat** like defeating a Boss, solving a major mystery, finally leaving a certain region, or an emotional breakthrough between characters, the story may skip forward in time and pick up again at the beginning of a new chapter.

►►► FLASHBACK

When the party **discovers history relevant to their story**, the characters may experience a flashback, vision of the past, or other type of shared memory to help contextualize the new information. The players roleplay or discuss a scene that happened at some point earlier in the timeline, either as their characters or figures from the past.



▶ THE MODERATOR



There are two terms at play here: The “Dungeon Moderator,” or DM, is the player who controls the monsters and facilitates the adventure for the players who play one character each. The “Master of the Dungeon” is, in a way, the character the Dungeon Moderator plays and they are the focus and finale of the dungeon. The term “Dungeon Master™” is very loaded, has a narrow interpretation, and implies an inaccurate (and often inappropriate) power imbalance between that player and the other players. *Fight Item Run* reinterprets “dungeons” as extremely broad and categorical and opts for a more accommodating title for the moderating player. All players have tools to affect the course of play, both narratively and setting-wise.

The Master of the Dungeon could be a big baddie, like an evil dragon protecting its ill-gotten horde or a lich practicing forbidden sorcery. The Master of the Dungeon could instead be an otherworldly anomaly, like a rift letting in an alien darkness or an ancient force rejecting the world around it. They could even be someone good who has been imprisoned away or an innocent creature who simply made a weird home that monsters spawned in. Finding and confronting the Master of the Dungeon is ostensibly the final goal of a game of *Fight Item Run*, but many other stories will unfold along the way.

▶ DM MOVES

The DM has access to special narrative moves which occur in response to player actions. In this way, the DM can mostly let the players take lead of the narrative pacing, filling in enough space in front of the characters to keep moving forward.

The **DM Moves** are the following:

- ▶ **COMBAT MISS REACTION**
- ▶ **RECOVERY MISS REACTION**
- ▶ **BITING AT HEELS**
- ▶ **WON'T BE IGNORED**
- ▶ **MONSTER ATTACK**
- ▶ **CHARACTER DEATH**
- ▶ **DUNGEON DISCOVERY**

▶▶▶ COMBAT MISS REACTION

When a character rolls a 6 or less while in the Combat phase, pick at least one:

- ▶ A monster takes an Engagement on the character
- ▶ The character falls into imminent danger
- ▶ The character loses or breaks an Item
- ▶ An ominous development is revealed
- ▶ The current strategy is revealed to be ineffective

▶▶▶ RECOVERY MISS REACTION

When a character rolls a 6 or less while in the Recovery phase, pick at least one:

- ▶ The character is interrupted by an **Extra**
- ▶ The character discovers something upsetting
- ▶ The character loses or breaks an Item
- ▶ An ominous development is revealed
- ▶ The move still provides a benefit as if it were a Hit, but the character pays a significant cost. The cost might be the opposite of a Hit for the other Recovery moves, such as re-rolls that keep the worse option or suffering damage instead of healing.

▶ The selected option is in addition to any effect separately listed. Even if the character didn't accomplish their goal, they still learn why they failed, and may gain insight into how to succeed next time. Remind the player to mark the Miss on their character sheet next to their Secret.

▶▶▶ BITING AT HEELS

When a character **spends a round Fleeing without rolling**, a monster may take an Engagement against them.

▶▶▶ WON'T BE IGNORED

When a monster **does not have any Engagements on it** from any character at the beginning of a round, it may take an Engagement against any one character.

▶▶▶ MONSTER ATTACK

When a monster **has accumulated three Engagements on a single character**, the monster immediately attacks that character. Remove three Engagements and pick at least one:

- ▶ Inflict one Harm
- ▶ Knock the character back or down
- ▶ Slow the character
- ▶ Impede the character's ability to use magic
- ▶ Some other special effect based on the monster's **Traits**

▶ **Monsters will spend many rounds without enough Engagements to affect the characters. Before the monster gains three Engagements, they may still be attacking (and missing), lunging, and scurrying about, but they are unable to accomplish the above results without Engagements.**

Boss monsters may access this move with only one Engagement (and only removing one Engagement afterward, instead of three) or they exchange three to act on all members of the party at once.

▶▶▶ CHARACTER DEATH

When a character **knowingly places himself in mortal danger or chooses to sacrifice himself for the party**, the character's player and the DM may decide that the character dies for good and, in so doing, accomplishes a significant, potentially impossible feat. The player may introduce a new character to the party at a narratively appropriate moment following their previous character's death.

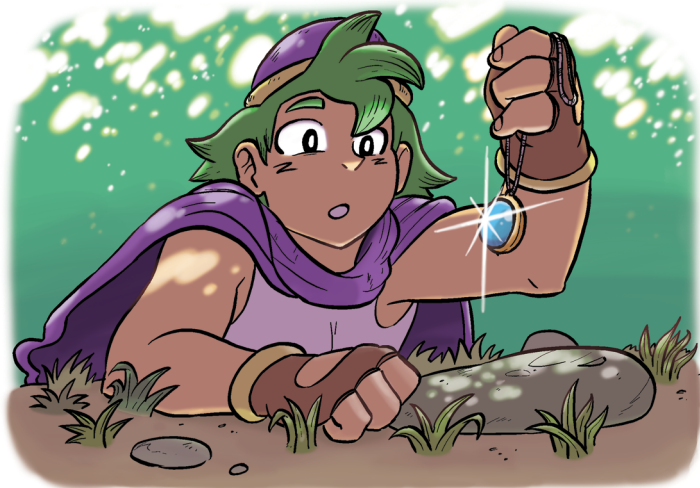
▶ See the "Character Death" Cutscene.

▶▶▶ DUNGEON DISCOVERY

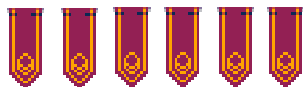
When a character **introduces a detail about the dungeon** (during Combat or Recovery) the DM may help elaborate on that detail and provide extra context to support the discovery. Discoveries may be made with the Search Enemy or Chamber move, the Rummage About move, through Affinity, during a Cutscene, or through other aspects of play. The player may not consider their contribution as significant at the time, but the DM may elevate the discovery to become a part of the narrative.

Ask at least one of the following leading questions of the player:

- ▶ How does this discovery relate to the last discovery made?
- ▶ How does this discovery relate to your Secret?
- ▶ Who in the party will be most affected by this discovery?
- ▶ How does the character feel this discovery relates to the Master of the Dungeon?
- ▶ How will this discovery benefit the party, and at what cost?
- ▶ What does this discovery imply about the near future, and what can the party do about it?



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▶ THE STORIES



Each of the following **STORIES** in this section offer settings and adventure prompts for players to quickly get started in. These stories are not comprehensive and include space for customizing.

▶ STORY DESCRIPTIONS

▶▶▶ CHRONICLES OF POWER: THE WILD TOWER

A love letter to JRPGs of the late '90s and early '00s, *Chronicles of Power: The Wild Tower* presents a concise arc within a massive world. Set in the far future of a high fantasy world, the story has the characters explore an abandoned power plant overrun with wild nature magic. Conspiracies run deep between power companies that've reshaped life itself, let loose celestial and elemental magic on the world, and collapsed under their own consequences.

Chronicles of Power may serve as an overworld with *The Wild Tower* acting as the first chapter in a saga. Consider other key players—who's looking to get their hands on which crystals—and what grand reveals lie in waiting in the vaults of overgrown cities.

▶▶▶ ZERO-DAY THREAT

Travel to distant space in the sci-fi action thriller *Zero-Day Threat* by Bri Williams. The off-world settlement Peregrina is connected to space station Almera by an impressive space elevator. The entire colony is a beacon of pride, hope, and advancement. Things get dangerous when communications are cutoff and the Quantum Computer turns the security drones against the residents. The characters must ascend the space elevator to catch the culprit.

Since *Zero-Day Threat* is science fiction, consider swapping out Item names such as "potion" for "med-gel" and "great fang" for "plasma grenade." Sufficiently advanced technology is, after all, indistinguishable from magic.

▶▶▶ SUPER DRAGON KID ADVENTURE!

Glide into action in *Super Dragon Kid Adventure!* by Bri Williams. When the human Prince has something to prove, he secretly snatches up all the dragons' treasures. The dragon adults get to bickering over who did it, so it's up to the dragon kids to pull their own heist to steal the treasure back.

The beginning of *Super Dragon Kid Adventure!* dials violence way down as the dragon kids sneak through a human town. Instead of monsters as normally defined, there are villagers and their loyal wolves, but the consequence of receiving "Harm" is just getting into some real trouble. Once in the depths of the fortress, the characters face off against autonomous baddies and the action unfolds like a classic dungeon crawler.

▶▶▶ THE SPOOEASY

Content Warning: *This story references suicide and murder as an element of the setting's history.*

The Claxon Manor stands as a haunted relic of the Victorian era, its history rife with murder and mystery. In this modern age of the 1920s, nothing stops an ambitious entrepreneur from opening a speakeasy under the stern nose of the Prohibition. The unexplained gets downright unwelcoming, so a team of supernatural experts are called in to investigate this labyrinthine manor in *The Spookeasy* by Bri Williams.

The unique setting of the Claxon manor offers many twists and turns when rooms shift and hidden passageways form unexpected connections. *The Spookeasy* is an expansive environment all within one building: pulling away a painting could reveal a door into a room the party just visited, but topsy-turvy with the floor and furniture overhead and the characters walking around the chandelier hanging upwards.

As a supernatural horror setting, *The Spookeasy* can be made frightening and disturbing or softened into a more all-ages haunted house. As with every story the players tell together, communicate boundaries and use safety tools.

CHRONICLES OF POWER



THE WILD TOWER

► THE HISTORY

►►► FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL

The diverse peoples of The Manylands have history and legends that weave back to time before time. Legends of how the dwarves were born of the mountains and how the first orc nomads were led by the thrice-horned bull god himself. The long-lived elves felt more kinship with trees than other sapients with each passing generation. Catfolk were apparently cursed and lizardfolk, they say, are descended from ancient feathered dragons. Even humans claimed to have some mystic role in the cosmos.

Territories played tug-o-war with their borders over centuries. Legendary battles were fought over everything from the unethical use of necromancy to a particularly coveted ring. Globalization would gradually lead to more diplomatic relations. As travel between nations became easier, taboos around children born of parents from two different peoples all but dissolved. It took much longer to get humans to stop using “half-elf” or “half-orc” as if that person’s human heritage went without saying.

►►► THE ENERGY REVOLUTION

The Manylands tumbled headfirst through cultural and industrial renaissances. Ultimately, innovations in energy technology ushers in the modern era. Engineers wield various types of elemental magics to best serve their communities. This lobby advocates for the wild, crackling power of electricity, while that coven harnesses clean, safe celestial energy. Crystals, used for magical purposes, are modern science’s all-purpose batteries.

Urbanization rocked The Manylands with a handful of energy companies as global leaders. Freely available, clean, efficient energy led to a post-scarcity golden era for several centuries. Unfortunately, the ecological impact of the energy titans caught up: the natural and elemental magic caused the environment to thrive wildly. New species of plants and animals were constantly being discovered as they overran cities.

►►► WITHIN THE OVERGROWTH

The infrastructure to provide energy wherever needed is still mostly intact and the explosion of nature has all but eradicated the concept of food deserts. The legacy of the energy companies still looms over the post-urban communities, and a corporate power struggle is still playing out in old towers and rooms buried beneath roots.

▶ THE POWER COMPANIES

Small as it is, The Manylands has seen thousands of power companies rise and fall. Some remain influential in their regions, like Belmont Power Company with their innovations in channeling magical energy in objects, or Monsteropolis Energy with their patented ceratanium solar power capsules. Countless others, such as Wutai Streamworks and Zebesian Power Authority, have gone completely defunct. Known for their impressive reach or groundbreaking technologies, companies such as Gravira Inc. and Guardia Time & Power have become household names. However, three companies would have undeniably the biggest impact on the course of history:

▶▶▶ SHINE INDUSTRIES

Shine Industries specialized in light and celestial energy by developing Gates that would channel it from the celestial plane. The company had a slow and disastrous downfall—one of the first titans to go. Between the portable conduit engines running inside cars to the massive Gates that could power whole nations, Shine Industries punched too many holes in the layer between the material and celestial realms.

Light magic poured from the heavens in great healing columns, uncontrolled by Shine. As Shine failed to patch up the holes, the restorative light coming through was a freely available power source for communities to harvest. Losing their monopoly on celestial power at that scale caused Shine lose more revenue and control. When Shine went under, their celestial Gates were abandoned and later hit catastrophic failure. History books remember the few weeks of beauteous light washing over continents as the Star Flood. In the aftermath, celestial beams still pierced the sky like rays of sunlight the world over.

Communities quickly redeveloped around the great beams of free light energy, distributing the power as a cheap, if not always reliable public utility.

▶▶▶ THE FIRE COMPANY (TFC)

The Fire Company, known simply as TFC, learned early on the dangers of firepower gone unchecked. Developed from the humble fireball, elemental fire evolved into a brilliant method of converting magic essence and oxygen into thermal and electromagnetic energy. After a few central crystals gone critical, TFC became the leaders in energy safety and have filled in the gaps of other companies' collapses. Originally the underdog with a few crash and burns starting out, TFC learned from their mistakes to become a reliable household name.

TFC is proud of their clean, efficient fire-based energy networks. They charge steeper fees to corporate towers in order to pass savings onto communities in need. As other companies reached too far and fell apart, TFC kept a cool head and began acquiring abandoned facilities and funding their efforts with salvage from their competitors.

▶▶▶ **TERRASOFT**

TerraSoft, previously Terra Firma Energy, exploded into the energy market and peaked hard and fast. Their eco-silos were lauded as functional perpetual motion machines: the wild nature magic at their core was infinitely renewable. Unfortunately, TerraSoft (a rebranding to reflect their colossal spread into tech, communications, and adjacent industries) couldn't contain everything they produced.

The environmental consequences were evident early on. Forests, faerie archways, strange creatures, and impossible plants sprung up around the eco-silos and power stations. These effects were hardly curbed due to the feedback loop the environs created, making the power generation even more productive. Every now and again, a station would erupt into a massive tree with roots that moved cities and branches that reached the stars, but while the funds were coming in, damage was paid for and progress continued.

TerraSoft, eventually, couldn't keep up with their reckless production. Their energy empire swiftly declined and came to an end. Widespread speculation is that nature spirits got involved, though the vine-entangled towers left behind were impenetrable to investigation.

▶ **THE ADVENTURE**

▶▶▶ **A JOB'S A JOB**

The Fire Company has recently acquired one of TerraSoft's primary power stations. The power station is so overgrown and dangerous, normal workers cannot be sent in. TFC hires the party of characters, either as uniquely skilled individuals or an already existing group, to recover something of great value buried deep within the foundation of the power station.

▶ The power station holds mysteries related to each of the characters' Secrets, as well as unexpected twists and turns. Fulfill your own goals as you pursue the mission you've been hired for.

▶ REGIONS

▶▶▶ THE SHELL

The introductory region includes the building exterior and several outer chambers, made of infrastructure held crookedly aloft by thick roots and vines. Many of these chambers aren't structurally sound; monsters will toss debris at the characters and the characters may find they advance into the next chamber when the floor collapses from underneath them.

MONSTER TRAITS:

- ▶ **BARK:** These monsters have a tough armor-like bark that keeps them protected. Blades might have harder times piercing defenses, but fire is sure to do the trick.
- ▶ **BITE:** These monsters may not even have faces, but they do have teeth and they can chomp them down on their prey.
- ▶ **ELECTRIC:** Typically represented by a crystal embedded somewhere in their bodies, these monsters crackle with blue lightning that they can shoot and control.
- ▶ **HANGING:** These monsters take the high ground—or, to be exact, the high ceiling. Suspended by vines or just good at hanging on, these monsters stay securely on the walls or ceiling. If a hanging monster is knocked loose, it's at a significant disadvantage.
- ▶ **VINES:** Whipping, binding, lassoing from across the room, vines offer a multitude of uses for monsters with this trait.

POTENTIAL DISCOVERIES:

- ▶ Previous crews have attempted entry and some have made it inside.
Did they ever come back out, and what did they leave behind?
- ▶ Nature spirits thrive outside the tower, but are unable to enter.
What is keeping them out?
- ▶ These monsters are the results of meddling similar to a disgraced physicist's experiments. **Who has a shared backstory with the physicist, and what might lie ahead?**

PUZZLE EXAMPLES:

- ▶ **ANGLE:** Thick walls of tangled roots and vines that appear impassable have one perfect throughway.
- ▶ **KEYHOLE:** Old powered doors and devices are stuck shut, but can be reactivated by inserting the crystals embedded in electric monsters.
- ▶ **ORDER:** Number pads lock away many secrets, but their codes can often be found peeling away the ivy that buries soggy password books.

- ▶ **PLATFORM:** Some tree trunks are dead standing; push them over to quickly make a bridge.
- ▶ **REFLEX:** Swing across deep gaps on vines, but be careful of which ones can support weight and which will quickly break.
- ▶ **TARGET:** Launch a lump of food from afar into the maw of a carnivorous plant so that it snaps down, revealing a pathway behind it.

▶▶▶ THE CORRIDORS

Once in the meat of the building, the characters must either advance up or down depending on where the macguffin is. A tower of this scale had an advanced internal transport system, like an elevator crossed with a light rail. Unfortunately, even if the system wasn't completely defunct, the tracks are so overgrown there's no clear path. An option for this region is the elevator level format: the characters all stay put on one massive platform that slowly raises or lowers and enemies swarm them. The party effectively advances through chambers without leaving the platform and the monsters just come to them.

To emphasize scope in a shorter period of time, consider using cutscenes to fast forward through long stretches of walking.

MONSTER TRAITS:

- ▶ **AUTOMATIC:** Part machine, these monsters are a corruption of an old security system with automatic targeting.
- ▶ **RANGED:** These monsters have means of attacking their targets from all the way across the chamber.
- ▶ **SLITHERING:** A wiggly, coiling body gives these monsters the ability to slip and slide in tricky, evasive, and (if big enough) constrictive ways.
- ▶ **SPORES:** The plant component of these monsters can release clouds of spores that carry unpleasant effects, varying from hallucinogenic to downright deadly.
- ▶ **THORNS:** These monsters are protected by spiny thorns on their bodies that add an extra sting to their attacks.

POTENTIAL DISCOVERIES:

- ▶ Some of these databanks have video clips stored.
What was being recorded, and who is it familiar to?
- ▶ A person has been hiding in a locked break room.
How long have they been here and what do they know?
- ▶ The more machine-like monsters show off technology that was definitely off the books for TerraSoft. **What were they experimenting with, and why is worrisome?**

PUZZLE EXAMPLES:

- ▶ **ANGLE:** Holo-glass screens only show fractions of designs, but lined up they reveal hole schematics.
- ▶ **KEYHOLE:** Different doors have different access levels; collect the right kinds of keys to open the right kinds of doors.
- ▶ **ORDER:** Some security systems still have functional voice recognition commands; the commands can be learned and repeated to override the systems.
- ▶ **PLATFORM:** Slide the heavy metal crate over the pressure sensitive pad to activate the freight elevator.
- ▶ **REFLEX:** Navigate bugged out hallways filled with slamming doors, gouts of steam, and loose wires by learning the unique way to avoid each obstacle.
- ▶ **TARGET:** Fire an electric shot through a hole in the wall to activate a circuit panel on the other side of a locked door.

▶▶▶ **THE WILD ENGINE**

Things get strange at the end of the adventurers' journey. Chaotic nature magic swirls around and the very ground pulses with its energy. **This is where the Master of the Dungeon waits, whether a renegade power core that gained some level of sentience, an exiled scientist attempting to harness the power station for themselves, or an ancient beast just trying to escape from this labyrinth.**

MONSTER TRAITS:

- ▶ **GROWING:** The plant aspect of these monsters grows wildly, extending and adapting in the moment..
- ▶ **ETHEREAL:** These monsters are like energy echoes: incorporeal menaces made of light.
- ▶ **OVERLOAD:** Hardly able to control their own power, when these monsters go off they might just hurt everything around them (including other monsters).
- ▶ **PLASMA:** These monsters generate super-hot material in arcing whips or branching blasts.
- ▶ **TENDRIL:** Betraying the physics of traditional plants, tendrils are powerful and prehensile weapons.

POTENTIAL DISCOVERIES:

- ▶ More than just energy production happened here.
What was TerraSoft hiding down here, and why does TFC want it so bad?

-
- ▶ A relic from long ago is here, seemingly out of place.
Why is it here, and to whom is it important?
 - ▶ The Master of the Dungeon lurks ahead.
Who might they be and what are they up to?

PUZZLE EXAMPLES:

- ▶ **ANGLE:** Manipulate little rifts in reality that create two-way doors in space within the chamber.
- ▶ **KEYHOLE:** Magically infused locks only respond to certain flavors of magic.
- ▶ **ORDER:** Crystals that scatter the floor can be arranged into mandalas to activate magical triggers.
- ▶ **PLATFORM:** While most levers no longer work, some raise pistons and platforms that can be jumped on to reach high, hidden places.
- ▶ **REFLEX:** The nodules in certain chambers will hum and then burst with power, forcing characters to navigate the minefield just right.
- ▶ **TARGET:** Use Gear from defeated ethereal monsters to hit targets hidden behind solid objects.



ZERO DAY THREAT

WRITTEN BY BRI WILLIAMS



▶ THE HISTORY

▶▶▶ A NEW BEGINNING FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE

It was only 8 years ago that it was discovered that Piedras, three planets away from home, could maintain life. There were mineral infused springs of water deep underground that sustained all forms of flora and fauna beneath the rocky surface and enough metals and ore to construct the buildings the first team used to study the surface.

It was only 4 years ago that the nations of the home planet formed a coalition that would allow for the advancement of space travel for everyone regardless of race, class or creed. The greatest minds came together so that the 3 months of travel to Piedras only took 3 days, and the first settlers on the planet were off to make a living developing Station Almera and the Space Elevator that would bridge the gap between the space hub and the land miles below.

It was just over 3 years ago when the countries of the home planet had to come together again to protect the settlers from the Noel Company, who's slow monopoly of the people and materials used to build the space elevator caused conflict and division among the settlers. To end this, the countries ensured that only small contractors and the future residents of Piedras were the ones to finish the job that needed to be done.

▶▶▶ PEREGRINA

Today the Space Settlement Peregrina flourishes as a city of around 5,000 with many coming and going to visit, study, and further advance the goal of the home planet: Travel into deep space. The technology on Peregrina is even more advanced than that of the home planet; with many scientists and inventors making the settlement their home and testing their inventions. Generators have been crafted to create sustainable energy from the underground springs that span the entire planet. Agriculture has flourished thanks to research done on local biology, and crops from the home planet and Peregrina have been able to thrive symbiotically.

The Settlement's crowning jewel, **The Central Tower,** is a 15-level monument to the progress that has been made in the short time Peregrina has existed. While many live in the surrounding and underground area around the tower, most citizens and visitors live, work, and play on its many levels. Ask any of the settlers and they'll tell you that The Central Tower is not just a symbol of pride for them but also a bastion of safety: Those who developed Peregrina wanted to make sure that if the time ever came that they needed to protect the settlement, Station Almera, or even the home planet from within or beyond the planet Piedras they would be ready. Many inventors came together to create a security system that could handle threats both natural and manmade, all being manned by the Quantum Computer that works in harmony with the settlers to ensure they feel safe.

▶ THE ADVENTURE

▶▶▶ HACK THE PLANET

It all started about 4 hours ago when the Central Tower lost communications with Almera. Despite the best efforts of those in the tower, they are unable to reach the station. The only contact is the station's distress beacon, signalling the emergency descent of the elevator. A crew immediately tries to board the elevator to help the team at Almera but just as quickly retreats when the security triggers and deems the crew a threat, attacking them. Looking back at it now, it seems that the distress beacon and the elevator was a trap: Soon after docking, the tower security system goes into a frenzy, and all measures go on the offensive to protect the settlement from its own people. Most are able to evacuate before the Central Tower goes into complete lockdown and others run to find shelter as the Tower begins its defense.

The party is a group of experienced engineers and seasoned fighters asked by the Council of Peregrina to navigate the Tower and reset the Quantum Computer on Almera. Each member of the team has something valuable to them on the station that they must reach at all costs, and a desire to protect the settlement they built with their own hands.

▶ **Survive each wave of the Central Tower's defenses, reach Station Almera, and find the culprit in charge of the security breach to bring them to justice.**

▶ THE TOWER

▶▶▶ CIVILIAN OUTPOST

The introductory region is the lower half of the tower where most civilians go for their daily activities. Shops and eateries comprise the first two levels of the tower while the next three are places where artisans make their crafts and children of the settlement go for care and learning. The last two civilian levels are the hospital where all the citizens of Peregrina go to get care and where scientists continue to conduct research into the effects the environment has on the settlers.

Stairways to each new floor of the civilian outpost are the safest way of traversing each level, and the party can reach the next section by finding the cargo elevator on the hospital level.

MONSTER TRAITS:

- ▶ **RESTRAIN:** These monsters, or AI, were designed to capture people that were later going to be interrogated by authorities. Once caught, a person is confined in a small space with only their head free.

- ▶ **DECEIVE:** Settlement security wanted to ensure the children would be safe in the case of an attack. Many of the toys in child areas also act as weapons. Getting too close to a toy bear could result in small claws and teeth to the back.
- ▶ **ELECTRIC:** Many of the patrol bots on the civilian levels are equipped with non-lethal stun weapons. However, they're only non-lethal if you get stunned once or twice.

POTENTIAL DISCOVERIES:

- ▶ Every piece of machinery and AI that has turned against you was once an ally.
Could they be turned back to help your task?
- ▶ Many of the artisans who have their own workshops in the civilian outpost were once members of the team who created the defense system.
Did they leave information behind that could be useful?

PUZZLE EXAMPLES:

- ▶ **REFLEX:** Cameras cover almost every inch of the tower for the sake of safety, but their timing, blind spots, and distractibility can be used to the characters' unique advantage.
- ▶ **PLATFORM:** Though some areas are blocked due to the lockdown, the party knows that measures were done so that paths could be accessed manually.
- ▶ **KEYHOLE:** The AI is smart but is easy to trick. If you can find the proper identification, there are areas that will open to the party.

▶▶▶ **RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

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The upper floors of the Tower are for the continued research of innovations for the settlement of Peregrina and deep space travel. As such, the security here is tighter than on the lower levels. **The party is bound to make interesting discoveries as they investigate the R&D chambers.**

MONSTER TRAITS:

- ▶ **BLARING:** These security measures work in tandem with the others: If they catch sight of anyone they deem dangerous they will immediately alert the entire floor.
- ▶ **LASERS:** Some rooms in this area are equipped with high-powered laser turrets that shoot with precision.
- ▶ **ROBOTIC:** Cyborgs that often work alongside researchers as assistants are also capable of attacking with abnormal strength.
- ▶ **CLAWING:** Many tasks on this level are automated with robotic claws doing the work. If one were to grab someone in the wrong place, it could cause injury- or worse.

POTENTIAL DISCOVERIES:

- ▶ It seems that some of the researchers were working on more than just projects that could help Piedras and the home planet.
What is it, and is it dangerous?
- ▶ One of the researchers was talking quite a bit with someone from the home planet.
What does the correspondence say, and who are they talking to?

PUZZLE EXAMPLES:

- ▶ **ANGLE:** Manipulate little rifts that create two-way doors in space within the chamber.
- ▶ **PLATFORM:** Large rock formations studied by geologists pepper some of the chambers. They can be used to avoid getting spotted.
- ▶ **REFLEX:** Sometimes the best way to get past a monster is to create a distraction and quickly slip past unnoticed.
- ▶ **TARGET:** Sometimes the best way to get past a monster is to create a distraction, and quickly slip by unnoticed.

▶▶▶ THE ELEVATOR



The second act is a greater test of endurance as the party must use the space elevator to reach Station Almera. A giant platform guided by a tether to Almera, the elevator is the main transport for goods and people to and from the home planet. It is a favorite tourist attraction for those visiting Peregrina, as the light field surrounding the elevator makes it feel like its passengers are floating in space. As waves of defenses activate to prevent progression, the party can stop and start the elevator at their own pace to prevent getting overwhelmed.

Each onslaught of AI can be more daunting than the last, so it is of the utmost importance that everyone is careful.

MONSTER TRAITS:

- ▶ **FLYING:** Some turrets can hover and fly around the party as they shoot.
- ▶ **GATED:** Periodically, the elevator goes through checkpoint gates made of pure energy to ensure that nothing has breached defenses. It seems like the gates are currently set to destroy organic matter.
- ▶ **SHOOT:** Turrets on the elevator can shoot lasers for several seconds before needing a cooldown period in which they lower themselves into the platform.
- ▶ **TENDRIL:** Mechanical tethers that are used to secure cargo are now able to grab and pull things off the platform...or apart.

POTENTIAL DISCOVERIES:

- ▶ It seems that the elevator itself was used as the vehicle for the security breach on the tower.
Is there anything that can be discovered from looking at the terminals?
- ▶ The only other thing on the elevator is cargo that doesn't seem to be on any manifest.
What's in the cargo, and who sent it?
- ▶ The Master of the Dungeon lurks ahead.
Who was it that caused the corruption of the planet's defenses?

PUZZLE EXAMPLES:

- ▶ **PLATFORM:** Play with the gravity on the Space Elevator to better dodge and disorient enemies.
- ▶ **REFLEX:** Turrets retreat into the platform to reload and cooldown. Moving cargo at the right time could prevent them from coming back.
- ▶ **ORDER:** Terminals on the Elevator are used to move cargo and check systems. Their systems can be hacked by interacting with the right wires and buttons in the right order.

▶ ▶ ▶ **STATION ALMERA**

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Station Almera is the counterweight for the space elevator and the central hub for travel and commerce between Piedras and the home planet. It is there where the final boss can be found: The Quantum Computer that controls all operations for the station and the Central Tower along with all it's defenses. **With personnel secured safely inside locked down offices and living spaces, it is time for the party to shut down and restore the Quantum Computer and ensure the safety of those on board the station.**

MONSTER TRAITS:

- ▶ **SHOOT:** Turrets line the corridors on the way to the Quantum Computer that activate at the first sign of movement.
- ▶ **ELECTRIC:** Some chambers could hold traps that cause walls to shoot charged probes.
- ▶ **OVERLOAD:** When these enemies become overwhelmed, they may explode before being deactivated as a last resort.

POTENTIAL DISCOVERIES:

- ▶ You find someone lurking around on your way to the computer.
Who are they, and can they be trusted?
- ▶ It's time to shut down the computer and restore order to Piedras.
Will the party be able to learn anything after it's done?

PUZZLE EXAMPLES:

- ▶ **PLATFORM:** Harmful laser grids can spawn on the floors of some chambers. Using objects to block them and get off the floor may be the party's best bet.
- ▶ **REFLEX:** Certain AI will explode as soon as someone gets too close to them, it's best to tread carefully in certain areas. Fortunately, many travel along set paths.
- ▶ **TARGET:** Many of the defenses here are activated by movement sensors and cameras. Use the parts of other AI to distract the enemy and get away.

WRITTEN BY BRI WILLIAMS

SUPER DRAGONI KID ADVENTURE!



▶ THE HISTORY

▶▶▶ FOR GENERATIONS, THE 7 GREAT LINES HAVE LIVED IN PEACE...

After decades of war and tension, the seven Great Lines decided to put down their arms and talk through their differences. The Dwarves, Humans, Wolves, Dragons, Fae, Waterkin, and Elves gathered their leaders and joined together at the center of the continent to figure out the needs of their people and create a magically bound treaty that would see every person in the land prosper. The Original Accord, as it is called today, still holds true and is a sacred bond highly regarded by all lines. Though petty crime and discord still happen occasionally, war has never been an option.

▶▶▶ THE KINGDOM OF NOELLE

The bastion of the Original Accord is Noelle: A kingdom originally run by humans that has become the center of commerce and politics for all the lines. Sitting near the center of the continent, the Kingdom has become a diverse metropolis that those of any line can call home. With a bustling town below it, a grand castle and fortress watch over their citizens with the human royal family ensuring that the kingdom is safe.

For decades, Noelle has prospered under the **Stoneseer** family, with each monarch's lineage being remembered by their contributions to The Fortress: the home of the royal family's treasures that help the kingdom thrive. Some monarchs earned their contribution through discovery: King Leon was able to bring back three rare jewels called The Ocean's Pride on his adventures with the Lords of the Waterkin. Others were given their fortune: Queen Elena, for her help in restoring the ancient dwarven temples, was given large bouquets of delicate roses made of pure gold and jade. The current King, Conrad, has also made his contribution to the fortress, having developed powerful mana crystals with the Elves that could power the entire continent for eons.

▶ THE ADVENTURE

▶▶▶ THE REPTILIAN JOB

To say that the crown prince Eres has big shoes to fill is no understatement, and at the age of 23 he decided that he had to fill them now in order to make his parents proud. A fortnight ago the prince, along with a squad of the best soldiers in the kingdom, took to the mountains in the east and infiltrated the dragon nests. The Dragons, a proud folk that enjoy treasure as much as they enjoy flight, have centuries worth of valuables both given and discovered. While several families keep their own collections in their nests, most of

the treasure goes to be protected by **Karina the Dragon Mother**: The oldest and most powerful of the Dragons. Eres, using a combination of sleeping draughts and cloaking magic, was able to steal the majority of Karinna's treasure along with some possessions of other families. The Dragons woke up devastated at their great loss. Unsure who would commit such an injustice, they have since been going to Noelle to talk with the leaders of other lines and investigate. As the talks continue tensions run high and a few dragon folk, knowing they could easily overtake the other lines, want to take matters into their own hands.

The party is a group of young Dragons who know the truth about what happened to the Dragon Mother's treasure: After all, sleep draughts only work so long on the young and energetic. They have tried to convince their parents and the adults of the group as to who the culprit is, but the adults won't listen. Seeing the proud matriarch Karinna, so devastated at letting down her people, caused the young Dragons to seek their own justice.

▶ The goal is simple: Infiltrate the Fortress that holds the Dragon's treasure and bring back evidence that it was the crown prince that stole from the Dragon people. The only thing standing in the way are a town of peaceful citizens, a labyrinthian fortress, and whoever decides to get in the young Dragons' way. What could go wrong?

▶ TRAVERSING NOELLE

▶▶▶ THE TOWN

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To get anywhere near the fortress, the easiest way is to walk through the town since many areas near the castle and fortress are no-fly zones. The bustling borough is set up in sections that form a crescent around the foot of the castle: Trading and commerce outposts make up the furthest semi-circle along with living spaces and farmland. Shops, markets, and taverns make up the next section while the guard training grounds are closest to the castle entrance. The young dragons have heard rumors of a hidden tunnel in the training grounds that leads directly into the fortress, so all they need to do is navigate the town and find it. So long as they don't get caught, they won't be sent away from the town, or worse: someone tells their parents.

MONSTER TRAITS:

- ▶ **RESTRAIN:** Though overall most citizens are peaceful, there's always crime waiting in the wings. Dragons are highly regarded for the power in their scales and those that work on the black market would love to catch a young dragon to farm their molting for profit.

..... SUPER DRAGON KID ADVENTURE!

- ▶ **GUARD:** The wolves have lived as allies and companions to the humans for many years and most grow up to become patrollers to keep the town of Noelle safe. If one sees you, they are bound to ask questions and escort you to their human counterparts.
- ▶ **TATTLE:** One of the blessings and curses of knowing your way around the town is that most of the people there know the young dragons and their love of mischief. While some may delay you with chatter and play, others who have been a victim of your antics may keep a closer eye on the party.

POTENTIAL DISCOVERIES:

- ▶ Starting this adventure during the day might be less suspicious as the young dragons come to play there all the time, but going at night may give the cover that they need.
What is the best course of action?
- ▶ Humans and dwarves are known for walking around and sharing the latest gossip with anyone who will listen.
What does the party hear on their way to the fortress?
- ▶ The town of Noelle has some of the best shops and merchants on the continent, often selling wares that you cannot find anywhere else.
Would something from the shops help through the journey?
- ▶ While dragons have an excellent sense of direction, no one in the party has ever been inside the fortress.
Could there be something in the training grounds that will help?

PUZZLE EXAMPLES:

- ▶ **PLATFORM:** While the adults always said that flying in Noelle was forbidden, they never said anything about jumping really high. Moving from rooftop to rooftop could aid in getting to the fortress entrance faster and avoid getting caught.
- ▶ **REFLEX:** The back alleys that snake through the town are dangerous but essential for this mission. Navigating them quickly to avoid curious glances will be important, lest someone sees and reports back to the Young Dragons' parents.
- ▶ **ANGLE:** The tunnel that leads to the fortress is somewhere in the training grounds and cloaked by magic. Dragon senses should be able to locate the general area where the tunnels are, but it will still take some sleuthing to find it.

▶▶▶ THE FORTRESS

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Shaped like a star inside a circle, the fortress is regarded by many as the other seat of power in Noelle. While humans and wolves patrol the outside of the large structure, the inside is a maze guarded by all kinds of elemental Golems and magic armor. While many paths lead to great treasure, they can also lead to traps and dead ends. It is said that anyone who joins Noelle's guard must spend a month training and memorizing the fortress, but the young dragons don't have that kind of time. The party must get in, find the vault where Prince Eres is hiding the Dragon Mother's treasure, and get out before being noticed.

MONSTER TRAITS:

- ▶ **ELECTRIC:** Electric Golems are shaped like snakes and coil around their victims to weaken them with their shock. Fortunately, their skin gives off sparks that can be seen from far away.
- ▶ **ICE:** Seven floating crystals form together to make an Ice Golem that shoots rays that freeze intruders in their tracks. It shouldn't be too hard for a young fire dragon to take down, but be careful: make sure that the fallen crystals do not surround you in their self-destruct trap.
- ▶ **STONE:** Stone Golems lumber through the halls of the fortress and use their giant fists to knock intruders out and away. Their rock exteriors are tough to crack but destroying the geode that gives them power will stop them in their tracks.
- ▶ **SHARP:** One of the elves' greatest inventions was the Armored Soldier: A suit of armor able to fight on par with the best knights on the continent. The fortress uses a version of the Soldier that wields a spear and can take a few hits. However, they are slow, and that can be used to a swift dragon's advantage.

POTENTIAL DISCOVERIES:

- ▶ Every path in the fortress is covered with not only treasure, but artifacts that tell of the rich history of the continent.
What is there to learn from these items?
- ▶ It's hard for an adult dragon to resist the allure of sparkling jewels and baubles, let alone a child.
Surely one gold coin missing from the pile wouldn't hurt?
- ▶ When the party does find the vault, there will surely be a trap that the prince prepared in order to protect it.
What could be waiting for the young dragons?

PUZZLE EXAMPLES:

- ▶ **ORDER:** To navigate some areas of the fortress, runes of the common language must be pressed in the right order. If done incorrectly, the patrols above will immediately be alerted and covers will be blown.
- ▶ **KEYHOLE:** In a certain chamber, a pedestal stands in the middle of a room filled with goblets. Above the exit is a stone tablet that reads "When the star aligns and the sapphires glow, the holiest will open the door." Find the goblet that fits on the indentation of the pedestal to advance to the next chamber. .
- ▶ **TARGET:** A series of levers sit on the ceiling of a room in a circle. Hitting them at the same time will allow the door to open to the next hallway.

▶▶▶ THE VAULT

After many a trial and error, the young dragons finally make it to the vault: an iron and stone chamber protected by an enchanted glass door secured with a solid malachite vault lock. Through the glass and stone the dragons can see the great treasure once protected by the dragon mother and runes decorating the walls. The party can sense that a strong and terrible magic is guarding the stolen goods, and as soon as they enter, they could have not only the entire fortress guard upon them but Prince Eres himself to lock them up.

MONSTER TRAITS:

- ▶ **FALLING:** The area just before the vault is filled with magic charges in the ceiling that fall when an intruder is near.
- ▶ **FIRE:** Fire Golems, ironically, look like tiny dragons made from origami. While they would surely be a threat to someone without a dragon's hide, they are nothing but a nuisance to the party. However, that nuisance combined with the other perils in the vault could become a bigger threat.
- ▶ **MAGIC:** Talismans and sigils on the walls of the vault spawn smoke the color of shadows and the shape of mages. These are the memories of mages who fought in the war centuries ago and they are ready to attack.

POTENTIAL DISCOVERIES:

- ▶ The magic enchanting this vault is advanced, way too advanced for the prince to handle alone.
This may be the work of another of the Great Lines, but which?
- ▶ Getting in and grabbing the jewels is only half the battle when it comes to proving the crimes of Prince Eres.
What will be the plan of escape?
- ▶ It is of the utmost importance that the right item is brought back to prove that this is Karinna's treasure so that the party can convince the adults when they get back.
What are the pieces that the young dragons take back?

PUZZLE EXAMPLES:

- ▶ **REFLEX:** Sigils that create mana spikes decorate the floors and walls of the chamber. Be cautious in how you navigate the room so that they don't get set off.
- ▶ **ANGLE:** To open the vault lock, the mechanism must be turned in a way that the etchings in the glass line up perfectly to make three different patterns: a rose, a shield, and a diamond.
- ▶ **TARGET:** It seems that the guards (and Prince Eres) will be notified if this vault is opened unless two buttons on the opposite ends of the vault get pressed in under a minute. Hit those buttons as quickly as you can by any means possible.

WRITTEN BY BRI WILLIAMS

THE SPOOKEASY



Content Warning: This story references suicide and murder as an element of the setting's history.

▶ THE HISTORY

▶▶▶ CLAXON MANOR'S STORIED HISTORY

Deep in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey resides Claxon Manor. On a small crumbling road just beyond the ghost town of Atsion, the manor has stayed vacant since 1909 when its fifth resident, Jacob Porter, mysteriously abandoned the property. The manor was built in 1862 for the wealthy Iron Magnate William Claxon and his family: His wife Ebba, twin sons Henry and Edison, and their youngest Cora. The family seemed to appear out of nowhere, with the manor being built in a matter of days and a company appearing soon after. The Claxons quickly became members of an "Iron Dynasty" that helped supply industries along the east coast of America. The Claxons would host all types of wealthy and influential guests in their house, often bringing in unique entertainment that had people scrambling back for more. Many rumors spread that the family, especially Ebba, had a deep love for the occult, and would bring powerful friends over to host seances and discuss matters beyond common understanding.

It stands to reason that many blamed these seances for what happened to the family in 1871, when William Claxon ended the lives of himself and his family deep in the bowels of the manor. Those who lived in Atsion said that their once civil boss had been falling into chaotic mood swings months before the incident. His family was also noted exhibiting odd behavior; the twins would often speak of secrets they couldn't possibly know, while Ebba's seances became too disturbing for her guests. Only little Cora seemed unaffected, but by the time anyone noticed what was amiss it was too late.

After the Claxon family deaths, the manor would lay untouched for a few years before a few wealthy businessmen purchased the home in quick succession. The attempt to take over the town and the Claxon ironworks was ultimately futile. Everyone who moved in would only stay for a few days before fleeing without a word and quietly selling off the property. With the business abandoned and decreased demand for iron, the town soon followed suit.

▶ THE ADVENTURE

▶▶▶ A LITTLE PARTY NEVER KILLED NOBODY...

Fast-forward to 1926- where the prohibition is in full swing, and hotspots for socialites to unwind with a drink are in high demand. The head of the Ottisimo family, Marco, recently bought Claxon Manor to renovate and turn into a speakeasy for the visiting rich and famous. Renovations were going well until about a month into the job when workers started to experience strange events in the building. They were small at first: Tools would be misplaced, and carpenters would feel someone tapping on their back

when they were alone. Sometimes workers would hear the whispers of a woman and the laugh of children in the halls. And many people reported seeing a man in old Victorian dress walking the halls just outside of their vision. However, in recent months, things have gotten much worse. Most workers have quit because of the impossible job the house has given them: the rooms keep moving, and anyone caught alone is attacked by... something.

Determined to see his speakeasy built, Marco Ottisimo has searched far and wide for experts in the paranormal to get to the root of the problem and rid the manor of its haunts. And though he is somewhat skeptical of the whole ordeal, he's willing to pay top dollar to the group that can settle things quickly so that his gin joint gets built.

▶ You have all been brought together for one night to rid Claxon Manor of its ghosts and possible demons. Be careful to have your wits about you.

▶ INVESTIGATING THE MANOR

▶▶▶ MAIN FLOOR

While it is true that all the rooms in the house shift at will, there does seem to be some method to the madness. The greenhouse in the back of the home does not move while the kitchen only shifts around the main floor. Though they stay in the same position, the parlor seems to have a mirrored version of itself on the upper floor making it so that you can be on either level of the house at random. When initially entering the manor, your team makes note that the kitchen, two bathrooms, a sitting room, and 2 bedrooms are all on the main floor. You can tell that two strong energies are lurking in the hallways and it seems they are ready to cause quite a bit of mischief.

MONSTER TRAITS:

- ▶ **WHIP:** While the overgrowth in the greenhouse is beautiful, with ivy and foxglove covering the glass and cobblestone in the room, the flora tends to fight back. Get too close and the vines might slap you away.
- ▶ **CONTROL:** Wisps patrol the halls and rooms of the main floor, floating gently towards any energy that doesn't feel ethereal. If one gets too close it will be absorbed by the person, causing confusion that may lead harm to the victim and others.
- ▶ **THROW:** It seems like some of the objects in the house are ready to protect their domain and will fling themselves at anyone who tries to pass by. Be extra careful with the knives in the kitchen.

POTENTIAL DISCOVERIES:

- ▶ Deep in the greenhouse, a small box with letters is discovered buried in a pot.
What do the letters say, and who wrote them?
- ▶ It seems the carpenters didn't get far in renovating the home, but what they managed to do seemed to make an area safe.
Where are the safe havens on the Main Floor?
- ▶ Some portraits are left hanging of the Claxon family that may help you with this job.
What information do you get?

PUZZLE EXAMPLES:

- ▶ **KEYHOLE:** Some doors were locked by workers to protect themselves from whatever lies within. Marco has assured you all the keys are in the manor, it's just a matter of finding them.
- ▶ **TARGET:** Sometimes the spirits will keep things you need just out of reach. Using an object or power to make them let items go will be important.
- ▶ **REFLEX:** The floors of the manor are decaying and decrepit. Watch your footing in certain rooms so that you don't fall through.

▶▶▶ **THE CLAXON TWINS' ROOM**

One bedroom on the main floor seems to belong to a pair of boys fascinated by the military. Toy guns and military banners adorn the walls as tin soldiers march along the floor. And in the center of it all are Henry and Edison, ready to cause mischief and send the team running. Exorcising them would allow you to have a little more peace of mind in exploring the main floor.

MONSTER TRAITS:

- ▶ **SHOOTING:** While the guns on the walls may be toys, they can cause real harm when Edison imbues them with spiritual energy.
- ▶ **MARCHING:** Tin soldiers with sharp little bayonets march the floors and are ready to poke at any ankle that gets in their way. However, their small stature and light bodies make them slow and easy to knock away.
- ▶ **FORCEFUL:** Henry can use his ghostly powers to move not only objects but the room itself. Be on your toes when he moves the ceiling to the floor.

POTENTIAL DISCOVERIES:

- ▶ You may be able to communicate with the boys before it's time to let them be at peace.
What do you ask them?

PUZZLE EXAMPLES:

- ▶ **ORDER:** The boys are two formidable opponents, but their attacks are juvenile. Attacking in the right way at the right time will exorcise them faster.
- ▶ **PLATFORM:** As Henry shifts the room, new paths will be opened to you on the walls and ceiling. Use them to incapacitate your opponent.
- ▶ **REFLEX:** Edison seems to be a crack shot for someone so young. Dodging his bullets will be difficult, but essential.

▶▶▶ **UPPER FLOOR**

Other than the rooms already encountered by the team, the second floor seems to also host a study, more bedrooms, the maid’s quarters, and the master suite. When the rooms are on this floor, they seem more volatile with furniture spinning around the room and the shifts shaking the area as they happen. Wherever you go the incoherent ramblings of a man can be heard and it seems like every item touched makes him angrier. While the ground floor’s antics can be chalked up to mischief, there is violent intent that can be felt up here.

MONSTER TRAITS:

- ▶ **GROWLING:** Cubbies in the hallways host a few different taxidermy predators like wolves and big cats. You can hear their growls as you pass, and some seem to bare their teeth.
- ▶ **DECEPTIVE:** All manner of art adorns the walls of the upper floor, but as you enter and exit rooms they seem to shift. It seems the paintings want you to get lost in the halls.
- ▶ **MESMERIZING:** One of the rooms that seems to stay on the upper floor the most is a little girl’s room filled to the brim with porcelain dolls. As cute as they are you probably shouldn’t pick them up; their eyes have the power to convince you to stay with them forever.

POTENTIAL DISCOVERIES:

- ▶ It seems like the youngest child Cora kept a diary up until the day of the Claxon murders.
What did she write that could be useful?
- ▶ The study has all manner of books and objects of the occult that could help on this job and beyond.
What does the team learn?
- ▶ Though the ramblings you hear while on the upper floor are mostly incoherent, sometimes you hear something that strikes you.
What is it?

PUZZLE EXAMPLES:

- ▶ **ORDER:** In the study, you can tell that there are hidden cupboards behind the bookshelves. Put books in the correct order to access them.
- ▶ **ANGLE:** Sometimes, to find the thing you are looking for, you need to look at it from the right point of view. You may need to re-enter a room when it's turned a different way to get what you're looking for.
- ▶ **REFLEX:** It seems that the master of the house haunts the hallways of the upper floor while waiting for someone to pass by. When he sees you, he will rush at you to try and gain control of your body. This happened to a worker who ended up hospitalized for quite some time, so be ready to dodge him when he charges.

▶▶▶ **BASEMENT**

After some time investigating, the team discovers that a massive spike of spiritual energy is coming from the cellars below the manor. As you enter, the voice of a woman bellows to "leave or face the consequences." The closer you get to the back of the cellar, the stronger the energy becomes and the weaker everyone feels. The team can see some type of dark swirling energy encompassing the back wall and a spirit standing in its way. This is it: if the portal is closed and that spirit is exorcised, the job is done and everyone gets paid. But are you all up to the task?

MONSTER TRAITS:

- ▶ **DEMONIC:** Small horned creatures fly around and cause a fuss. Some carry a pointed staff that they want to poke your eyes with.
- ▶ **DRAINING:** Pillars among abandoned furniture and trinkets activate to drain the energy from the body and send it into the dark spiral. Destroy them quickly before you collapse.
- ▶ **SHARP:** The spirit, Ebba, wants to stop the team from approaching her at all costs. She sends out sharp icy spikes from her form and the floor to do so.

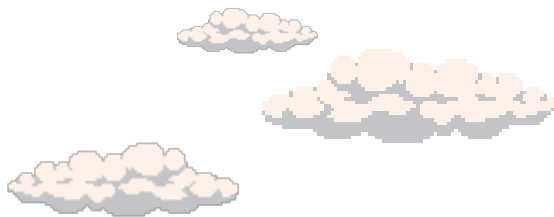
POTENTIAL DISCOVERIES:

- ▶ It seems that Ebba was the culprit behind her husband's deterioration and eventual killing spree.
Did she do it on purpose, or did she get in over her head with the occult?
- ▶ Something beyond the dark spiral calls to you all and tempts you.
What does it tempt you with, and do you answer its call?

PUZZLE EXAMPLES:

- ▶ **PLATFORM:** To get to the dark spiral, all manner of stored furniture is in your way. Sometimes the best option will be to jump and climb over things to safely reach your target.
- ▶ **REFLEX:** Just like other areas of the manor, items will float around and be flung at you. Mind your head.

► CREDITS



Fight Item Run is written by Taylor Curreysmith.
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Internal artwork by Bree Wolf
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and Super Pixel Space Base by unTied Games

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This game is Powered by the Apocalypse with specific aid from *Simple World* by Avery Alder. It is additionally inspired by old school dungeon crawler and fantasy RPG video games.

Safety tools are an important part of all roleplaying games. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the **TTRPG Safety Toolkit Quick Reference Guide** and the guide to Using Safety Tools in Online Play created by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk. These resources are invaluable for anyone engaging in roleplay, whether they're starting their first game or about to finish their fiftieth. Find these resources here.

The author of this book resides on Coast Salish and Nuxwsa'7aq (Nooksack) territories. The Point Elliott Treaty of 1855 did not include land or federal recognition for the Nooksack people. Please use this territorial acknowledgement as an opportunity to educate yourself about the impact of white colonialism on the Indigenous people of your area and support them to the best of your ability.

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Follow Taylor at @WhimsyMachine for announcements and updates.
Please support this and future games on Patreon at patreon.com/whimsymachinemedi.

If you get a chance to play, I'd love to hear how it goes. Enjoy!

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