COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

SWISSRPG

ISSUE
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DUNGEONS, DATES & CARNIVALS

4 DAZZLING ONE SHOTS

FORUM

OPINIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY & MEET THE MODS

ART CORNER

FANTASTIC CREATIONS

CALL OF CTHULHU

ELDRITCH DEEP-DIVE

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Editorial Note

What a ride! You guys completely overwhelmed us with the many entries (in a good way and in a bad way that we weren't able to add all the entries!). So much creative outpour, exciting insights and adventures, fun tables and amazing artwork all contained in this very first issue - a whooping 62 pages! Anytime I get up to do something with the SwissRPG Community I am over and over again amazed how much dedication, creativity and motivation people have to help create something. It's a lot of fun working like that.
Naturally, I and the team behind it learned a lot from the first issue and there will be some changes regarding the 'entry rules' for the next issue which should enable us to work more efficiently and (most importantly) be more transparent regarding editing. The next issue will be published at the start of the next year, and anyone can enter their ideas, adventures, artwork and essays again! I am looking forward to it!
The announcement for the entry opening will be published on Discord, so keep your eyes peeled.

Special thanks goes to our volunteers Dave, who has worked relentlessly on the layout and put up with the chaotic nature of the first project, baffes and toadheart for the typo hunting and all the writers and artists that have shared their creations. I hope you, the reader, enjoy the very first issue of SwissRPGs zine!

@Henston

Community Mods

@najahiri

Name: Daniele
About me: I started playing RPGs during my high school studies and continued sporadically until I came to Switzerland. I now manage the Zwergenschmiede regular games in Bern and I am happy to get to know people through the hobby as well as telling and listening to new stories! **Favorite dice:** I have to go with the d12, the perfect number of faces.

@durward.

Name: Durward
About me: I fell in love with rpg when I was introduced to a D&D Starter set with my son many years ago (and we still play the same campaign). I regularly work at an Asian food store and run an Aikido dojo. With the amazing help of others, we are promoting ttrpgs in the Romandie region of Switzerland. My favorite part of ttrpgs is expanding our minds and creativity through shared stories. I love prepping games and often find myself defying laws of the multiverse in daydreams.

@hurlebise | Alain

Name: Alain
About me: I started playing ttrpgs with AD&D and 3.5 many years ago with a bunch of friends. Since then I explored many other systems and fell in love with the versatility. I have way to many books to read and playtest, often with lighter systems that focus mainly on roleplay and narration. My future goal would be is to introduce my children to ttrpgs. I am particularly active in organising ttrpg events around Geneva and Lausanne.

@akiera42 | Akieran

Name: Kieran
About Me: I am an international ham of mystery.

@mr.albertshiny | MelOne

Name: Jens
About Me: I'm playing RPGs since sometime in the 90s. Going through some systems over the years I am hone at running Horror, Sci-Fi or the more weirder systems out there. Working and living in Basel, I mostly organize events and games with occasionally helping at events and conventions in other regions.

Rules explanation

Spirit Guardians - You're doing it Wrong!

- @Wawa

There I've said it. But what are you doing wrong about Spiritual Guardians? Let's take a look at it:

> [...] An affected creature's speed is halved in the area, and [...]

Yes, yes I hear you say "basically that's difficult terrain, right, the enemies speed is halfed, meaning they just spend double movement."
WRONG!

Let's say an enemy has 30 ft of movement. They move 15 ft and enter the aura of Spirit Guardians. Since their speed is now halved, their remaining movement is 0.

What about the reverse? Assuming someone starts their turn in the aura of Spirit Guardians, next to you. They currently have a movement speed of 15 ft They use the disengage action and move away 15 ft from you now leaving the area of the Spirit Guardians, thus their movement speed will be reset to their original 30 ft having already spent 15 ft of it, meaning a remaining movement speed of 15 ft.

Shoot your monks

- @Nico

Getting to use your abilities is fun! As DM you should facilitate scenarios where the players get to use their abilities. Most abilities are easily used, like spells or multiattack. Some are a little more niche: monks can block projectiles, elves are immune to magical sleep, dwarves have advantage against poison etc. A good DM can target the players weaknesses to make an encounter harder but a great DM can target the players strengths so they can use their cool stuff. Cast sleep on your elf, poison your dwarf and shoot your monk!

Beware the white box

- @Nico

The white box is a square, empty white room. I heard the term from a video game developer where the white box is kind of a "test chamber". In D&D you should try and avoid having too many fights in locations that can be reduced to a white box. It's okay to just have some monsters in a room occasionally but if there's a way to make it more dynamic, go for it! A river, a bridge, a chasm or just some pillars. Just beware the white box!

Move around

- @Nico

The combat system in D&D disencourages you to move during a combat. With the attack of opportunity rule, a player will rarely get out of an enemies range without good reason. And so it can happen that everyone squares up in round one, and then everyone hits each other without ever moving again until one side has lost. This is dull. As a DM you can encourage the players to move around more, by letting the monsters move around too! For example, use enviromental area effects which monsters and players can get pushed into. This forces them to move around it and plan their movement accordingly.

Nimm Ein RPG (Take an RPG)

- @najahiri

At the beginning of the year, I stumbled on an article from Yochai Gal (the creator of the OSR RPG system "Cairn"). He describes how he spreads small bundles containing dice and role playing game in free little libraries around his community. I got inspired by this and decided to follow his example.
In Bern we have little free libraries where you can take a book-leave a book (from this their slogan "Nimm eins, gib eins"). The perfect place for this project!
I bought a bunch of dice online, printed some small RPG systems, printed some small flyers to include in the package and, almost a year later, I released my small bundles in the wild!
I think role playing is my way of expressing myself and getting surprised both by the other players as well as by my own decisions at the moment. It's a way to dream of a different reality, and today I dream of a person who one day might have the same fun I have through these pieces of plastic and paper, and might find themselves as I do in the roles we play, together.

References:

Bücherschränke in Bern:
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Meaning of OSR:
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3 Things I've Learnt from Joining a 'Rotating GM Group' and Why You Should Join One Too

- @Vesaevus

Five months ago, I started a group where participants would take turns GMing. One of my aims was to explore other systems without the commitment of mastering a new one each month. The response was swift, and our group filled up quickly. I began with a Blades in the Dark three-session mini-campaign before handing over to a fellow player. Since then, we've explored various games, from "old school revival" inspired by original D&D to psychologically-driven narrative adventures. We've had a blast, and here's why I think you should do the same:

1. You'll elevate Your Skills as a GM or Player

As a forever GM (and happy to be one), sitting on the other side of the screen has enhanced my craft, and my players can tell the difference! When we run games, we run them for players. Being that player for different GMs in different types of games gave me a better understanding of what I was doing.
On the otherhand, as a player switching seats to GMing gives you a better unstanding of the game as a whole. GMing will work your creative muscles, let your role-playing skills flourish by playing multiple NPCs and most of all you'll develop a deeper understanding of the GM's role and learn how to contribute effectively to enhance the gaming experience for both your GM and yourself.

2. You'll Discover Your Preferred Game Styles

We're now playing the fifth game system. Learning systems that I would never have tried otherwise, has given me a much better understanding of what I like and why. While I usually would've said that I love rules light games, I discovered that I enjoy more rules heavy parts of certain systems and vice-versa .

The game system you are used to might be the one you only enjoy the most, because you never tried anything else. There's a chance you could have twice as much fun, so why would you not take a chance to find out?

3. You'll Understand RPGs Much Better

For those inclined to homebrew, you'll widen your creative horizons. My tendencies often mirrored what I was accustomed to playing. With a more varied gaming experience, my creations have become richer and more diverse. If you're toying with creating your own system like me, playing in many different ones is a must. If you're interested in crafting new 5e monsters the depth of your inspiration will broaden resulting in more unique and captivating outcomes

Post a "rotating GM group" in your area and find some like-minded people. If it's not as good as I promised, you can call me out in the Swiss RPG server. I bet you wont!

PS: If you have questions or want help organizing something like this, message @vesaevus on the Swiss RPG discord <3

DnD 5e is dead, long live DnD 5e!

- @Wawa

OneDnD, DnD 5.5, DnD 5e24, DnD 5.24 or DnD 5e 2024 revision however you want to call it, WotC has decided it's "just" DnD 5e with a twist and we can decide if we want to adopt it or not. To help you decide here's a not exhaustive list of what changed:

Backwards Compatibility

Can you just use the old and new stuff? According to WotC: Yes*. Why the asterik? The recommendation is for the DM to decide, if they want to run with 2014 or 2024 rules.

- Choose 2014, then no you can't use the new stuff. You just play the regular DnD 5e we all know and love
- Choose 2024, then yes*. The DM decides if only the new, or both, the old and new, can be used. The recommendation is to only use the 2024 classes and pair them with 2014 sub classes.

As a rule of thumb: If something is "reprinted" meaning "has a version in the 2024 rules", then use that, if not, then use the old one. For example: Since the "Great Weapon Master" Feat exists in both 2014 and 2024, if you're playing with 2024 rules, you'll only use the 2024 version as the 2014 version gets "overwriten"

General Changes

- "d20 test" means abillity check, attack roll or saving throw
- "Bloodied" is an official condition and means half health
- Spellcasting is now a "Magic Action" which is also used to activate magic items
- Saving Throws can now be officially failed voluntarily
- Inspiration is now "Heroic Inspiration" and allows to reroll any dice, not only d20s!
- Hiding now requires a minimum stealth check of 15
- Opportunity Attacks can now be made against allies, not only enemies
- Surprise just means you have disadvantage on initiative rolls
- Unarmed Strikes do one of the following: Deal Damage, Grapple or Shove
- Grapple and Shove are now a STR or DEX save instead of the opposed checks
- Heavy Weapons can now be used by small creatures without any disadvantage, however they now require a STR or DEX of at least 15 or you suffer disadvantage.

~~Race~~ Species

You are now a member of a species. And you don't get a bonus to your abilities from it anymore. Don't worry, that's moved to the backgrounds now. Should you play with the mixed 2024 and 2014 rules and use an older species, simply remove the +2/+1 ability score boosts.

Backgrounds and Feats

As mentioned above, the Backgrounds now provide you with your bonuses to ability scores. Each background has a list of three ability scores to choose from. You can increase one by 2 and another by 1, or you can increase all three by 1. For example the Wayfarer offers you Dexterity, Wisdom, and Charisma.
Additionally each Background also provides you with a specific feat. These feats are called "Origin" Feats, which is a subsection of feats you can pick up from level 1 and don't provide a bonus to an ability score. "General" Feats all have the prerequisite of being 4th level and usually provide a +1 boost to an ability score.
Should you use 2014 material, treat all feats from there as "General" Feats. In case you use a 2014 background just add an Origin Feat to it (if it doesn't contain one yet) and add the 3 ability scores associated with it.

Classes

Artificer still hasn't made it into the PHB but all other classes now start with 4 subclass options. Each class now gets a subclass at level 3. Previously classes like the Cleric got it right at level 1, others such as Fighters at level 2 and the rest at level 3. For example: if you play a Tempest Cleric with the 2024 rules and 2024 class you won't get your subclass and all the things it entails at level 1 and you won't get your Channel Divinitiy option at level 2. When reaching level 3 you'll gain the subclass and with that get access to all the features they would have gained at lower levels in 2014 rules.

Spellcasting

The Bonus Action spell rules got simplyfied now you're resticted to just 1 spell that uses a spellslot per turn meaning you can now use a BA cantrip and then a Magic Action leveled spell. This also means if you can cast spells without using slots, for example Misty Step from the Fey Touched Feat you can BA Misty Step and since you haven't used a slot, you can follow it up by casting a Fireball using your spellslots.
Action Surge however no longer allows you to cast 2 spells in a turn.
There are way to many changes to spells to list them here (so be sure to check them in your 2024 copy). Most noteable are:

- Healing spells mostly had their dice doubled
- Spiritual Weapon requires concentration
- You don't give up your own sight when watching through a Find Familiers eyes
- Conjure Animals/Celestials/Elementals/Fey/Woodland Beings has completely changed. If you want a minion go for the Summoning Spells that got introduced in Tasha's Cauldron of Everything
- Counterspell is now a CON save and you don't loose the spellslot anymore if you fail it

Weapon Mastery

Each weapon will have a mastery property, letting you do cool stuff, such as cleave through enemies, push enemies around or even get advantage on your next attack roll. The classes with the Weapon Mastery feature are: Barbarian, Fighter, Paladin, Ranger and Rogue.

Conditions

- **Exhaustion:** You still die at 6 exhaustion but all the things have been replaced by "When you make a D20 Test, the roll is reduced by 2x your Exhaustion level." and "Your Speed is reduced by a number of feet equal to 5x your Exhaustion level"
- **Grappled:** The grappled creature has disadvantage to attack rolls against creatures other than the grappler
- **Incapacitated:** Mostly just wording that was reworked and you have Disadvantage on Initiative rolls
- **Invisible:** You get Advantage on Initiative rolls and being hidden now gives you the Invisible condition.

The Caverns of Chameen

@nilceps

This short dungeon delve is intended for 4 adventurers around 8th level. It can be completed in one session making for an adventure you can fit almost everywhere.

In the harsh arid lands of Shuth followers of the Goddess of the Sun Armeen were witness to the birth of a new God. During a solar eclipse the Goddess sent forth her son to dispel the darkness bathing Shuth in a green light he travelled across the firmament before falling in the west.

A small group of worshippers set out west finding where he descended. Although they were able to find the location his body already disappeared back into the heavens but he did bring gifts. A set of star eggs from which crystals would grow that would allow the followers of Armeen and her son Chameen to become gods themselves.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs explore a set of ruins underground which turn out to have been a temple of a splinter sect of Armeen, the Goddess of the Sun. They'll have to deal with crumbling ruins, underground monsters and their now transformed leader.

Adventure hooks

There are several ways your group of adventurers can end up in The Caverns Of Chameen:

- While chartering a ship the captain or the crew can tell them about ruins in the water deep below that they'll pass by soon. This could be a nice little expedition to spice up their boat trip.
- A local priest of Armeen hires them after receiving Omens about a looming disaster in the very same caves.
- A survivor from the last adventuring party could sell them a treasure map warning them of immense danger that lurks below.

Note: There is a map included at the end of this one-shot, as well as a journal handout and two unique monsters.

1 Cavern Entrance

Light: None
Monsters: 5 Darkmantles (MM P46)

> The air in this large cavern is oddly warm and damp, stalagmites cover the floor and imposing stalactites hang from above.

They have to dive to the cavern entry. It's reachable with a short swim.

The Darkmantles in this area don't get much to eat and will be more sluggish. Unless the adventurers make a lot of noise, light up a torch or stand next to a stalagmite the Darkmantles won't attack. If they investigate the cavern, on a DC 25 they will discover a secret passage to "22 Cavern Exit Passage".

2 Prison Area

Light: None
Monsters: None

> Beyond the portcullis is a chamber of worked stone with a ramp leading downward. There are several cages as well as chains affixed to the walls. The entire room is dominated by two statues depicting a kind woman holding a sceptre and an orb and a young man holding a sword and a potion.

This was the prison area of the former temple. The statues depict Armeen, the Goddess of the Sun, main god of the shuthan people, and her son Chameen, the Starborn. Players can make a history or religion check to see if they would recall anything about those two statues. Armeen would be quite easy to recognize (DC 10) as a local minor goddess but Chameen is obscure as no one currently worships him (DC 20).

3 Cloaker Cavern

Light: Everburning Torch at the far end.
Monsters: 5 Darkmantles (MM P46), 1 Cloaker (MM P41)

> A lone torch is burning on the ground, casting shadows that dance on the cavern walls.

A group of adventurers that made their way through here got ambushed by the local Darkmantles, dropping an Everburning Torch while making their retreat. A Cloaker now uses this source of light to lure prey into an ambush.

4 Storage Area

Light: None
Monsters: None

> This rectangular room has two iron bar walls sectioning it into two parts. There are several minecarts filled with yellow crystals in the eastern half, the western half has two fallen over suits of armor and an exit going further west flanked by two statues of warriors as well as some benches, there's a faint orange glow coming from the southern exit.

This storage area is for the most part unremarkable, the yellow crystals are dull and cold to the touch and completely worthless.

The suits of armor have rusted joints and are practically useless. The iron gates are easy to overcome by breaking it down with a strength check (DC 5) or picking the lock with thieves' tools (DC 10)

5 Armory

Light: None
Monsters: None

> This room seems to have been the Armory, spears, khopeshes and rusted over breastplates are all over the floor, hanging on the wall are shields and swords.

The items found here are almost all unusable in their current form, with a high enough passive perception (DC 20) or an investigation check (DC 15) adventurers can see that a shield was recently removed from the walls.

6 Collapsed Stairs

Light: Lava from the south
Monsters: 1 Lava Ooze (See End)

> To the south of this cavern there's a crack in the cavern wall that shows slow moving lava, in the middle seems to have been a stairway that have long since collapsed. To the west there's a small pond. Large Mushrooms seems to be thriving in this damp warm area.

Adventurers will come to a dead-end here. If they pass an Investigation check (DC 15) they quickly find an underwater passage in the small pond. If they spend a long time investigating the place or approach the crack (10 ft), they will earn the attention of an lava ooze. The

lava ooze is similar in behavior to a rust monster. The ooze is easily distracted by weapons (e.g. from the armory). Clearing the stairway would take several weeks of labor and would excavate the ruined dormitories and dining area leading into room 12 (the Planar Summoning Circle).

7 Underwater Passage

Light: None
Monsters: None

> The cavern is halfway filled with water. It rises towards the western end where a small exit can be seen.

This room is mostly empty except for the bodies floating in the water. A successful Medicine check DC 20 or Religion check (DC 25) will reveal that these adventurers have no apparent wounds but clearly have been drained of their lifeforce (necrotic damage).

8 Dead Adventurers

Light: None
Monsters: 2 Bodaks (MPMM P64)

> The narrow passage opens up to a small cavern with several human remains on the ground. Some of the items on the ground look to be in a usable state.

The two Bodaks here are trying to ambush adventurers. An ideal time to strike would be while some adventurers are still climbing up the ladder. Most dead adventurers they can find here have unremarkable equipment except for a Shield +1, 3 Potions of Healing, and a Restorative Ointment.

9 Bottomless Hole

Light: None
Monsters: None

> Bones can be found around a large hole that seemingly goes down for forever.

This room can both be used as an alternative entry or exit. If adventurers try to take a short rest in this cave area a roaming monster would crawl through this hole (e.g. the cetipede described in the journal could come back as a Necrotic Centipede).

10 Red Crystal Cave

Light: Red Crystals (dim)
Monsters: None

> At the far end of the cave, clusters of red crystals can be found. A faint hum can be heard and the crystals seem to vibrate with a strange power.

The crystals found here contain energy and can be used as an improvised thrown weapon dealing 2d6 thunder damage on impact. If collected, they loose their energy after 1d4 weeks and become dull and cold to the touch. Harvesting some crystals is a strength check (DC 15). Adventurers could also use mason's tools. If they fail the DC by 5 or more the crystal cluster explodes doing 2d6 thunder damage in a 10ft radius. If they exceed the check by 5 or more they manage to get 1d4+1 red crystal bombs.

11 Cave-in

Light: Dim light coming from the north room
Monsters: None

> Seismic activity and age have broken down the walls revealing another section of the underground temple. The air is warm and dry. On the south wall there's stairs leading down, flanked by two statues. The opening on the western wall has some script next to it. Dim light is coming in from the northern room.

The southern stairs descend 30 ft before leading into the workshop area. The western corridor is labelled "Experiments" in shuth.

12 Planar Summoning Circle

Light: 3 Magic Candles
Monsters: 1 Efreeti (MM P145)

> In the middle of the room is a summoning circle with with three candles burning. A fourth has been extinguished. To the east is a collapsed hallway and a small basin is on the eastern wall.

The Efreeti has been stuck in this room for several centuries and only wants to return to his plane. Unfortunately, the summoning circle still binds him to this place. He'll try to disguise himself as a genie and will promise the adventurers to grant them a wish if they free him. He has spent more time on the material plane than he'd like to and will plane shift as soon as possible but if the adventurers annoy him enough he'll 'fulfill' one or two of their wishes before leaving.

The planar summoning circle can be destroyed by extinguishing the remaining 3 candles with water from the basin, the spell “dispel magic” or can be restored by adding a suitable magical candle (Continual Flame Candle) completing the circle which would allow any player in this room to cast “Planar Ally” as a 5th level spell.

13 Administrator Room

Light: None
Monsters: None

> Ruined mosaics are on the walls. They seem to depict a star falling from the skies and people bowing in worship. It also depicts the building of a grand city at the site and a man in ornate headdress holding the star in his outstretched hand. A skeleton with rotten clothes and ornate jewelry is sitting on a stone throne.

The assorted jewelry can be sold to a discerning collector for up to 2000 GP though they are more likely to receive 1000 GP from a standard jeweler as they’ll melt down the gold and pry out the gemstones to make new jewelry. An investigation check (DC 20) will reveal a hidden compartment in the stone throne with an ornate dagger worth 130gp and a almost ruined journal. Although most pages are beyond mending a few pages can be repaired and with comprehend languages deciphered (See appendix “Journal”)

14 Failed Experiments

Light: Lava Glow
Monsters: None

> A crack in the southernmost room opens to a lava seam 30 ft below. The sarcophagus has been destroyed by falling debris and the ground seems unsafe. The hallway is unremarkable with three small rooms each filled with a sarcophagus with a short inscription on top.

The ground in the southernmost room is clearly unstable and if adventurers step inside the room it collapses requiring a Dexterity saving throw (DC 10). If they fail by 5 or more they fall into the lava below, otherwise they fall 10 ft before managing to break their fall taking 1d6 bludgeoning and are now hanging in a precarious position. The other three rooms all contain a sarcophagus and each contain a skeleton and a yellow dried substance on the bottom. If they cast comprehend languages the inscriptions translate to ‘Starry Skies’, ‘Brother of the Old One’ and ‘Son of Horns’. The names of the people buried here.

15 Ruined Workshop

Light: Lava Glow
Monsters: 3 Lava Ooze (See End)

> This workshop area is completely ruined with collapsed walls and parts of the floor destroyed. At the base of what must’ve been an anvil a few shiny gemstones can be seen.

If the adventurers move too slowly or stick around to pick up those gemstones (200 GP), the Lava Oozes will close in and attack anyone with iron items on them. These Lava Oozes ate an iron seam containing gemstones before the adventurers arrived and if they are defeated these gemstones can be found on their corpses. They are worth 1d6 x 100 goldpieces each.

16 Fake Trap Floor

Light: None
Monsters: None

> This hallway is in a better state than the rest of the underground ruins. Halfway up the hallway there seems to be a triggered trapdoor that didn’t reset properly. Nevertheless the spikes at the bottom look in pristine condition.

The trapped floor is actually an illusion and the real trap is a pressure plate on the next square. If a player jumps over the gap and lands in the first open square the pressure plate triggers and a giant axe comes down to strike at whoever is on this or the plate next to it. Atk +10, dealing 2d6 slashing damage. Spotting the pressure plate from a distance is very hard and requires a Perception check (DC 25). Interacting with the pit, for example trying to climb down, will dispel the illusion.

17 Mushroom Cavern

Light: None
Monsters: None

> The hallway splits off into a small cave filled with mushrooms and a spongy ground.

There’s not much of note, however it is a safe place if the adventurers intend to take a short rest here.

18 Successful Experiment

Light: None
Monsters: Ulzerai, Starborn of Chameen (See End)

> Tucked away deep in this small cave there's a heavily secured coffin. Red crystals are growing out of the ground surrounding it. The coffin is flanked by two stone statues.

Breaking open the coffin will take some time as adventurers have to break both the crystals as well as undo all the chains. Once the coffin is opened Ulzerai will wake up and start attacking the adventurers. Ulzerai cannot be reasoned with and he should be considered a mindless creature. The coffin contains the finery Ulzerai was buried with, his personal effects and crystal goo. These items are:

- Rod of Rulership (rare, DMG 197)
- Gold Warhammer with a single flawless sapphire (2500 GP)
- Gold dagger set with a single small ruby (250 GP)
- Gold Mask engraved with star imagery (250 GP)
- Various metal art objects (1000 GP)

19 Yellow Crystal Cave

Light: Yellow Crystals (Dim)
Monsters: None

> At the end of the Hallway a small opening can be seen with clusters of yellow crystal growing out of them. It seems to lead further but most of the cave has long since collapsed.

The crystals found here can be used as an ingredient for the transformation elixir. However, after 1d4 weeks the crystals lose their energy and become dull and cold to the touch. Harvesting some crystals is a strength check (DC 20), if they fail the DC by 5 or more the crystal cluster crumbles into dust and causes whoever attempted it to be cough and be blinded for 1d4+1 minutes. If they exceed the check by 5 they could make a second dose.

20 Processing Room

Light: None
Monsters: None

> A weird contraption dominates the room with eldritch symbols carved into each circle. In the middle is a small chalice with a dried up yellow substance inside it.

This apparatus was used to refine the yellow crystal into an elixir that killed the people in the failed experiments room and turned Ulzerai into a mindless creature.

21 Archives

Light: None
Monsters: None

> This small library is in a sorry state, several bookshelves are smashed and a few support pillars have clearly collapse. Only one shelf is still standing with a few scrolls and bound books.

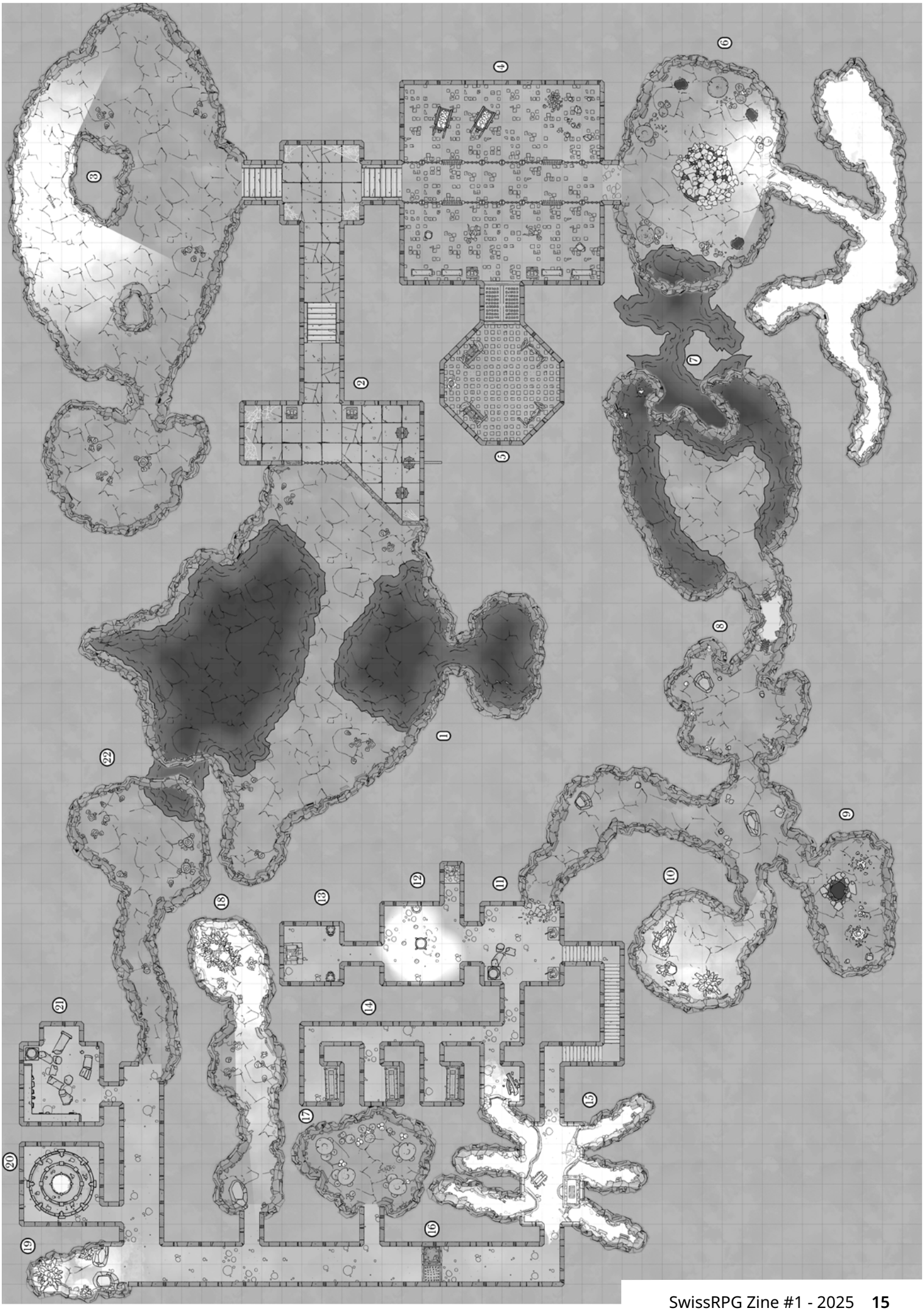
Despite the description, this room is fairly sturdy and unless the overall weight of everyone in here exceeds 1000 lbs there's no danger of the floor collapsing. With a successful investigation check (DC 20) adventurers can find two still somewhat intact texts. One is "The Descent of Chameen, the Burning Star" the holy scripture of his religion, and the other is an alchemical journal detailing the properties of the yellow crystal and its effect, greatly increasing a person's strength and magical aptitude.

22 Cavern Exit Passage

Light: None
Monsters: None

> This small cavern is cold and wet with several stalactites and stalagmites making the way forward harder. It ends at a small but seemingly very deep pond.

If the adventurers examine the small pond they are able to make out a small passage that lets them swim from here to the cavern entrance.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Ulzerai, Starborn of Chameen

Medium Construct, neutral evil
Armor Class 16 (Natural Armor)
Hit Points 152 (16d8+80)
Speed 30 ft.
Initiative 0

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	10 (0)	20 (+5)	2 (-4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +9, Wis +6
Damage Resistances poison, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 12
Challenge 12 (8'400 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +4

Starcrystal Perfection. Ulzerai regains 20 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.
Legendary Resistance (1/Day). If Ulzerai fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Actions

Multiattack. Ulzerai makes three attacks, only one of which can be a subsume attack.
Slam Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d6 + 7) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, Ulzerai can grapple the target, escape DC 18
Subsume Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5ft., an automatic hit on a creature that is grappled by Ulzerai. Hit: 10 (1d6+7) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (3d6) acid damage.

Lava Ooze

Large Ooze (Fire)
Armor Class 9 (Natural Armor)
Hit Points 157 (15d10+75)
Speed 10 ft.
Initiative -2

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	6 (-2)	20 (+5)	2 (-4)	6 (-2)	2 (-4)

Damage Vulnerability Cold
Damage Immunities Fire
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8
Challenge 6 (2'300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3.

Amorphus. The ooze can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.
Eat Metal. Any nonmagical weapon made of metal that hits the ooze corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to -5, the weapon is destroyed. Nonmagical ammunition made of metal that hits the ooze is destroyed after dealing damage. The ooze can eat through 2-inch-thick, nonmagical metal in 1 round.

Actions

Multiattack. The Lava Ooze makes two pseudopod attacks.
Pseudopod Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage and 7 (2d6) fire damage. If the target is a creature or a flammable object, it ignites. Until a creature takes an action to douse the fire, the target takes 5 (1d10) fire damage

Journal

41st of Oao, 241 – Grand Alchemist Nasrahh
I've managed to refined the yellow crystal into a small elixir which I've fed to a small insect, observing its reactions closely. As the day neared its end, signs of greater vigor emerged from the creature, these star crystals have great transformative potentials if only I could test on my brethren instead of lowly vermin.
16th of Fowgt, 242 – Grand Alchemist Nasrahh
With the death of Djehuty this makes the fourth person to die after ingesting the elixir, I don't understand why insects were able to survive and even grow stronger after ingesting much larger doses than what I've given them. I'll have to report this to Ulzerai and he'll probably shut down this entire experiment.
31th of Fowgt, 242 – Grand Alchemist Nasrahh
I've solved it, the key lies in the twilight of ones life, administering the elixir when someone is at deaths door not only rejuvenates them but also makes them much stronger although it seems subjects still are affected by the rigor mortis and are more stiff then a normal human.
3rd of Armeen, 242 – Grand Alchemist Nasrahh
The Temple of Armeen has branded us heretics and its warriors are at our doors, Ulzerai is mortally wounded. I doubt any of use will survive here, I'll have to put our hopes into the elixir and that Chameen will protect Ulzerai for as long as its needed for his rebirth.

Fun & Chaos at the Carnival

@Wawa

Mission Name: Fun & Chaos at the Carnival
Players: 3 - 6
Success Condition: Stop the attacker in the "Defending the Carnival" section
Length: 4 - 6 h
Short Rests: No
Levels: 3 - 20

NOTE TO DMS:

- Proficiency Bonus: At some points [PB] is used within this document. This refers to the proficiency bonus of your party. So 2-6 depending on level.

Assuming you have a level 5 Party:

- DC 10+[PB] = DC 10+3 = DC 13
- [PB]d6 = 3d6
- DC 10+2×[PB] = DC 10+2×3 = DC 10+6 = DC 16
- It's assumed the whole party has the same level

Prompt

The sun begins to set over [insert fantasy town], casting a warm, golden glow across the lands. The air is filled with a sense of anticipation, a buzz of excitement that is almost palpable. For tonight is no ordinary night - tonight, the [insert fantasy carnival] has arrived.

As you make your way through the town, you notice that the streets are more lively than usual. Townsfolk and travelers alike are gathered, their faces lit with smiles and eyes wide with wonder. You can hear the distant melody of whimsical music drifting through the air, accompanied by the laughter of children and the cheerful chatter of the crowd.

Soon, you find yourselves at the heart of the festivities. The town square has been transformed into a spectacle of lights and colors, with tents of every hue and size stretching out as far as the eye can see.

Story

Fun & Games

Between each game there will be a 10 minute break. Keep track of success and failure for each character individually. The players can choose to partake or skip each of the games individually. Some of the games are individual games, meaning a single character enters at a time, while others are group games, meaning all the players enter at the same time and compete against each other as well as NPCs. For group events, all players who don't win will get one failure. The following games are available at the carnival:

Note: play as few or as many games as you like and feel free to add your own games! The games don't have any negative effect on the players but might drain some ressources. Also if players are creative and suggest other skill checks/class abilities, be generous and let them use them.

Pig Catching (Individual)

Try to catch a pig that has been greased up. This requires two checks. First a **Acrobatics check** to be able to catch the pig, followed by a **Athletics check** to be able to hold on to the pig.

A character with a Passive Perception equal to the checks DC of this challenge will notice the Pig is greased up. If the character is smart, by for example using some hay or chalk applied to their hands, the DC of the Athletics check to hold on to the Pig will be lowered by 1d4.

Should a character try to roll a Intimidation check, they'll roll both the Acrobatics as well as Athletics check with disadvantage. Should they on the other hand try a Wisdom Animal Handling or a Persuasion check they'll get advantage on both their Acrobatics and Athletics check. Being able to speak with the Pig or feeding it grants you advantage on the Animal Handling check or a Persuasion check.

DC for all checks:

- lvl 4: DC 12
- lvl 8: DC 14
- lvl 12 : DC 16
- lvl 16: DC 18
- lvl 20: DC 20

Arm Wrestling (Individual)

There are 3 contestants to beat. Roll a **Athletics check**.

- **Kriv the Mighty**, a very confident Kobold. When entering the contest he'll insult the character, momentarily shake the confidence. Roll a **Saving Throw** on a fail, the DC will be raised by 1d4. The DC is:
  - lvl 4: DC 8
  - lvl 8: DC 10
  - lvl 12: DC 12
  - lvl 16: DC 14
  - lvl 20: DC 16
- **Lythia Windwhisper**, an arrogant High Elf. When entering she'll kiss her arms as a good luck charm. If a character asks about it, have them roll a **Insight** check, DC 10+[PB]. A character that beats the insight check thinks that her resolve could be shaken by doing the same. If a player kisses their arm before attempting the check, the DC will be lowered by 1d4
  - lvl 4: DC 12
  - lvl 8: DC 14
  - lvl 12: DC 16
  - lvl 16: DC 18
  - lvl 20: DC 20
- **Thornak Stonefist**, a blunt and straightforward Goliath. He respects strength above all else and takes pride in his physical prowess. Players roll an opposed **Athletics** check against him. He will have proficiency in Athletics and use the same proficiency bonus as the players. His Athletics bonus is:
  - lvl 4: [PB]+5
  - lvl 8: [PB]+6
  - lvl 12: [PB]+8
  - lvl 16: [PB]+9
  - lvl 20: [PB]+11

Pie Eating Contest (Group)

Eat as much pie as you can! Each round of the contest a whole pie is served to every contestant. After eating it, each player needs to roll a **Save against being Poisoned** to see if they can stomach it. Resistance or Immunity to Poison damage gives you advantage on the check. Immunity against the poisoned condition doesn't apply but gives you advantage on the check. The DC starts at 10 and goes up by 2 after every pie. The current record is 7 pies (DC 22). Should characters finish their 10th pie and still make the save (DC 28), they will be crowned the new champions as they've eaten all available pies.

Other Contestants:

- **Rurik "The Maw" Thundertusk**, A massive half-orc with a tusked grin and a reputation for devouring anything in his path. Rurik's friends claim he's never met a meal he couldn't finish, pies included.
  - Will manage 2 pies
- **Elara Sunfeather**, A slender elf with a refined air, usually more at home with delicate pastries than pie-eating contests. Elara joined on a dare, determined to show that elves can enjoy hearty foods too.
  - Will manage 3 Pies
- **Hoggle**, A scrappy goblin with a surprisingly large mouth and a competitive streak. Hoggle is quick, cunning, and known to occasionally "borrow" pies for a head start.
  - Will manage 5 pies
- **Grumblegut Stonechewer**, A stocky dwarf with a thick, braided beard and a hearty appetite. Known for his love of all things baked, Grumblegut boasts that no pie is too big for his iron stomach.
  - Will manage 5 pies
- **Willow Petalwind**, A cheerful halfling with rosy cheeks and a mischievous grin. Willow is a regular at food contests, and her small size belies her incredible capacity for sweets.
  - Will set a new record (unless the player beat her) and will manage 8 pies

Pies to Eat:

1. Moonberry Delight Pie: A pie filled with sweet and tangy moonberries, which only bloom under the light of a full moon. The filling glows faintly in the dark.
2. Dragonfruit and Ember Crust Pie: A spicy-sweet pie made from dragonfruit and a crust infused with ember-dust, giving it a warm, slightly spicy kick.
3. Starlight Custard Pie: A delicate custard pie made from starlight-infused cream, topped with edible glittering star shards. It has a light, ethereal flavor.
4. Faerie Apple and Lavender Pie: A pie with thinly sliced faerie apples, known for their iridescent skin and floral aroma, combined with lavender for a soothing, fragrant experience.
5. Forest Nut and Honey Pie: A hearty pie filled with a mix of nuts gathered from ancient, enchanted forests, sweetened with wild honey and a hint of cinnamon.
6. Frostberry and Mint Pie: A refreshing pie made from frostberries, which are always cold to the touch, combined with a cool minty cream filling. Perfect for a hot day at the carnival.
7. Pumpkin and Spice Elemental Pie: A warm, comforting pie made from a blend of pumpkin and elemental spices that seem to dance on the tongue, creating a warming sensation.
8. Whispering Windfruit Pie: A light, airy pie filled with windfruit, a rare fruit that grows in high mountain peaks, known for its delicate, crisp taste. Eating it gives the sensation of a gentle breeze.
9. Darkwood Mushroom and Truffle Pie: A savory pie filled with darkwood mushrooms and truffles from the Shadowgrove, with a rich, earthy flavor that lingers pleasantly.
10. Golden Nectarfruit Pie: A luxurious pie made from nectarfruit, which drips with golden, honey-like juice when cut open. The pie has a rich, sweet flavor with hints of citrus and vanilla.

The Hall of Mirrors (Group)

A magical mirror maze that shifts and changes to challenge the players perception. Have all the players who enter roll **Perception** checks to see who can find the exit the quickest. The person rolling the highest will win this game. If two or more players tie, all players with the highest roll will win.
A Passive Investigation of 11+[PB] or a player having blind sight means they can discern illusory mirrors and thus get Advantage on the Perception check

Target Practice (Individual)

A shooting range is set up where the characters try to hit 6 balloons that are 60 ft away from them. All simple and martial weapons are available to be used but characters are also welcome to use spells as long as they have an attack role and target a single object/creature without any AoE effect. Each balloon is a construct with 1 HP and Each ballon gets more difficult to hit:

- Balloon 1: AC 10, HP 1
- Balloon 2: AC 13, HP 1
- Balloon 3: AC 16, HP 1
- Balloon 4: AC 19, HP 1
- Balloon 5: AC 22, HP 1
- Balloon 6: AC 25, HP 1

Popping [PB] balloons is a success.

Sorcerer's Stack (Group)

A simple card game. There will be 3 three other NPC players (commoners) participating.

How to Play?

The DC will be 8+[PB] and it will be played in two rounds. For each round, have the players choose one ability to roll and narrate how they use it. They can't use the same ability as in a previous round. Keep track of the success for everyone. Once the game is over have people roll their points.

Rolling Points

- 0 Successes = 1d6
- 1 Success = 1d8+1
- 2 Successes = 1d10+2
- 3 Successes = 1d12+3 *(in case you want to add a third round)*

This will be the final score and the player(s) with the highest score will win the game.

Examples of Checks

- **Investigation:** Make an accurate calculation of the probabilities by monitoring the results of played cards (card counting)
- **Insight:** Unveil an opponent's bluff
- **Deception:** Bluff an opponent
- **Sleight of Hand:** Attempt to cheat (ace up the sleave)

Basically: ask your players what 2 checks they want to roll and have them flavor it however they like. In general if they expend resources (ex. spell slot, class abilities, etc. I'd let them auto succeed, but that's up to you.)

Other Players

- **Rizzik Sharpclaw**, A sleek, silver-furred tabaxi with quick reflexes and sharper instincts. Rizzik is known for his cunning strategies and the way his eyes seem to flicker with every turn of the cards.
- **Brynna Ashglow**, A tiefling with ashen skin and glowing amber eyes. Brynna is a cool, calculating player, often toying with her opponents by letting her tail curl lazily as she considers her next move.
- **Tozmuk "Two-Fingers"**, A wiry goblin missing a few digits, but not his wit. Tozmuk is a fast-talker who relies on misdirection and sheer nerve to keep his opponents guessing.

Pin the Tail on a Dragon (Group)

The characters are blindfolded and spun around 5 times. Roll a DC 15 Perception check to find your bearing (characters with blindsight will auto succeed on this check) and try to pin a tail on a painting of a dragon. Each character who gets their bearing rolls a d100, highest roll wins. On a tie all characters with the highest roll win.

Talent Show (Group)

Oh no, the entertainers haven't shown up. Will the party step up and put on a show? Roll for initiative just to have a turn order. The characters take the stage. Then have the players describe what ability check their characters use and how it looks like. Every ability check can only be used once (so if Character A uses Athletics, no other character can use it!). DC to succeed starts at 10+[PB] and goes up by 1 for every skill check made. Keep a tally of success and failure for the group.

If they get 5 successes they win over the crowd and every participating character gets a success, however should they first get to 5 failures the crowd loses interest in their performance and every participating character will get a failure.

Dragon's Armada (Group)

This is a version of Battleship adapted for the carnival. Have a 6x6 grid. Have the players choose a field and have 6 NPCs join as well. Choose random positions for the NPCs.

The game takes place over 6 rounds. For each round roll 2d6. The first d6 determines the column, the second d6 the row. If a creature occupies the "hit" square, they get eliminated. If a square that has been hit get's hit again, reroll the 2d6 (or have it splash to all 8 adjacent squares, your call). Everyone left over after round 6 get's a success, everyone that's eliminated get's a failure.

Other Participants

- **Tharok Flameheart**, A fierce dragonborn with crimson scales and a competitive spirit, always eager for a challenge.
- **Kara Windwhisper**, A swift and agile aarakocra with blue feathers, whose keen eyesight gives her an edge in spotting enemy ships.
- **Glimmer**, A clever gnome with a knack for mechanics, always tinkering with new ways to outmaneuver her opponents.
- **Lyra Moonshadow**, A cunning drow with silver hair, adept at reading her opponents and predicting their moves.
- **Tara Greenbough**, A gentle firbolg with a deep connection to nature, often surprising opponents with her serene yet effective tactics.
- **Raxle Quickfingers**, A nimble halfling with a mischievous smile, known for his quick thinking and ability to turn the tide of battle in an instant.

Something's not Right

The joyous laughter of children fills the air as brightly colored balloons bob above the carnival grounds, swaying gently in the breeze. But suddenly, a sharp, unnatural sound cuts through the merriment – a loud **POP!**

One by one, the balloons begin to burst, the vibrant colors disappearing in an instant as they release thick, swirling clouds of dark fog. The once-clear evening sky is quickly obscured by the growing mists, which seem to pulse with an ominous energy.

As the fog spreads, it engulfs the children who were moments ago laughing and playing. Their cheerful giggles turn to confused cries, and then – terrifyingly – those cries become panicked sobs. The dense fog distorts their voices, making it impossible to tell where the children are or how many are trapped within.

The festive music of the carnival falters, growing distant and eerie as if being played on a broken instrument. The lights, once bright and welcoming, now flicker and dim, casting long, twisted shadows across the grounds.

The atmosphere shifts from one of joy to one of fear, the carnival's enchanting allure replaced by an overwhelming sense of dread. The once cheerful celebration has become a haunting nightmare, and the air is thick with tension as the cries from within the fog grow louder and more desperate...

Have everyone **Roll Initiative.** Characters with a Passive Perception of

- lvl 4: DC 13
- lvl 8: DC 15
- lvl 12: DC 17
- lvl 16: DC 19
- lvl 20: DC 21

can spot two figures (a Half-Elf and a Hobgoblin) running away, laughing maniacally and jumping on a flying carpet. Everyone with a Passive Perception lower than the DC will be surprised.

Luckily there are 4 more flying carpets available to the players. Each flying carpet can hold up to 2 Medium or smaller creatures or 1 Large creature. The carpets use the mounting/dismounting rules for mounts. They can fly up to 120 ft. per turn and require an action to pilot. The flying carpets require attunement and the first person to jump on a carpet will automatically be attuned to it, furthermore it's attunement slots will get raised by 1 (basically meaning you can't switch pilots). The fleeing suspects have a head start of 200 ft. If the players don't manage to restrain/trap the culprits at the end of Turn 3 or 4 they will escape (by using a spell or getting lost in the crowd). Chase participants can't make opportunity attacks against each other, since they are assumed to be moving in the same direction at the same time.

Complications

At the start of the pilots turn (both players as well as culprits), roll a d8 on the following table. Characters of level 4 or lower will only take half damage.

1d8	Complication
1	You've got headwind, the carpet has only half it's movement, should you use your action to move
2	A taught line with colorful pennants is in your way, everyon on the carpet needs to make a DC 8+[PB] **Dexterity Save** of take [PB]d6 bludgeoning damage, the movement of the carpet/character is slowed by the damage taken of all occupants rounded down to the next 10ft.
3	Choose to fly around or through a group of knife jugglers. If you fly around the area it will cost you an additional 20ft. of movement, flying through the knives is a DC 10+2×[PB] **Dexterity Save** for all occupants on a failure you take 2x[PB] of slashing damage
4	A flock of birds is in your path. The pilot needs to make a DC 12+[PB] **Survival** or **Animal Handling** check. On a failure the obstacle counts as 30 ft. of difficult terrain
5	You fly through hanging banners. Everyone on the carpet makes a DC 8+2×[PB] **Acrobatics or Athletics** check of be blinded until the start of the pilots next turn. Flying while blinded makes everything difficult terrain for you
6	No Complication
7	No Complication
8	You've got tailwind, the carpet has double movement, should you use your action to move

Both culprits will use the following stat blocks:

- lvl 4: [Asharra], CR 2 (Party of 3 = 1'350 AXP + traps)
- lvl 8: [Booyahg Slave of the Archfey], CR 4 (Party of 3 = 3'300 AXP + traps)
- lvl 12: [Inquisitor of the Mind Fire], CR 8 (Party of 3 = 11'700 AXP)
- lvl 16: [Viconia DeVir], CR 13
- lvl 20: [Drow Matron Mother], CR 20

If the party captures one or both culprits, they'll laugh maniacally but after some interrogation reveal to the players that they were only the distraction to lure protectors away and the [BBEG] (see Encounter List at the end of this section) forces are on the other side of the carnival.

Note: You as a DM decide what captured means. This could be knocked of the flying carpet, this could mean knocked unconscious, this could mean grappled, this could mean trapped with a spell, etc.

Defending the Carnival

A sound cuts through the air like a knife \- shouts of terror, rising in a crescendo from the opposite side of the carnival. The distant echoes of panic quickly grow louder, more desperate, as the festive atmosphere is violently shattered. The [BBEG]'s forces have struck.

The vibrant lights of the carnival flicker ominously, and the joyous music is drowned out by the cacophony of chaos. You realize with a sinking feeling that the true attack has begun, and it's happening far from where you stand.

The proprietor of the Carnival runs towards you, urging you to help before blowing sparkling powder into your faces.

Everyone gets teleported by the dust between the [insert BBEG] forces and the attendees of the Carnival. Additionally everyone gets to roll up to [PB] hit dice to regain HP during the teleportation.

Note: If you feel the party doesn't need it, then don't let them roll hit dice. Or just let people below 50% hp roll. Or whatever. You do you, I'm not your dad.

The [BBEG] forces consist of a Dragon as well as some minions (see Encounter List after this section).

Note: It's up to you if the Dragon can use any Legendary Actions (assuming it has any) or can use the Lair Action (assuming it has any). My recommendation is to not use the Lair Actions.

Party Lvl 3-4

Encounter for 3 Players: 1’800xp

- 1x [Young Deep Dragon], CR 5

Note: depending on Initiative and Breath reload as well as party level/composition this can be very VERY deadly. Consider lowering the HP of the Dragon and/or give it vulnerabilities.

Encounter for 4 Players: 1’800xp

- 1x [Young Deep Dragon], CR 5

Note: depending on Initiative and Breath reload as well as party level/composition this can be very VERY deadly. Consider lowering the HP of the Dragon and/or give it vulnerabilities.

Encounter for 5 Players: 3’000xp

- 1x [Young Deep Dragon], CR 5
- 1x [Core Spawn Crawler], CR 1

Encounter for 6 Players: 4’275xp

- 1x [Young Deep Dragon], CR 5
- 1x [Mind Flayer Nothic], CR 2
- 1x [Core Spawn Crawler], CR 1
- 2x [Choker], CR 1

Party Lvl 5-8

Encounter for 3 Players: 5’000xp

- 1x [Young Void Dragon], CR 9

Encounter for 4 Players: 5’000xp

- 1x [Young Void Dragon], CR 9

Encounter for 5 Players: 7’200xp

- 1x [Adult Deep Dragon], CR 11

Encounter for 6 Players: 12’075xp

- 1x [Adult Deep Dragon], CR 11
- 1x [Mind Flayer Nothic], CR 2
- 2x [Core Spawn Crawler], CR 1

Party Lvl 9-12

Encounter for 3 Players: 11’500xp

- 1x [Adult Solar Dragon], CR 14

Encounter for 4 Players: 11’500xp

- 1x [Adult Solar Dragon], CR 14

Encounter for 5 Players: 17’550xp

- 1x [Adult Solar Dragon], CR 14
- 1x [Core Spawn Crawler], CR 1

Encounter for 6 Players: 26’600xp

- 1x [Adult Solar Dragon], CR 14
- 9x [Core Spawn Crawler], CR 1

Party Lvl 13-16

Encounter for 3 Players: 41’000xp

- 1x [Ancient Mithral Dragon], CR 22

Encounter for 4 Players: 63’150xp

- 1x [Ancient Mithral Dragon], CR 22
- 1x [Arboreal Grappler], CR 4

Encounter for 5 Players: 88’600xp

- 1x [Ancient Mithral Dragon], CR 22
- 3x [Arboreal Grappler], CR 4

Encounter for 6 Players: 97’400xp

- 1x [Ancient Mithral Dragon], CR 22
- 4x [Arboreal Grappler], CR 4
- 3x [Dorreq], CR 4

Party Lvl 17-20

Encounter for 3 Players: 90’000xp

- 1x [Niv-Mizzet], CR 26

Encounter for 4 Players: 184’400xp

- 1x [Niv-Mizzet], CR 26
- 2x [Arboreal Grappler], CR 4

Encounter for 5 Players: 191’000xp

- 1x [Niv-Mizzet], CR 26
- 2x [Arboreal Grappler], CR 4
- 3x [Dorreq], CR 4

Encounter for 6 Players: 199’800xp

- 1x [Niv-Mizzet], CR 26
- 4x [Arboreal Grappler], CR 4
- 5x [Dorreq], CR 4

For the statblock sources, you can find a list here:

Idea for a short DD5 campaign

@Macsword-FendrelTheTenacious

The PCs accept a basic side quest: to protect a merchant on the road to a nearby town.

On “pure luck” the group finds an ancient piece of artifact (a stone puzzle piece) left on a corpse on the side of the road. The corpse seems parched, as though it has passed away from extreme fatigue.

If you bring the artifact to a historian, he will manage to decipher a few fragments and conclude that it is merely an incomplete treasure map that will remain useless until the remaining pieces are located. Several place names are also mentioned: "Dolisi" which is presently a ruin in the middle of a desert; "Mailogne", a little island that the local fishermen believe to be cursed; and lastly the "Pic de Saumomble" which is the top of a local mountain.

An oasis is hidden beneath the desert ruin, and a Naga has made her home there with her offspring. The second piece of the map is in her lair.

The little island serves as the final resting place of a Banshee and her army of undead. She is holding the third piece of the map.

A colony of harpies, headed by a Harpy Witch who holds the final fragment, calls the mountain home.

As the journey progresses, a “narrative” emerges: it tells of a monarch named Fendrel the Tenacious who is claimed to have fallen ill and, before passing away, would have buried his treasure before giving his concubines a portion of the map showing where it lies. After the king's death, the latter are supposed to have left on their own before disappearing.

The king's treasure is open to whoever gathers the four pieces.

When the four map pieces are gathered, they combine to reveal a very precise location - far from the major cities - where a hidden subterranean dungeon is located.

The PCs eventually make it to the dungeon's depths, where they, of course, fall victim to a trap that closes in on them: the main antagonist was, in fact, the map itself ("elder map mimic")! It is a conscious magical artifact that specializes in deception, mind control and illusions. Additionally, this map has the ability to change and transform into multiple parts, which allows it to be spread by a "slave" and to restart the cycle.

The only purpose of the artifact is to draw in prey so they can be devoured. No pompous plan. Just a man-eating monster that laughs at the avarice of humankind.

Because magical objects are resilient, the PCs are unable to directly destroy the map. However, with great effort, they can momentarily divide it into parts in order to diminish its power.

If the group wishes to destroy the map, another campaign can begin with the hint of the "Rust Dweomer," an ancient rust monster buried deep beneath the earth and rumored to be able to permanently dissolve magical objects.

The Quinn T. Senshall Adventuring Academy

@andradaq

Introduction

The adventure is an excuse to pack together classic dungeon puzzles (with a twist), iconic monsters, and some un-apologetical puns. The loosely woven story of Mr. Quinn T. Senshall gives a common theme to the traps and foreshadows some of the challenges ahead. You can adapt as you see fit for your group, and even replace the final boss monster with your favourite foe. The adventure is designed for PCs of level 3 - 4, but you can adapt the difficulty by using more buff monsters.

The adventure takes place at the Quinn T. Senshall (read as “quintessential”) Adventuring Academy over the course of a few hours, as the PCs are trying to complete their adventuring course by passing the final exam. You can adjust the timing to match whatever time frame you have in mind for your game in real life, for a bit of fourth wall breaking. The PCs would know that they don’t have time to take a long rest, but they will be able to take a short rest, if they need to. Share this information with your players.

Mr. Senshall, who runs the homonymous academy, is a mage of some renown in the region. He can give off an air of being quite self centred, but he is ultimately interested in providing the best teaching for his students (also partially because he is convinced he’s one of the best professors in the realm). Following the “for the greater good” mentality, Quinn has sometimes taken shortcuts in his career, but he is coming from a good place. It is rumoured that the T. in Quinn T. Senshall stands for “Troll”.

Role-playing

If you are running this for players new to TTRPGs, the following tips might help them lean into the role playing aspect of the game:

- You can encourage the group to develop their own high-school dynamics, telling them that they’ve been attending some classes together, and had some common project work. It’s up to them to develop this a bit more, if they chose to do so.
- If you are using pre generated characters, you can try to add a bit of role playing flavour to them by having them be high-school stereotypes: the bard is the popular kid, the wizard is the nerd, the fighter the jock, the rogue the rebel, the cleric the teacher’s pet (or whatever combination you chose). This provides them with some easy stereotypical roles to try to role play

The Paintings

The players will have to interact with paintings in the dungeon to progress, so you need to make sure they understand this mechanic from very early on.

The paintings act as small extradimensional spaces. All the Mr. Senshalls and other people they encounter are similar to the servants from the Magnificent Mansion spell, posing no real threat to the players. The exception is the version of Mr. Senshall who holds the key in The Mixing Room (see that section for more details). For extra flavour, you can describe that if the players are poking their heads through the paintings, inside of these they are poking their head out of another painting of the place they just have left, sometimes located in odd places like against a stalagmite in a cave or a burlap sack in the spice market. This is to make it clear that they can easily jump in and back from these

Handout "Drinks Bottles"

paintings. The paintings are permanently attached to the walls of the castle, but it's up to you if you want to relax that rule and let the players move them around (just be prepared).

Scene 1: You meet in a tavern

To start the adventure read the following outloud or paraphrase:

It's finally the day of your exam. For more than a year you've been preparing for this, running countless errands, killing countless giant rats, escorting more caravans than you can count. You are excited to be able to finally prove your worth and be declared a graduate of the prestigious Quinn T. Senshall Adventuring Academy. Mister Senshall had been an adventurer himself and rumour has it that he's quaffed more than a few Potions of Longevity in his adventuring days, which would explain his unnaturally long lifespan for a human. Or maybe a pack with some devil? Whatever the gossip might be, Mister Senshall's Adventuring Academy has provided you with a very fine training. Sure, you had to sign a magic contract waiving away your rights. It also has a clause that your body might be used for science in case something goes awry in the dungeon. But this is a small price to pay for such fine adventuring training, right?

As you arrive at the academy, all wearing your azure-orange uniforms.[1] You are all nervous, as the exam is rumoured to be very tough and everyone seems to be extremely secretive about what it actually entails. Try as you might, you couldn't learn what happens during the exam from any of the previous students. [2]

It's a beautiful large castle, Mr. Senshall is waiting for you in the courtyard. He looks like a human in his 60s, quite handsome and impeccably dressed in a deep blue robe with golden details. He speaks excitedly, with a soft lisp. He's springy and excited, and he starts guiding you towards a statue of himself with many scrolls in his hand and a harp in the other. "Good afternoon, so good to see all of you! I'm so proud of what you've all learned. Are you ready for the most fun hours of your lives?"

With a flick of his hand the statue shifts to reveal stairs descending into the ground. "Good luck!" you hear behind you, as you start climbing down. "And remember, living to tell the story is more important than a diploma. In the end, one can have many diplomas, I personally have more than a few dozen, but just one life - divine magic and necromancy excluded."

As you reach the end of the stairs, you find yourself in what looks like a tiny speakeasy: a few small tables, a bar, and, occupying almost the entirety of one of the walls, a large painting of a much younger Mr. Senshall leaning over a desk, inspecting a large parchment.

[1] *This is foreshadowing that the skeletons in the final dungeon, who are wearing the same uniforms, are one of the ways the bodies are used "for science".*
[2] *This is foreshadowing the "Modify Memory" cookies that Quinn will offer to the adventurers at the end, as the arcane way of recycling the exam questions.*

Behind the bar you see the familiar shiny golden face of Cube, Mr. Senshall's loyal automaton. Cube is wearing a leather apron over his usual long red robes and nods as you enter. Pointing behind him to a neatly ordered row of spirit bottles Cube hands you the drinks menu: "Welcome! Please enjoy a drink. Everything is on the house."

Drinks Puzzle

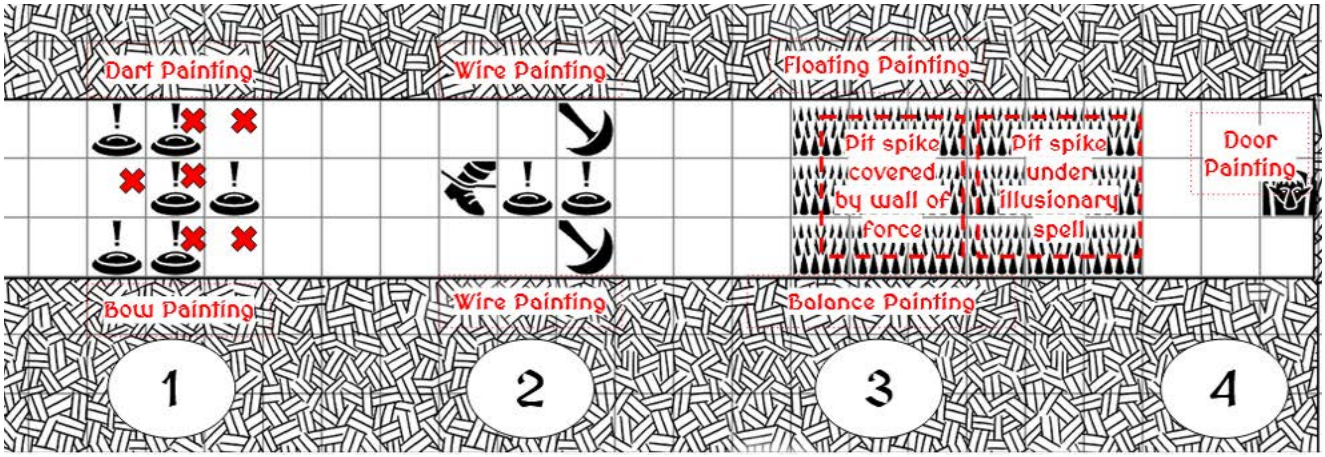
At this point, hand out to the players the "Drinks Menu" handout (on this page). If they ask Cube about the exam, he will just shrug ("I have no idea, I'm just here to serve drinks.").

Give the players a moment to interact with the menu and with Cube, before telling the player whose PC has the highest passive perception that they can swear the Quinn in the painting is moving, glancing at them from time to time. You can give them some time to look around before Quinn is more obviously trying to make eye contact with them. Once a PC approaches the painting, Quinn will look up at them and smile, then lean over the desk in the painting and push the parchment he was inspecting through the painting frame, towards the player. Make sure to clearly describe that an edge of the parchment is poking out of the painting frame now and they can reach out to grab it. Once they do so, hand out to them the Puzzle Map handout.

If you notice that the players are struggling with the puzzle, you can attach the "Drinks Bottles" handout (on page 25) to your GM screen, to make it clear that the symbols on the map (attached at the end of this adventure) and on the bottles are the same.

To solve the puzzle, the bottles with the symbols on the map (the dragon, the unicorn, and the mermaid) need to be lifted off the shelf. The players can either order the corresponding drinks, ask Cube to take a look at the bottles, or just get the bottles themselves (or with a Mage Hand). Cube will politely ask them to not go behind the bar, but will not object too strongly. If paying attention, the PCs can hear a soft click when any of the three bottles is lifted and would notice a pressure mechanism under the bottle if they check. When the three bottles are not present on the shelf, the wall behind the bar will rotate, revealing a corridor behind.

Handout "Drinks Menu"



Map "The Trapped Corridor"

Drinks Effects

The players who chose to drink a full drink need to succeed a DC10 CON saving throw (increase the DC by 3 for each additional drink). If they succeed they get 3 temporary HP, with the exception of Quinn's Delight, where players get 3 temporary HP and the effect of the Bless spell for the next hour. If they fail, they are drunk for the next 1h (use the Poisoned mechanics). As temporary hit points don't stack, drinking additional drinks has no beneficial effects, but it can potentially make them drunk.

Scene 2: The trapped corridor

The PCs find themselves in a long corridor with sumptuous marble flooring, with rows of paintings on either side, giving the impression of an art gallery. The corridor is well lit, with soft light emanating from around each painting frame.

There are 4 puzzles in this area, three along the way and one at the end of the corridor.

Part 1: Dart Trap

As the PCs enter the corridor, they would notice two pictures of the younger Mr. Senshall. On their left, Mr. Senshall is posing holding a dart, winking at the PCs. One their right, Mr. Senshall is striking a perfect shooting pose, holding a bow and arrow.

On the floor there are easy to spot (DC 10 Perception) markings on some of the tiles. Some of the tiles are trapped, triggering the trap, but the markings are there to mislead. Only some of the marked tiles are trapped and the other way around. The player can either investigate which tiles are actually trapped (DC 12 Investigation), fully jump over the area, crawl, or whatever other solution they see fit. If the trap is triggered, both paintings will attack simultaneously, then proceed to reloading. Have the players roll a DEX saving throw DC 14 to dodge. If they fail, they get 1d4 piercing from the dart and 1d6 piercing from the arrow.

Part 2: Wire Trap

The next set of paintings are mirrored and depict Mr. Senshall holding a wire that is obviously under tension, coming from towards the ceiling and then out of the picture. It's easy to spot (DC 10 Perception) that the wire does continue out of the picture at about shoulder level for a human of average height.

As with the first trap, the wire is there to mislead the players. The trigger of the trap is the next section of the floor which is a pressure plate (DC 15 Investigation). If pressed, two swinging blades are released from gaps in the wall just after the painting frames. Each blade deals 2d6 slashing damage or half on save (DC 10 Dexterity). The trap can be disarmed by cutting the wire stretching out of the picture (DC 18 Investigation). It releases two slabs of stones, one on either side, that block the blades. Players can also easily jump over the plate.

Part 3: Spike Pit

As the PCs advance in the corridor, they would notice a 5 ft wide spike pit in front of them, with paintings of Mr. Senshall on either side. On the left side, Mr. Senshall is levitating cross legged while reading a book. On the right side, Mr. Senshall is riding a unicycle on a wire.

He is holding a long pole with what appears to monstrous heads on either end. On a closer look, these can be identified as the heads of a troll and a medusa. The paintings are not relevant for completing this part

of the corridor, but they will need the troll head for the next puzzle.

The PCs can just reach into the paintings and grab whatever objects they want. The medusa's gaze is inert, but the snake hair will attack if someone attempts to grab the head, dealing 1d4 piercing plus 2d6 poison damage on a hit (+5 to hit). In the levitating picture, Mr. Senshall is reading a book on Beholders, foreshadowing the final room. As with the monster heads, the players can reach into the painting and grab the book. If the players spend some time investigating the book during a short rest, you can reward them by offering the party the equivalent of 3 luck points during the final encounter.

The trap consists of a 10 ft wide spike pit, but with a twist. The first 5 ft of the pit are covered by a wall of force, making it safe to step on. However, the next 5ft section is under an illusion spell, as the spike pit continues in that area, but it looks like solid ground. PCs trying to jump over the visible 5 ft of the pit would land directly in the spikes, taking 2d10 piercing damage and 1d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall. Have players roll a DC 5 Athletics check to be able to jump the full 15 ft. On a failure, they would land safely on the wall of force. On a DC 18 Investigation check, the players would notice that there is no gap where appears to be one, and vice-versa. Encourage the players to describe how they would actually investigate the pit (e.g. by throwing a ball bearing). To pass the section, the players can, for example, walk to the end of the covered section, then attempt the jump.

Part 4: Password

As they approach the door at the end of the corridor, it becomes apparent that it is in fact a painting depicting a door. Mr. Senshall will step in front of the door, unravelling a scroll that reads "Give me the password". On the wall next to the painting someone has scribbled the following mirrored letters in red ink: L L O R T ("troll"). You can prepare a small piece of paper with the text to hand over to the players. If any of them say "troll" out loud, they hear a loud cackling in their head and need to roll a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw, taking 2d8 psychic damage on failure and half as much on save. If the players fetch the troll head from the painting in the Spike Pit section and hand it to the Mr. Senshall in front of the door, he will smile, grab the head with disgust, and step aside, waving to them to continue. The PCs can step into the picture and pass through the door. If the players are struggling, Mr. Senshall will grab a dirty bucket and make expectant gestures that something should go in it. Of course, you can reward any other creative solution that the players would come up with, like for instance, grabbing a piece of parchment, writing "troll" on it, and handing that over to Mr. Senshall

Scene 3: Feeding Room & Mixing Room

As the players finish the trapped corridor puzzle they find themselves in a small hallway. Right in front of them is a large painting depicting Quinn stabbing a Beholder in the eye with a sword (foreshadowing for later). To the right is an archway labelled "Feeding Room". To the left is an archway labelled "Mixing Room". The Mixing room holds a puzzle with paintings. Players can take either path to proceed. Both rooms have a trap door that's hidden inside a chest, except that in the "Feeding Room" there is a second mimic chest. The players need to get one of the keys to proceed.

Feeding Room

Here players see a laid out dinner table in the middle of the room, with the exact number of seats as players. There are 2 doors on the other side and 2 chests in the corners of the room where they entered. The players can sit down for a bit and enjoy the meal, which would grant them some temporary HP. The problems start to happen when they try to use the doors, one of them in a mimic. The other one leads to a small 10ft x 10ft storage room that has a brass key on a hook on the opposite wall. The room is squeaky clean and empty other than the key. They do actually need the key, but the storage room is filled with a gelatinous cube that will start to spill and attack the players as soon as they open the door and realize that there is food. A player just attempting to walk to the key would walk directly in the gelatinous cube, of course.

Mixing Room

As the party enters the room, they are immediately struck by the grandeur of it all. The walls are lined with ornate frames, each containing a different painting, (tapestry, or sculpture). The room is dimly lit, with soft spotlights illuminating each exhibit. The floor is tiled with marble, and a large red carpet runs down the center of the room. In the corner to your right, there is a massive wooden chest, its lid closed tightly. The air is still and silent, and a feeling of awe washes over the party as they take in the grandeur of the place.

You notice that all paintings, maybe 2 dozens or so, seem to depict Mr. Senshall history:

Most of the paintings should Quinn victorious and happy: a painting of a young Quinn T. Shenhall practicing magic with a group of other students, a painting of Quinn with the hoard of a dragon, a painting of Quinn at the opening of his Academy, and so on and so forth. There are some noteable paintings where the players can interact:

- A painting of a young Quinn being smothered by a carpet, eyes panicked. Here they can collect a bottle of hazelnut liquor.
- Another painting is a bustling market, Quinn surrounded by vendors and shoppers. He seems to be intensely haggling with a gnome and growing increasingly frustrated, as it looks like he's not getting what he wants. Here they can get the Gnomish Rum.
- The painting depicts Quinn in his laboratory surrounded by various alchemical tools, flasks, and books. He could be wearing a long white coat and holding a bubbling flask or stirring a cauldron. Here they can collect the cinnamon.
- Another one is Quinn in a tavern with an empty glass in front of him and playing absentmindedly with a large brass key. This is the key that unlocks the chest, if they hand him a drink through the painting they get the key.

You can make the Quinn and automaton in this painting to be a simulacrum and respectively another automaton (named Squared, if you'd like).

Scene 4: Behold!

Have some facts on Beholders ready. Give the party some advantage if they have found the book - either in the trapped corridor or in the mixing room, for example by giving them 2 luck points that they can use in saves against the Beholder. Although a Zombie Beholder is a lot weaker, you might still want to tweak it to disable the insta-kill disintegration ray. You can also add a mechanic where anyone dealing more than 20 damage in one turn randomly cuts off one of the functioning eyes, making the Beholder less dangerous.

> As you descend the stairs, the air grows colder and damper, and the musty scent of decay fills your nostrils. You step into a large, dimly lit room. The walls are made of rough-hewn stone, and the floor is strewn with rubble and debris. A faint green glow emanates from torches in the wall, casting eerie shadows on the walls.

Amidst the rubble, the players notice a large, ornate portrait hanging on the wall.

As they approach the portrait, they see that it depicts five figures frantically fleeing a dark and ominous figure with multiple tentacles? This is in the shadows, so it's hard to see at first but the players will notice that the figures are them. The fleeing figures seem to be looking directly at the players, almost as if they are pleading for their help. When they first see the portrait, it shows the group of adventurers in a state of panic, running away from something. Perhaps there are scratches on the wall around the portrait, indicating that they were trying to break through it to escape. In order to proceed to the finale, the players must step into the picture, taking the place of their fleeing doppelgangers and defeat the Beholder.

After defeating the beholder and stepping out of the portrait, the painting changes to depict Quinn waving at them from his office. They can step through the painting to enter te office.

Finale

> As you are stepping through the frame, you find yourself in Mr. Senshall's cozy office. Mr. Senshall is at his desk and seemed to have been waiting for you.

He congratulates the adventurers. "Congratulations, you did put up quite the fight there. I will have quite a hard time bringing that fellow back up for the next exam." You should add some specific details depending on what the party did. For extra fun, even if the party was victorious, you might want to hand out a coupon to repeat the class at a 50% discount to players who fell unconscious, took a lot of damage, or just rolled poorly: "Just in case you want to repeat some classes to get more confidence, you know" In any case, he offers them cookies and milk - these are magically enchanted to act as a Modify Memory spell that blocks any recollection of what actually happened in the dungeon, so diploma or no diploma you all leave his office feeling very happy.

Map for the drinks puzzle

Hallice Halfwaite's Normal Date

A three-hour adventure for 2nd-4th level Characters.

@Westonra

1. Introduction

Hallice Halfwaite's Normal Date is a one-shot adventure for DnD 5e, intended to be completed in 2-3 hours. The difficulty of the encounters has been weighted for a party of four level 3 characters, but it can be easily adjusted for any level. It was originally conceived as an introductory adventure for inexperienced players.

Hallice is the sole heir to the Halfwaite Shipping Corporation. Originally founded by her grandfather, her father expanded the number and length of the trade routes sailed until the company is an almost ever-present sight in any port of note. In preparation for taking over the business, Hallice began work at the company and quickly made a name for herself through her own burgeoning but already impressive eye for investment.

As one of the city's most prominent (and wealthy) bachelorettes, Hallice is constantly approached by a never-ending stream of suitors, entrepreneurs, and kidnappers. This has become particularly irksome after having met a particularly sweet young man, Dain Thunderfist, while doing some undercover investigations of a new investment opportunity. After spending an afternoon discussing the various qualities of the ores coming out of the Iron Hills, Dain has asked her out for a stroll through the water gardens. Hallice is enthusiastic about this prospect, but she has not yet told him about her true name and net worth. She would like to keep this secret until she has got to know him.

The players must follow Hallice and Dain through the Water Gardens, a picturesque park located on a series of small, interconnected islands, clearing a series of obstacles that threaten the evening. These obstacles can be cleared through a mixture of skill checks and combat, and are designed to reward creative play. At the end of the date, Hallice is beset by a mage and her monstrous creation, who attempt to kidnap her for ransom.

2. The Call to Arms

If played as an isolated one-shot adventure, the adventuring party can be introduced as a group of troubleshooters employed by the Halfwaites to protect cargo or to clear out bandit gangs from trade routes.

The party will have earned the Halfwaites' trust through their exploits, leading to Hallice recruiting them for her protection. Alternatively, if you wish to run this as part of an existing campaign, Hallice (not wishing to involve the company in her affairs) could reach out directly to a group of adventurers whose reputation is growing. Whichever way, the adventure is initiated by Hallice sending the party an invitation to meet in her office at 3 pm. She notes that it is for a personal matter, rather than work for the company, and stresses the need for secrecy.

The adventure begins with the party waiting in the reception of Hallice's office after receiving her invitation (this is an opportunity for the players to introduce their characters if necessary). Hallice's assistant (Garth, NG male goliath commoner) will stand up,

announce “Miss Halfwaite will see you now” and show the party into Hallice’s office.

Hallice is a young but very accomplished LG halfling woman, with olive skin and red hair in a braid. She is very assured when speaking normally, but will become noticeably more bashful and start playing with her braid when the topic turns to Dain and their date. ‘

> “Thank you for coming to speak with me today. My father speaks most highly of you and your work, and I rather hope that if you are willing to help me, then he’ll be much happier. Father has always been a little overprotective of me, mostly because of all the people trying to kidnap me for ransom. I usually travel with his security, but... that would not be appropriate this afternoon. ‘You see, I was doing some hands-on research into the quality of the ores coming out of the Iron Hills yesterday, and... I met someone. We got talking, and we talked some more, and then he invited me to go and visit the Water Gardens with him this afternoon! ‘This is where it gets complicated. I haven’t told him who I am yet, and I’d like not to until we get to know each other a little better. If he doesn’t know, then I can hardly have a security detail around me. So, our trusted band of troubleshooters, I would like to ask a personal favour of you. Please, accompany me on my date, protect us, make sure that nothing spoils it, and don’t let Dain notice that you’re there!’

Hallice will offer up to 150 GP per player to take the job. She will suggest that the party goes on to the Water Gardens first to clear any potential problems, and will offer some suggestions for things to look out for.

She has been plagued by people trying to get her money through either investment opportunities or through gold-digging romantic proposals, so she will ask for the party to clear away anything unsightly or that might disturb them.

She highlights that the main attractions of the Water Gardens are the immaculately curated plants, the bridges over the water ways, and the flocks of ducks that populate them. She may also ask the party to secure a dinner reservation at one of the restaurants at the far end of the park. Finally, she will mention that she has been the target of attempted kidnappings for ransom in the past.

Hallice will distribute messenger rings to the party. These rings do not require attunement and allow anyone wearing one to cast the message cantrip without verbal or somatic components to someone wearing one of the other rings. This allows for long range telepathic communication between the party and with Hallice, who wears one of the rings. Hallice may then offer the party advice, alert them to potential threats, or encourage them to act as needed.

Roleplaying Hallice

Hallice is a 21-year-old lawful good female halfling. She is confident, bold, and well spoken. Having been well educated by her school and by her father, she is sure- footed when navigating both the professional and social worlds. However, due to the threat of being kidnapped and by being constantly approached by people more interested in her bank account than herself, Hallice has not had many opportunities to enter the dating pool. These bad experiences mean that she is keen to keep her identity a secret while she gets to know Dain.

Roleplaying Dain

Dain is a 23-year-old lawful good male dwarf. He is genial, easy going, enthusiastic, and the heir to the Iron Hills Mining Company. He met Hallice while working undercover to do market research on the availability of different ores in the local port. Due to the threat of being kidnapped and by being constantly approached by people more interested in his bank account than himself, Dain has not had many opportunities to enter the dating pool. These bad experiences mean that he is keen to keep his identity a secret while he gets to know Hallice. Dain’s gender is inconsequential and may be changed at will. However, it is important that they experience romantic attraction towards Hallice.

3. The Water Gardens

The water gardens are a picturesque series of small islands surrounded by reeds and water plants, filled with beautifully manicured plants, and connected by bridges. There are several groves of trees for cover, a series of small stalls selling refreshments (ice cream, fried turkey legs and grilled noodles), and an open-air restaurant with a small stage for performances.

4. The Date

The date can be broadly split into three parts: reconnaissance (when the party explores the Waterpark before Hallice arrives), the date itself (when Hallice and Dain make their way through the park) and the first kiss (when the ambush occurs).

The following are a series of scenarios that can occur over the reconnaissance period and the date itself. These are short encounters for the party to overcome sequentially over the evening.

These are not designed to be run in a strict order, or for all of them to be run in the same adventure. Rather, the number of scenarios to be run and the order in which they are encountered can be chosen and tailored to specific party and time constraints.
An example series of encounters may run as follows:

- Reconnaissance
  - I Vulture Capitalists
  - V A Practical Joke
  - IV Dinner Reservations
- The Date Itself
  - VII A Nice Night for an Ice Cream
  - VI A Brush with Danger
  - II An Abhorrent Admirer
  - VIII Dinner and a Show
- The First Kiss
  - Ambush

Success or Failure

The player's actions over the evening will affect the result of Hallice's date by the date score. The date score starts at 0, and changes at the end of each scenario. In general, add 1 for each situation successfully navigated and subtract 1 for each situation failed. If Hallice is revealed as a Halfwaite heir, then subtract 2. At the end of dinner, calculate the date score.

- Below -3, Dain will leave early (if Hallice's family fortune is revealed, he will say that he feels betrayed by the deception) and Hallice will be upset.
- Between -2 and 2, Dain will stay until the end, but the future of the couple is uncertain.
- Above 3, Dain and Hallice will be surreptitiously inching towards each other in anticipation of a kiss.

5. Reconnaissance

The party will arrive an hour before Hallice and Dain, and will get the opportunity to search the park. Careful examination (DC 12 perception or investigation) of the reeds surrounding the islands will reveal evidence of large animals moving between the land and the water.

They should have to locate and deal with a potential issue before the arrival of Hallice. Choose one or more of the following (or make your own):

I. Vulture Capitalists

Close to the entrance, a group of 5 bald headed, black feathered (with a collar of white feathers) Aarakokra are lurking in a clump of trees. They are well dressed and carry a board with a series of figures written on it. They are conversing quietly about how best to approach Hallice. They have learned that Hallice will be at the Water Gardens today and are trying to get her to invest in them.

Characters who get sufficiently close or succeed on a DC 12 perception check will learn that the group are trying to invest in a scheme where they get predictions from a divination wizard about which resources will be in short supply in the coming year, and use that information to preemptively invest in that resource. If they are not dealt with before Hallice arrives, they will descend upon the happy couple. Hallice's identity as an heir will be revealed and the interruption will distract from the date.

When approached, the Aarakokra will be dismissive of the characters. If the party reveal their connection to Hallice, the Aarakokra will immediately try and ingratiate themselves with the party. The Aarakokra are extremely greedy and difficult to persuade that interrupting Hallice's date is a terrible idea (DC 18 Persuasion). Hallice is aware of the group and will refuse to meet with them. However, the Aarakokra will leave if presented with a better (not necessarily true) opportunity to meet with Hallice (DC 12 Deception) or accept other reasonable solutions. If engaged in combat, the Aarakokra use the Bandit stat block (MM p343) and will flee quickly.

Please note that visible corpses will spoil Hallice's enjoyment of her date. If the date is interrupted, subtract 1 from the date score. If the Aarakokra leave, add 1 to the date score. If there are visible corpses, the date score does not change at all.

Roleplaying the Aarakokra

The lead Aarakokra, who will interact with the party, is named Qaartik. He is a lawful neutral male 5-year-old (young adult, equivalent to 25 in humans) Aarakokra. He is ruthlessly ambitious, arrogant, and convinced of his own superiority. Possessing above-average intelligence, he believes himself to be much smarter than he is. He is dismissive of those 'beneath him' or who cannot be of use to him, but fawns over anyone with higher status or who has something that he wants.

II. An Abhorrent Admirer

Waiting at one of the stalls is 23-year-old half-elf Percivoril Perlar. He carries a bunch of red roses and a box of sweets, and wears a tunic emblazoned with "I <3 Hallice", and an odd chunky necklace with an amethyst in. If asked, Hallice will identify him as a friend from the school Enchanted Objects club, who became obsessed with her seemingly overnight. Despite repeated rebuffs, he is still chasing after her. If he is not dealt with, he will accost Hallice on her date but will not reveal her identity as a Halfwaite heir.

Unknown to her, at a club meeting Percivoril unwittingly attuned to a cursed necklace that made him obsessed with the first person he saw, which happened to be Hallice. Attempts to get him to see reason will be counteracted by the necklace that he still wears. His eyes will flash the same colour purple as the amethyst necklace whenever a character attempts to persuade him to abandon his pursuit of Hallice. Do not allow a persuasion or deception roll when characters interact with Percivoril, but a perception check DC12 or a passive perception of greater than 12 will notice the eyes change colour. Alternatively, subtract the result of the charisma check from 23. Any character with a passive perception greater than that number will notice Percivoril's eyes.

Percivoril will not remove the necklace for money or persuasion, as the curse will lift if he does. If the party offer to allow him to reach Hallice in exchange for the necklace, he will get stuck in a mental loop where he will alternately accept and then decline (he will give anything to get to Hallice, but he will not yield the necklace for anything). In this state, he is effectively frozen, and the necklace may be removed. Removing the necklace by grabbing it (strength DC18, advantage if Percivoril is distracted) or subtly removing it (sleight of hand DC 15, advantage if Percivoril is distracted) will break the curse. The necklace can be removed if Percivoril is restrained, incapacitated or dead. In combat, Percivoril (bolstered by 'love') uses the Bandit Captain stat block (MM p344).

Visible corpses will upset the mood of Hallice's evening. If a character puts on the necklace, they must make a DC15 Charisma check. On a failure, they fall deeply in love with the first creature that they see; a squirrel (no player character can be forced to fall in love with another player character without both players' consent). The afflicted character can repeat the check as an action to try and break free of the curse. If another player tries to talk the afflicted player out of it, the non-afflicted player should make a charisma (persuasion or intimidation) check. The DC of the afflicted player's check is reduced by the result non-afflicted player's check minus 12.

The squirrel is on a branch of a nearby tree and does not run away as the afflicted character approaches. If the player character reaches the squirrel, the squirrel joins them as a familiar. If the date is interrupted, subtract 1 from the date score. If Percivoril leaves, add 1 to the date score.

Roleplaying Percivoril

Percivoril is a 23-year-old chaotic neutral male half-elf. He is cursed to be magically obsessed with Hallice and will pursue her beyond all reason. He is intense and vocal about this obsession and will respond rudely and aggressively to anyone who tries to talk him out of it. If the curse is lifted, he is revealed to be quite mild-mannered. He will take his leave politely and quickly, while trying to avoid contact with Hallice.

III. Birdwatching

One of the attractions of the water gardens is the considerable number of ducks that gather by one of the banks where feeding is allowed. Unfortunately, today the ducks have attracted a Peryton, which is looking hungry. If the Peryton is not dealt with, it will frighten off the ducks and Hallice will be disappointed. It can be defeated in combat (visible corpses will upset Hallice), tempted away with food (DC 12-18 animal handling, depending on the food offered), or accept other reasonable solutions.

Alternatively, the birds could be chased by an unruly dog, which can be captured following a series of skill checks. If there are no ducks to view when Hallice and Dain arrive, subtract 1 from the date score. If the couple share a romantic moment viewing the ducks, add 1 to the date score. If there are visible corpses, the date score does not change.

IV. Dinner Reservations

Hallice may ask the party to book a table at the restaurant for her. The party will meet the proprietor of the restaurant;

Astolfo, a Tiefling bard. Astolfo is in his sixties with blue skin and greying hair. He is usually quite amiable and welcoming, thanks to a lifetime working in the service industry. However, today he is downbeat, slightly distracted, and morose. This is due to it being the 10th anniversary of the death of his wife and performance partner, Joanna. When approached by the party, he will accept the reservation but warn them that there will be no music this evening. On a DC 10 persuasion check, he will reveal that it is the anniversary of his wife's death. He used to play his lute to her each day, and she used to sing for him. Playing reminds him of her, but he finds it too painful to play on this day. A DC 18 persuasion check, falling to DC 15 if the party invokes the kindling of new relationships as an honour to her memory, will persuade him to play this evening.

Alternately, he will let the party perform instead if they pass a DC12 performance check. On a significant failure of this check (Nat 1 or similar), he will proclaim it an insult to his wife's memory if he allows the party to perform and will take up his lute again to perform. If Hallice and Dain have musical accompaniment to their dinner, add 1 to the date score.

Roleplaying Astolfo

Astolfo is a 63-year-old chaotic good male tiefling bard. He is polite, open, and friendly. While he and his wife Joanna used to travel the world in their 20's, they settled down to start their restaurant and their family 30 years ago. Usually unshakeably professional, the anniversary of Joanna's death always hits him hard. He is downbeat and a little distracted when the party meet him.

V. A Practical Joke

A group of local children – Timmy (CN male tiefling), Tommy (CN male dwarf) and Tammy (CN female human) – have been preparing practical jokes for the unsuspecting public. Having gotten hold of a bucket of spoiled milk and a couple of sheep bladders, they have rigged a tripwire over one of the bridges. This tripwire leads to an overhanging tree, where they have suspended bladders full of the spoiled milk from the branches ready to fall on whoever steps on the tripwire. The children are hiding in bushes near to the bridge. The tripwire can be found on a successful DC 15 perception check and disarmed safely with a successful DC 15 sleight of hand check. A failure results in the bladders falling on the bridge and spilling the milk. If this is cleared up (or if it is not spilled due to successful disarming of the trap), Hallice and Dain will share a romantic moment on the bridge looking out over the water.

If the trap is not found, Hallice will be doused in spoiled milk when she tries to cross the bridge. Once the trap is removed, the children break cover and run for the exit, shouting "spoilsports" at the party. They mean no harm and will not seek revenge. If the bladders fall on Hallice, subtract 1 from the date score. If the bridge is covered with spoiled milk that is not cleaned away, the couple do not linger, and the date score is unchanged. If the couple share a moment on the bridge, add 1 to the date score.

6. The Date Itself

Hallice and Dain will arrive and make their way through the water gardens. Their aim is to arrive for dinner at the restaurant at the end of the gardens, where the conclusion of the adventure will play out. Select at least two situations from this section and the reconnaissance section to play out over the course of the evening.

VI. A Brush with Danger

While Hallice and Dain are walking through the park, an owl swoops past and brushes Hallice's hair, stealing a strand of hair. This owl is the familiar of the Bullywug Mage and is stealing the hair so that the Hunting Toad can track Hallice later in the scenario. The aim of this scenario is to suggest that all is not well, rather than to provide a problem for the party to solve. Nevertheless, if the party is able to stop the owl (they need to pass a DC 15 dexterity check to react to it before it reaches Hallice), Hallice is upset by the death of the bird (subtract 1 from the date score). However, the hunting toad will no longer be able to hunt Hallice so effectively. The bullywug mage and the toad will emerge from the water too far from Hallice and need to dash to reach her, so she cannot be grappled on the first turn.

VII. A Nice Night for an Ice Cream

While walking through the park, either Hallice or Dain can make a comment that it would be a perfect night for an ice cream, and Hallice can direct the party to locate some. The ice cream seller, a young gnome

named Wunklys, will be in the process of walking his cart to the exit. He will refuse to sell the party any ice cream, and a DC10 insight check will reveal that he is extremely nervous. On a DC13 persuasion or intimidation check, he will reveal that his father has been investigating new selling points and devised a new way to serve self-shaping ice cream. Unfortunately, this has resulted in the ice cream becoming sentient and upset about being consumed. He has managed to contain it within his cart, but he cannot access any of his wares until it has been dealt with. If the party defeats it, he will reward them with as much ice cream as they can carry and 6 sp. The stat block for the self-shaping ice cream can be found in the appendix. The ice cream seller has set up his stand in a shady grove shielded by trees, which should be quite far from where Hallice and Dain are stood. Hallice will be upset if she observes the fight (if the self-shaping ice cream travels further than 50 ft from where it was initially placed), but she can be directed to avoid it. She will also be upset if the party reveal themselves as her employees delivering ice cream, but Dain will accept any excuse for their involvement on a DC10 persuasion check.
If the couple get ice-cream, add 1 to the date score. If they do not, or if they observe the fighting, subtract 1 from the date score.

Roleplaying Wunklys

Wunklys is a 40-year-old (equivalent to 16 in humans) chaotic neutral male gnome tinkerer. He is highly intelligent, but inexperienced and poor under pressure. He is concerned that the city may revoke their food vendor's license if they discover that he has unwittingly brought a murderous monster to a city park and is trying to cover it up as best as he can. When he meets the party, he is trying to think of a way to dispose of the ice cream as quickly and as safely as possible.

VIII. Dinner and a Show

Hallice and Dain will dine at the open-air restaurant at the end of the gardens. The restaurant has two tents, one covering the kitchen and one covering a stage where a bard will perform for the patrons. Over the course of dinner, a family group of four at the next table will erupt into an argument and a member will be punched into the performing bard. The party must subdue the fighting family, either in combat, where the family uses the Thug stat block (MM p350), or by persuading them to reconcile (DC12 Persuasion). Hallice will be upset if blood is spilled, but pleased if a non-violent solution is found. She is also pleased if the party replaces the entertainment (DC 15 Performance or Acrobatics).

You may choose the argument. As an example: in the past, the eldest brother might have argued with his mother over falling in love with a woman with a child. The family split, and the older brother resents the younger brother for not speaking louder in his defence, while the younger brother was blindsided by the argument, supported the relationship but was insulted by the elder brother rebuffing his attempts to reach out. The mother has now died, and the father is trying to reunite the family.

The party may have met the Bard, Astolfo, while making Dinner Reservations, in the Reconnaissance section. If this was failed and no music will be played, then remove the bard from this section. The restaurant will be quiet, and the argument can be heard escalating over the course of the meal. If the fight lasts longer than 3 rounds, subtract 1 from the date score. If the argument is resolved by reuniting the family, add 1 to the date score. If the party can reestablish a romantic atmosphere by performing, add a further 1 to the date score.

7. The First Kiss

At the end of the evening, there are three options; Hallice is alone after a failed date; Hallice and Dain are about to end the evening on an amicable note; or Hallice and Dain are about to kiss. In any case, they are rudely interrupted by a bullywug mage who is attempting to kidnap Hallice for ransom.

Ambush!

The pair are attacked by bullywug mage mounted upon her hunting toad (see Appendices) and her familiar, which uses the stat block of an owl (MM p333). The bullywug group has advantage on a stealth check against the passive perception of each of the party members. The bullywug group gain a surprise round on the party members that fail this test. On the first turn, the hunting toad reaches Hallice and attempts to use its tongue attack on her to grapple her. If the familiar was unable to obtain Hallice's hair earlier, then the hunting toad emerges from the water too far from Hallice and must dash to reach her. The bullywug mage will attack Dain on its first attack. The familiar uses the help action to give the bullywug mage advantage on their attack. The group will attack from hiding in the water and attempt to withdraw if the toad is successful in swallowing Hallice. If they are unsuccessful, they will quickly withdraw. The party will need to escort Hallice and Dain to the entrance of the water gardens, as the bullywug group ambush them repeatedly from

the water. The party are victorious when they defeat the bullywug group or escape the gardens.

8. Ending the Adventure

If Hallice is rescued, she will thank the party and give them their reward. If Dain left before the ambush, then she will sadly take her leave and suggest that the party sticks to fighting bandits in the future. If Dain is still there, then when he wakes, he will unexpectedly apologise to Hallice. He will assume that the bullywug attacked in order to kidnap him, as he is the heir to the Iron Hills Mining Company. Hallice will delightedly reveal her heritage as well, and the two will share a kiss.

Stat Blocks

Hallice Halfwaite

LG Small Female Halfling
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 8)
Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Skills Persuasion +5, Medicine +4
Senses Passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Halfling, Elvish, Dwarfish
Spellcasting. Hallice is a 1st-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Hallice has the following cleric spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy
1st level (3 slots): bless, cure wounds, sanctuary

Actions

Dagger. Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Raised to take over the Halfwaite Estate, Hallice is a consummate businessperson; calm, composed, and efficient. In the brief time in which she has been working in a leadership role at the company, she has impressed by making a series of shrewd investments.

Dain Thunderfist

LG Medium Male Dwarf
Armor Class 12
Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Skills Athletics +6
Senses Passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Elvish, Dwarfish

Actions

Multiattack. Dain makes two melee attacks.
Axe. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

Dain is the heir to the Iron Hills Mining Company, currently working undercover to do market research on the availability of different ores in the local port. He is genial, easy going and enthusiastic. Dain's gender is inconsequential and may be changed at will. However, it is important that they experience romantic attraction towards Hallice.

Self-Shaping Ice Cream

TN Large Ooze
Armor Class 8
Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)
Speed 20 ft. Climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	5 (-3)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	3 (-4)

Damage Immunities Cold, Lightning, Slashing
Damage Vulnerabilities Fire
Condition Immunities Blinded, Charmed, Deafened, Frightened, Prone
Senses Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), Passive Perception 8
Languages –
Challenge 3
Amorphous. The ice cream can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.
Spider Climb. The ice cream can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Pseudopod. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 12 (4d6) cold damage.

Reactions

Split. When an ice cream that is Medium or larger is subjected to lightning or slashing damage, it splits into two new ice creams if it has at least 10 hit points. Each new ice cream has hit points equal to half the original ice cream's, rounded down. New ice creams are one size smaller than the original ice cream.

Hunting Toad

LE Large Monstrosity
Armor Class 15
Hit Points 84 (8d10 + 40)
Speed 30 ft. Swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	3 (-4)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)

Skills Athletics +7, Stealth +7
Condition Immunities Charmed, Frightened
Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 13
Languages Bullywug
Challenge 4

Water Stealth. While in water, the hunting toad can take the Hide action as a bonus action.
Hunting Instinct. If the hunting toad gets the scent of its quarry, for example from a lock of hair or a piece of clothing, it can follow a trail from that individual that is up to three days old. When within 1000 ft, the hunting toad knows the exact location of its quarry.

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 18 (4d6 + 4) piercing damage.
Tongue. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 15 ft., one creature. Hit: 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage, and the target must make a DC 14 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the target is pulled to a space within 5 feet of the hunting toad. If the target is large or smaller, the creature is grappled.
Swallow. The hunting toad makes an attack against a medium or smaller creature it is grappling (+7 to hit). If the attack hits, the creature is swallowed, and the grapple ends. The swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the hunting toad, and it takes 7 (2d6) acid damage at the start of each of the hunting toad's turns, and when the creature is first swallowed. A creature reduced to 0 hit points in this way stops taking the acid damage and becomes stable.
Only one creature can be swallowed at a time. If the hunting toad chooses, or if it dies, the swallowed creature is regurgitated into a space within 5ft of the hunting toad.

The hunting toad appears at first glance like a giant toad. However, there are several noticeable changes; the eyes face forward, the mouth is too large and too full of teeth, and the tongue is forked. It was made through dark magic by the Bullywug mage as a tool for abductions. As a construct, it will fight until destroyed.

Bullywug Mage

LE Medium Female Bullywug
Armor Class 17
Hit Points 84 (8d10 + 40)
Speed 30 ft. Swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Arcana +3, Deception +4,
Perception +4, Stealth +3
Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Bullywug, Draconic
Challenge 3

Amphibious. The bullywug mage can breathe air and water.
Speak with Frogs and Toads. The bullywug mage can communicate simple concepts to frogs and toads when it speaks in Bullywug.
Standing Leap. The bullywug mage's long jump is up to 20 feet and its high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.
Swamp Camouflage. The bullywug mage has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in swampy terrain.
Innate Spellcasting. The bullywug mage's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:
At will: chill touch, dancing lights, minor illusion, vicious mockery
1st Level (3 Slots): Bane, Guiding Bolt

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (3d6 + 1) piercing damage.

References

Bullywug mage based on the Bullywug (MM p35) and Green Hag (MM p177).
Hunting toad based on the Banderhobb (VGM p122).
Self-Shaping Ice Cream based on Black Pudding (MM p241).

The wording and format of the stat blocks is taken from the Monster Manual.

The Hog's Trough

An inn to drop into your adventures

@Gecko97

The two-storey building before you is impressive – about 35 feet wide, set back five feet from the road, the walls of the ground floor are made of heavy mottled pink and grey granite blocks. You can enter the inn through either the double doors to the right or slightly wider folding doors to the left. A large window is between them. The walls of the first floor are wooden, and three windows overlook the road.
Inside, heavy wooden beams from left to right support the ceiling. Four rectangular tables are set around the walls, each with four seats, and an elliptical table is near the centre of the room with ten seats around it. The bar is to the rear, slightly left, with a door that you assume leads to the kitchen behind it. Another door leads out opposite you, in the far right-hand corner of the room. A handful of people are seated around the room in small groups, but one of the rectangular tables is free.

The Hog's Trough is a popular inn, run by Gredakh Long-tusk, a retired half-orc adventurer. He was accepted by the townsfolk because one of his adventuring companions was Liaenor Naïlo, who was born and raised in the town. He borrowed money from his companions to buy and refurbish the building, using his own masonry skills to extend the cellar and build the external walls of the first floor.

Gredakh keeps the room to the rear to himself, along with the balcony. He rents out the other rooms to guests, as well as the private dining room. People who wish to stay but have less money can unroll their swags in the large room at the top of the stairs ...
Gredakh employs five people: Emalia Fletcher (cook), Kirun Lightfoot (kitchen hand), Levinia (barmaid), Unxerin Veritas (barman), and Taelira Steeltoe (barmaid).

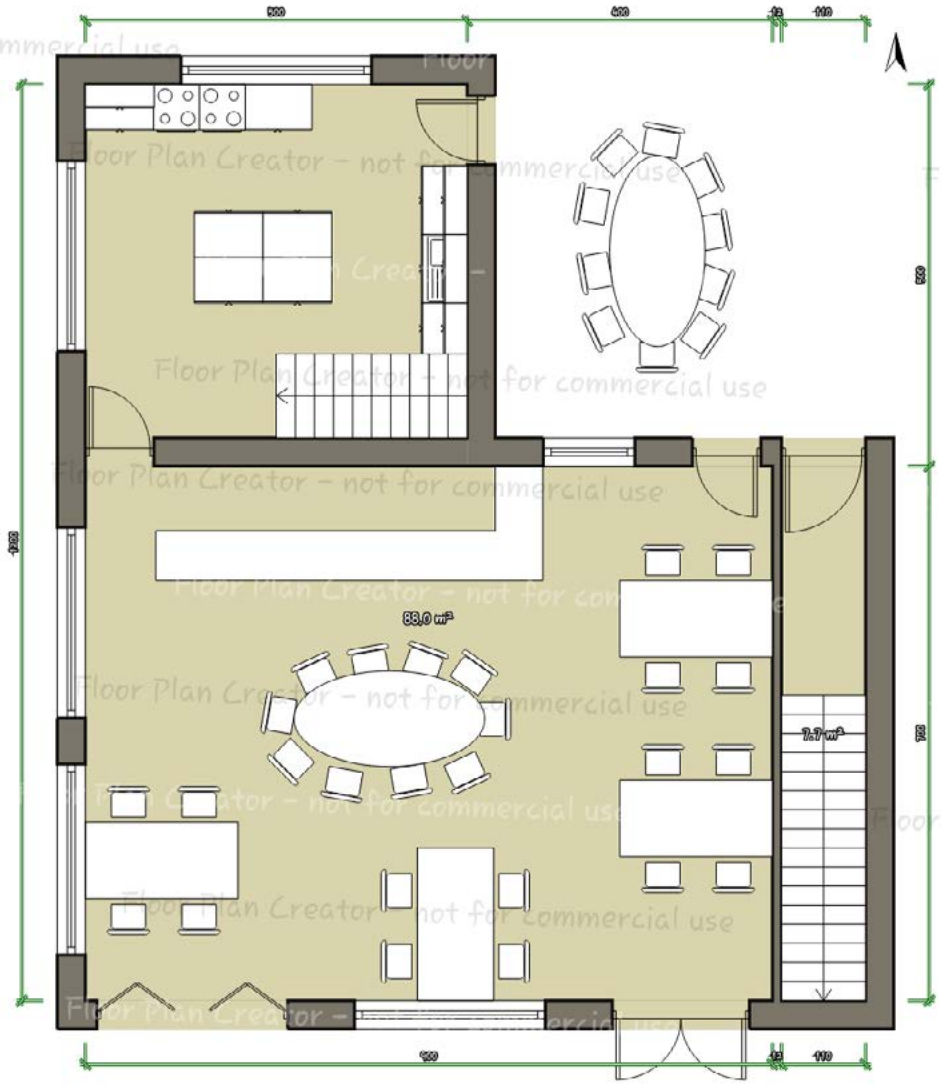
Gredakh Long-tusk (Outlander)

He is bulky, but not so tall. You can see several scars on the left side of his orcish face, including one of a slash which took the lobe of his left ear when it was made. He has short tusks sticking up from his lower jaw, the one of the right both longer and sharper than the other. His hands look broad and strong, and you can see some scars on them and his forearms. A steel-studded club and folded net hang from the broad leather belt around his waist.

Gredakh was born to a human slave in an orcish tribe in the mountains, but decided to leave and strike out on his own at 16 after killing another member of the tribe (the orc who had killed his mother in front of him when he was 8). He met up with Berongar and the others, and adventured with them. At first they didn't trust him much at all, but over time they came to rely on him. Gredakh borrowed money from his friends to buy and convert a house in town to an inn, which he called "The Hog's Trough". He has since repaid their money and now owns the inn outright. Initially the townspeople only accepted him because of his friends (especially since one of them, Liaenor, grew up in town), now they like and respect him – he is fair to all, and doesn't allow any trouble in his inn.

CG Half-orc Fighter 6; 34, 6'2", 219 lb.
Languages: Common, Orc.
AC 20, HP 59, Move 30

Str 17, Dex 10, Con 19, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 10.
Proficiencies: all armour & shield, simple weapons, martial weapons,
Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Animal Handling, Intimidation, Survival, Orcish War Drums, Mason's Tools.
Feats: Great Weapon Fighting, Second Wind, Action



Surge, Battle Master (Student of War; Disarming Attack, Parry, Sweeping Attack), Tavern Brawler, Features: Darkvision, Relentless Endurance, Savage Attacks,

Equipment: +2 greataxe, plate armour, shield, dagger, +1 heavy crossbow & 20 bolts, club, net, Ring of Feather Falling, Ring of the Ram, Immovable Rod, mason's tools, orcish war drum.

Emalia Fletcher

NG Human; 31, 5'5", 104 lb.

She is short, with her dark brown hair braided into a coil around her head. With her sleeves rolled up above her elbows, you can see an intricate tattoo winding its way up her left arm from the palm of her hand.

Emalia grew up in the town and married young. She has five children, all of whom still live with her in their one-room house near the edge of town. Her husband, Erlik, died 7 years ago, making it hard for her to keep raising her children, then four years ago Gredakh employed her as his cook and now life is easier. Kelaria sometimes helps out at the Trough, if one of the other staff are unwell.

Children: Kelaria (13), Serid (11), Therina (11), Erlik (9), Zaira (8).

Kirun Lightfoot

NG Human; 14, 5'9", 137 lb.

He looks young, but tall for his age. His nose looks like it was broken some time ago, but set crookedly. He has roughly-cut brown hair which covers most of his ears.

Kirun is a local boy, who is happy to work for Gredakh. He is also skilled at playing the harp, and often does so after the kitchen is closed. He hopes to be a professional musician one day.

Levinia

NG Human; 43, 5’8”, 140 lb.

> She is an older woman, with a bright smile. She is missing the last two fingers on her right hand, but that doesn’t reduce her efficiency in serving.

Levinia grew up in a neighbouring town, but moved to be with her husband when she got married. They had two children together, then something happened – while out hunting together, they were attacked by a pack of wolves. One wolf took her fingers, while others took her husband and their children. She managed to get into a tree, thanks to her husband, but then he was taken below her.
She doesn’t have a plan for the future yet, but really likes Gredakh ...

Unxerin Veritas

LN Rock Gnome, 53, 3’9”, 47 lb.

> He is tiny, with broad hands and a long nose. He has a calm expression on his face, looking at you with a question in his eyes.

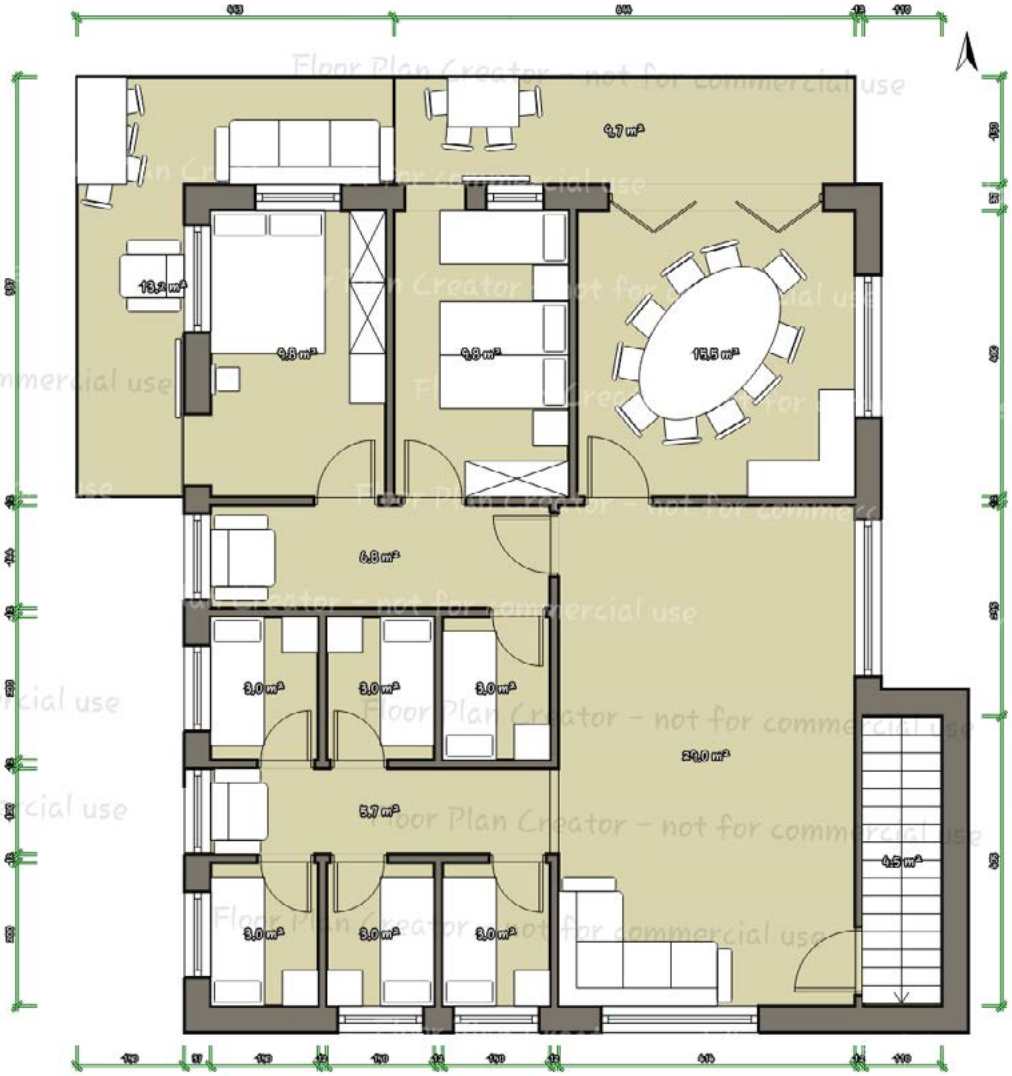
Unxerin got lost one day, and stumbled into a trap in the forest. He was released by Tharimar, a member of Gredakh's adventuring party, and brought back for healing. Gredakh let him stay in the inn for free until he recovered. In return, Unxerin asked for a job. Gredakh agreed, and Unxerin is his most loyal employee.

Taelira Steeltoe

CG Human, 34; 5’11”, 168 lb.

> She is tall, and looks strong. She looks ready to either welcome you, or kick you back out into the street. You notice that one of her eyes is green, while the other is blue. She is also wearing a pair of tough boots.

Taelira has a habit of dealing with drunks directly: if they don’t do what she says, she kicks them, hard – with her steel-capped boots.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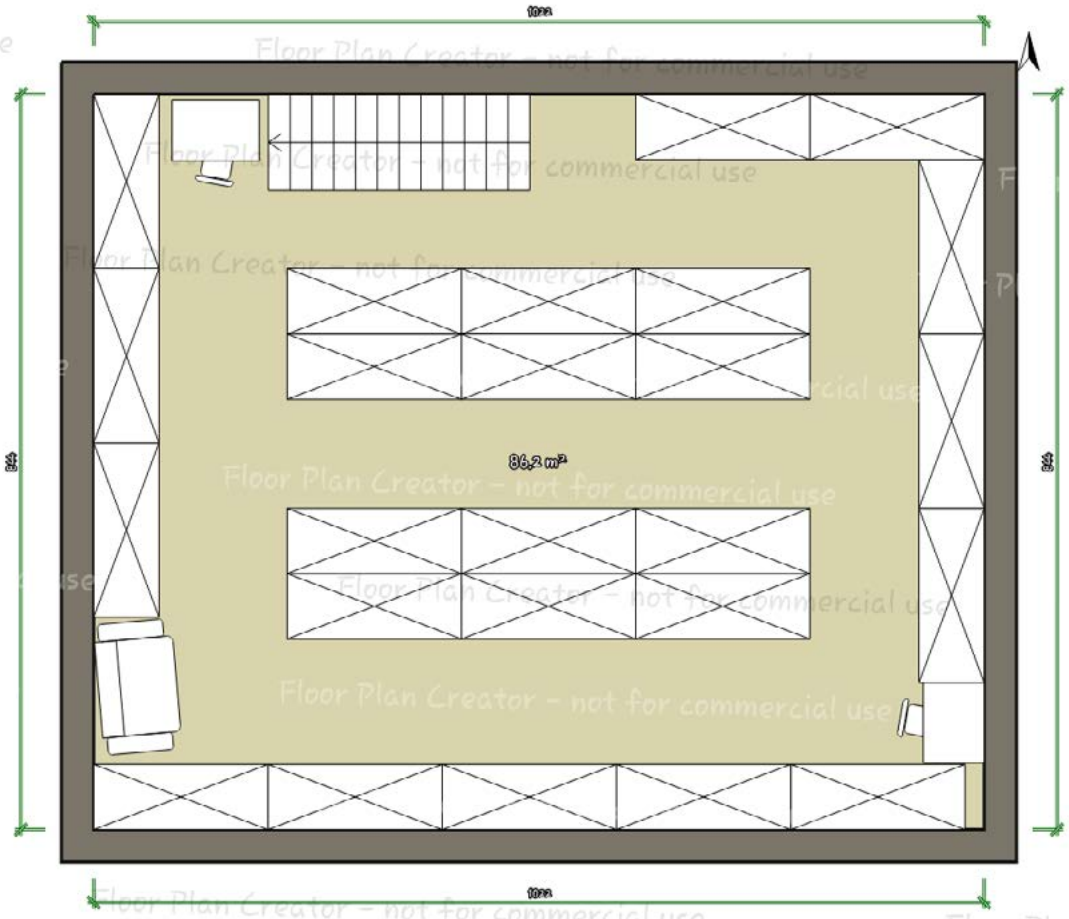
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Art Corner

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Berakh's Origin

Character Backstory

@Gecko97

Berakh shifted slightly as he stood with eleven of his cousins, all waiting for their clan chief to address them. They wore the red and black formal robes of their clan's wizard apprentices.

Everyone straightened as the door at the back of the balcony opened, Berakh smiling as he saw his uncle lead a small party into view.

Berakh's uncle was Chief Tharnak Flaresteel, leader of their clan for the past 97 years. Berakh was the only child of Tharnak's sister Cherala, his only living sibling. Tharnak himself had two daughters, Kherania and Miranha.

Behind Tharnak came one of his aunts, Merakha Flaresteel, Clan Archmagus. Her red and black robes were far more ornate than those of the apprentices, embroidered with runes representing significant events from her almost-200-year tenure as paramount wizard of Clan Flaresteel. She was still vigorous and powerful, despite her advanced age.

"I am old, near the end of my time as Clan Archmagus," Merakha began, after reaching the balcony rail. "I have outlived all of the Clan Magi who were trained with me, as well as most of those who came after. None of them wish to take my place.

"So Clan Flaresteel looks to you, a new generation, to discover whether any of you will be both willing and able to take on my duties. It will not be easy.

"The first challenge is to leave our clanhold, exploring and learning beyond our borders," Merakha continued. "I do not know where your feet will take you, but you need to learn how to focus - as when you return, your ability to concentrate and maintain a spell will be tested. Pass, and I shall interview you to see if you are suitable to continue.

"Next you will serve in our mines for a year, to ensure the safety and security of our miners. Then you will work with our clan's smiths. You will learn to forge strong pieces, then how to enchant them. You will create a masterpiece, then face another interview with me.

"Survive that, and you will be sent to one of our new outposts. There you will cast a teleportation circle each day until it becomes permanent. I shall then come to you for another interview to see if you're still focused on taking my place.

"Stepping back to our clanhold, you will face the final magical challenge: protecting a snowball from a barrage of fireballs, while I watch.

"Finally, I shall have one last interview with you.

"There is a long, hard road ahead of you, should you choose to take it. Anybody wish to withdraw now?"

The apprentices were still and silent; none wanted to miss this chance.

"I am glad, and proud of you," Merakha concluded. "Seek out a place where you can help. It might be a grand city, it could be a simple farmer's hut. Everyone needs help. Learn, while you help others, and come back ready for the next stage of your training."

Tables of Connection and Disconnection

@mrtakai

Our perception and emotions are subjective and nuanced. Over millennia, we humans have developed a rich vocabulary to express them. In an RPG, we place ourselves in extraordinary situations—unforeseen circumstances where the outcome is uncertain. This is where roleplaying transforms into something magical, as we often surprise ourselves.

To encourage a broader vocabulary for emotions during play, I've created some tables for you to roll on. These can be used for your own character or NPCs and will work in both group and solo play.

The vocabulary is inspired by the works of Marshall Rosenberg and his outstanding book on non-violent communication.

Rosenberg, M. B. (2003). Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life (2nd ed.)

Table 1: Feelings when needs are met

1d100	
1	adventurous
2	affectionate
3	alert
4	alive
5	amazed
6	amused
7	animated
8	appreciative
9	ardent
10	aroused
11	astonished
12	blissful
13	breathless
14	buoyant
15	calm
16	carefree
17	cheerful
18	comfortable
19	complacent
20	composed
21	concerned
22	confident
23	contented
24	cool
25	curious
26	dazzled
27	delighted
28	eager
29	ebullient
30	ecstatic
31	effervescent
32	elated
33	enchanted
34	encouraged
35	energetic
36	engrossed
37	enthusiastic
38	excited
39	exhilarated
40	expansive
41	expectant

42	exultant
43	fascinated
44	free
45	friendly
46	fulfilled
47	glad
48	gleeful
49	glorious
50	glowing
51	grateful
52	gratified
53	happy
54	helpful
55	hopeful
56	inquisitive
57	inspired
58	intense
59	interested
60	intrigued
61	invigorated
62	involved
63	joyous, joyful
64	jubilant
65	loving
66	mellow
67	merry
68	mirthful
69	moved
70	optimistic
71	overjoyed
72	overwhelmed
73	peaceful
74	perky
75	pleasant
76	pleased
77	proud
78	quiet
79	radiant
80	rapturous
81	refreshed
82	relaxed
83	relieved
84	satisfied
85	secure
86	sensitive
87	serene
88	spellbound
89	splendid
90	stimulated
91	surprised
92	tender
93	thankful
94	thrilled
95	touched
96	tranquil
97	trusting
98	upbeat
99	wide-awake
100	wonderful

Table 2: Feelings when needs are not met

1d100	
1	aggravated
2	agitated
3	alarmed
4	aloof
5	angry
6	anguished
7	annoyed
8	anxious
9	apathetic
10	apprehensive
11	ashamed
12	bewildered
13	bitter
14	brokenhearted
15	chagrined
16	cold
17	confused
18	cross
19	dejected

20	depressed
21	despairing
22	despondent
23	detached
24	disaffected
25	disappointed
26	discouraged
27	disenchanted
28	disgruntled
29	disgusted
30	disheartened
31	dismayed
32	displeased
33	disquieted
34	distressed
35	disturbed
36	downcast
37	downhearted
38	edgy
39	embarrassed
40	embittered
41	exasperated
42	exhausted
43	fatigued
44	fearful
45	frightened
46	frustrated
47	furious
48	gloomy
49	guilty
50	harried
51	helpless
52	hesitant
53	horrified
54	hostile
55	hot
56	hurt
57	impatient
58	indifferent
59	irate
60	irked
61	irritated
62	jealous
63	jittery
64	keyed-up
65	lethargic
66	listless
67	lonely
68	mad
69	miserable
70	morose
71	mournful
72	numb
73	overwhelmed
74	panicky
75	perplexed
76	pessimistic
77	puzzled
78	repelled
79	resentful
80	scared
81	shaky
82	shocked
83	skeptical
84	sorrowful
85	startled
86	surprised
87	suspicious
88	terrified
89	troubled
90	uncomfortable
91	uneasy
92	unnerved
93	unsteady
94	upset
95	vexed
96	weary
97	wistful
98	withdrawn
99	worried
100	wretched

The creation of a crossover between **Call of Cthulhu** and **Fast & Furious**

@mr.albertshiny (MelOne)

With the „Fast & Furious vs The Highway of Blood" scenario I've created a crossover between two universes for an RPG one shot: between the action driven world of Fast & Furious franchise and the horror filled dimension of the Call of Cthulhu roleplaying game.

For making this madness reality the first decision after going for "Lets do this" was: should I write a storyline for this or taking an existing, published scenario for Call of Cthulhu and overhaul it? Since I'm not too bat at interpreting and modifying scenarios but not really that good in creating a story from scratch. So I was aiming for modifying and enhancing an existing scenario.
The initial idea – inspired by another SwissRPG member – was already connected a bit with an existing scenario: "Highway of Blood". A story based on the exploitation movies of the 70s with a lot of mature topics in it, but already centered around cars. To be more detailed, centered around car chases, so a good base for connecting it with the car maniacs that are the characters of Fast & Furious.

The scenario revolve around a cult of Texan villagers lead by a serpent person/human hybrid. The hybrid himself is influenced and commanded by a full serpent person – who transform children through rituals in enhanced humans loyal to her. The cult members have mostly taken control of their hometown Abattoir. Some inhabitants are still neutral and a few people are actively working against them. Besides of kidnapping kids for their leader the cult members also need to do two blood rituals a year at defined dates. This involves catching their sacrifices in a ritual car chase. And this ritual car chase is the main element for the one shot and very fitting for throwing four people in overhauled racing – and muscle cars. As a disadvantage the story has some disturbing topics in it which the players can discover. Violence against kids, sadistic violence, torture, cannibalism, body horror and sexual violence. Topics that either needs to be addressed to players before the game or to be removed from the whole game. From my view especially the sexual violence is a topic that should not be part of games I present to players, so this is the first part I removed from the storyline, including a rewrite to kit the places where it was removed from the scenario. The rest of the topics is something I have taken over but presented it in Content Warnings before the game. Also we used the X Card system during play to make sure scenes can be immediately be canceled and stopped without discussion. Partially I have also lightened up some of the gruesome descriptions.

But besides of the more gruesome topics the scenario offered what I needed. An enhanced car chase and around of it the Chtulhu mythos happening with a serpent person lady (With the very pronounceable name Al'issya Ss'rissi A'na) that is very displeased if her people can't complete the blood sacrifice. Additionally the scenario comes with entrances to the lair the Serpent Lady has chosen as her home: a huge cave somewhere in the hills around Abattoir. Either you can go through caves that lies at the route of the car chase or by going into the closed Plutonium Mine near the village. The company closed this mine after realizing the plutonium is nearly exhausted. A collapsing mine shaft that killed some of the miners just speeded up the process. For Abattoir the closing of the mine also meant the end of the biggest employer in the region and workers leaving the district of the village the company has built for them. This opened

the cult for gaining control most of the village. For the scenario this means: The characters may either try to escape a cult with a lot of members, cars and having additional help through the magical converted children who are more than humans now - or trying to handle the power behind the cult without knowing too much about it. The background can be learned through research in the base of the cult (including a confrontation there) or by accident in the form of them being hunted into the tunnels (which was the case in the three times the scenario was played). Also, I inserted another way into the caves in one play through the story: the base of the cult is a fortified camp outside of Abattoir, which has as a central building a church where the believers can pray to the Serpent People. Since one of the players wanted to jump with his car into the church, I improvised a wooden floor with a hidden tunnel below it so that the car ends up in the tunnel with the cult hunting the group into it. Ideally the group is then able to meet and taking care of Al'issya Ss'rissi A'na and ending her reign in the region.

For bringing in the Fast & Furious characters the scenario itself doesn't need to be changed that much. The cult got more cars and some spells in the form of car repairs and shields, and that's the most that needed to be done. The scenario comes with rule enhancements for car chases (in example what people can do that doesn't actively drive) and for the hot environment (in this case Texas in the summer during a heat wave). For bringing in the Fast & Furious characters I have read through the Fandom articles of the characters and chose Dom, Letty, Mia and Brian somewhere after Fast & Furious 6 as player characters. This were built with the standard rules and then given more skill points to reflect the more action centered theme and more heroic approach for Fast & Furious. Which means all characters had certain fighting skills, repair skills and driving skills plus personal skills for the role. And some special skills to use the weapons their cars will have.

For the cars the scenario already comes with a base set of cars. Based on Fandom articles and Wikipedia entries of the actual car models I prepared four cars for the game, including enhancements of the cars like a rocket launcher, an EMP module or cantrip thrower. The initial story for the group is, that at that point all of them are searched in the USA, so they are living either in Europe or South America. But they needed to do a job in the US and needed to leave after the job. During the job two of the cars got damaged, so they are on the way back to South America with two cars and a tow truck. I've done this to balance it a bit in favor of the cult – but I also have included places in Abattoir and around where they could repair the cars, if they find the places and have the time for it. On their way south they cross Abattoir and with shields they realize this is the last station for getting gas for quite a time – and there they get the attention of the cult who will start the blood hunt. Most time in preparation probably has gone in creating the characters, cars and watching a lot of the movies to get the tone right. Good is also that the Highway of Blood is a scenario with a very loose story but very detailed city and environment. Most of the NPCs living in the village are defined including pictures, there are detailed maps of the streets around and the cave systems. The cave system also gives the possibility to divide the players from their cars and letting them handle it without the protection of the vehicles.

But I also allowed the characters access to assault rifles and explosives – in the end these people know how to organize this stuff. And they need the firepower in the final, because Al'issya Ss'rissi A'na knows magic and has a lot of the magical enhanced kids around her. Plus, an additional surprise in the cave system if she has the time to release it.

I've done this crossover three times and as far as I can tell people had fun with it. It is a bit unusual to run Call of Cthulhu with this amount of action in it, but it also was an option to once let the heavy weapons speak and let the characters go crazy. Plus: the current seventh version of Call of Cthulhu comes with Chase Rules I never really understood and also never really needed, but this time with the advanced rules from the Highway of Blood I actually managed to run a chase with those rules.

Since it worked quite well and I also got requested for one, I will transform another published scenario into a Fast & Furious Crossover.

Tips for running Alien RPG

@mrtakai

> Space is vast, foreboding, and anything but welcoming. Gamma rays and neutrino bursts from dying stars can sear you alive, black holes will tear you to pieces, and the void itself can boil your blood and seize your mind. Scream, and no one will hear you; hold your breath, and your lungs will rupture.

Space isn't as empty as it seems either—its boundaries are always expanding. Rival governments engage in a cold war of covert aggression, while greedy corporations compete fiercely for valuable resources. Colonists reach for the stars, gambling their lives on new worlds—each one a potential feast or famine. And lurking in the shadows of every asteroid are strange, deadly beings—things alien.
Welcome to the ALIEN RPG: a universe of body horror and corporate greed, where synthetic beings play god and space truckers and marines become hosts for monstrous new lifeforms. It's a brutal, unforgiving world where players are nothing if not expendable.

First published by Free League in 2019, the ALIEN RPG offers unique challenges for any aspiring game MU/TH/UR. At its core, this is a survival horror game where the primary goal is simply to stay alive until the session's end. While the game tempts players with the promise of untold riches, the truth is that most characters don't make it out alive. The ruleset supports two styles of play: campaign mode and cinematic scenarios. While the core rulebook and the Colonial Marines Operations Manual provide material for campaign play, this article focuses on cinematic play.

The ALIEN RPG is considered rules-light, with only a handful of mechanics to master, making it easy to learn. The game emphasizes story and player interactions over min-maxing character builds.
And in case you were wondering, this game is based on the iconic Alien movie franchise, with the first film—released in 1979—widely regarded as the best. It was a visionary masterpiece. I also enjoyed the latest installment, Romulus—it definitely made me jump!

What's cinematic play anyway?

A cinematic scenario captures the intense, dramatic arc of an ALIEN movie. Designed for between one and three sessions, this game mode emphasizes high stakes, fast-paced action, and brutal encounters. Conflict between player characters is likely, and survival is not guaranteed - most of the characters probably won't make it to the end. So far, Free League has published the following:

Hope's Last Day: This one is part of the core rulebook, can be played in one session

Chariot of the Gods: Published as part of the Starter Set, can be played in one session

Destroyer of Worlds: Published as a boxed set, needs to be played in about three sessions

Heart of Darkness: Publishes as a boxed set, needs to be played in about three sessions

Leo Visions @ Unsplash

All cinematic scenarios come with pre-generated characters. Players cannot make their own. This is intended for purposes of story: it only makes sense if the players play the characters as given. The background of the various characters have drama and pvp elements built in: The pilot with an addiction problem, the corporate representative with a hidden agenda, the mechanic who sees his teammates as family and wants to protect them at all costs...

Briefing the players

A key responsibility of the GM in a cinematic scenario is to set the right expectations for the players. Make it clear that this is a one-shot adventure, and their characters are likely to face dire consequences, including death. Encourage them to separate what they, as players, know from what their characters know—although they might anticipate what's coming, they should still open that door because it will add to the excitement. Emphasize embracing the drama and making bold, even reckless decisions. For instance, we had a memorable scene involving a syringe and some unexpected PvP combat—perfectly capturing the spirit of the game.

To support this, give players time to familiarize themselves with their characters. I typically lay out the character sheets, provide a brief description of each, and then allow players to choose their character in no particular order. Make sure they read through their backstory, understand their signature items, and take some notes on their talents and how these might influence their actions during the game.

Have the players introduce their characters to the rest of the group. Sometimes, incorporating physical gestures or postures that reflect their character's demeanor can help them get out of their rational mindset and enhance immersion.

Since Alien is a horror RPG, it's crucial to ensure that all players are comfortable with the content. Respecting players' boundaries regarding sensitive topics is important, but if someone isn't comfortable with the presence of aliens or body horror, this particular scenario might not be a good fit. The horror elements are integral to the experience.

As with any RPG, it's crucial to create an environment where players feel safe and comfortable, as this helps them perform at their best. Remind everyone that there are no stupid questions, and that the goal isn't to impress others, but to collaborate and enjoy the experience together. Encourage a non-judgmental and generous mindset—everyone can have an off day, and that's okay. I find it helpful to start each session with a check-in to make sure everyone's voice is heard. This is especially important when players are unfamiliar with each other.

Creating immersion

The Alien RPG offers limited guidance for game masters, so it's wise to seek advice from other sources. *Impossible Landscapes*, a campaign for Delta Green, provides excellent tips for running horror games. One suggestion is to build your scenes around a specific theme. For example, in *Chariot of the Gods*, themes of loneliness and desolation complement the classic Alien motifs of corporate greed and a disposable crew. You can convey this atmosphere by describing long, cold, empty corridors, a partially burned child's toy on the ground, or the unsettling feeling that comes from reading a superior's briefing.

Timing is crucial for immersion. Avoid revealing the aliens too early; instead, hint at their presence with subtle clues like scratching noises, mutilated bodies, or white slime on a terminal. The full reveal should occur at the peak of tension. Cinematic scenarios are typically structured into three acts, each with a list of events you can trigger in any order. Keep the players on edge, building suspense until the big reveal makes them scream!

Another key aspect of running horror is the sense that the story is ultimately beyond the players' control. They can influence events to some extent, but they can't prevent the inevitable horrors from unfolding. This feeling of helplessness and despair is unique to horror RPGs, and it's not the same as railroading—it's an intentional part of the genre.

Practical tips

Here are some practical tips for running your session:

Timers for Supply Levels

Use a timer to manage supply levels. When players suit up to avoid a deadly virus, start the timer right away. Have them make a supply check every 10 to 15 minutes to see if their oxygen runs out. To lighten your load, assign this task to one of the players.

Countdown Timers:

Implement a timer for counting down to something catastrophic. For instance, if MU/TH/ER calmly announces that the ship will self-destruct in ten minutes, starting the countdown will definitely get the players moving. Using your smartphone as a timing device is a simple way to do this.

Stress Tracking with Tokens: Alien uses a mechanic where players accumulate stress over time. I find it helpful to use tokens that players can stack in front of them to visually represent their stress levels.

Remember to Add Stress: In the heat of the moment, it's easy to forget to hand out stress points. Encourage the players to remind you when it's time to add stress, so those piles of tokens can really stack up.

Have Plenty of Dice: This game requires a lot of six-sided dice. I have around fifty of the special dice that come with the game, and even that can feel like barely enough. I love dice—they add a tactile element to the game that's hard to beat.

Roll Only When It Matters: Unlike games like Pathfinder or D&D, where rolling is frequent, in Alien, dice rolls should be reserved for actions with serious consequences, such as risking death or crashing the spaceship. Focus on advancing the story rather than frequent rolling.

Enhance the Experience with Sensory Details: I like to prepare my sessions using the 7-3-1 technique by incorporating smells, sounds, and tactile effects, as well as adding trinkets or props to make the game more immersive. Since creativity can be challenging on the spot, I prepare by rolling on random tables before the session and taking notes. Some of my favorite resources include Hundreds by Quadra, Ultraviolet Grasslands and the Black City by Luka Rejec, and Stars Without Number by Kevin Crawford—but there are many others to explore.

Use Light and Sound: Playing in a darkened room with atmospheric sounds can significantly boost immersion. While this does add to your prep work, it's not strictly necessary if you're short on time. One of the authors from the Mothership community, Quadra, is working on a new audio tool for GMs called TAT, which looks promising and is something I'm eager to try. For a simple audio tool, I recommend Soundpad by Tabletopaudio.

Thank you for reading

And there you have it—some tips from me to you. I hope you find them useful and that they help you enjoy running your sessions. Or better yet, feel free to join one of mine—it'll be a blast!

An Introduction to Call of Cthulhu settings

@mr.albertshiny (MelOne)

Call of Cthulhu is mostly fixed on cosmic horror but is made to be very flexible in which time and area you set it. Most people will have heard of the system being a 1920s thing – which is kind of true because most of the publishment is set in that time area. This is caused by Lovecraft, who inspired the RPG, has published most of his stories and books in the 20s and based his stories in that time. But cosmic horror is not fixed to a time or a place, so other time settings were published by Chaosium (and the German publisher Pegasus) over time (and probably a lot more were used in homebrew stories, third party publishments and one shots). This article should help to give you an idea of what exists out there. As a general note to most of the settings: The social norms were different in different times, and you need to set how historical accurate you want to run the games (and to discuss with the players what is ok and not). Especially racism, sexism and persecution of everyone out of the heteronormative view is a part of many of the settings if you have a look at it, and if you want to include this in your games it need to be ok with everyone in your games. Just including this without discussing it with a group is simply a no go. I personally try to either not include those topics in general but may have single scenarios where it is the main topic and is discussed with players and coming with trigger warnings.

The big ones

These settings exists for quite a while and have a bigger number of publishments available either as print or as PDF.

The Classic era

The roaring twenties, an area of time set between two world wars. After a war that destroyed a lot of areas in different parts of the world and left a lot of countries with war veterans, it seems like a promising time – which is ended with the Black Friday and a global market crisis. Many of the Call of Cthulhu publishments, including for example the three biggest campaigns, are set in that timeline. A lot of the stories from Lovecraft can be taken directly as inspiration.

The Modern times

Set in today's times you may fight the mythos horrors with smartphones, access to search machines and Big Language Models like GPT. But with these advancements in technology mythos entities may also use these to their advantage. As a side note, Chaosium, the publisher of Call of Cthulhu, started publishing books and scenarios with the label "modern" in the 90s – which is today kind of a setting on its own. You would have still to visit libraries for knowledge, plus Google, Amazon and Wikipedia had their prime time after the 90s. From the view of Lovecraft the modern times would be the truest to his ways of thinking where to set stories: Set it in the time you are living in and being the most knowledgeable of – and show you that there are thinks you could never imagine.

The Gaslight era

Great Britain in the 1890s: The biggest empire the world has seen until this time - and London is its center. Queen Victoria is reigning over a country that is roughly 26 million square kilometers big and contains 400 million inhabitants. The Gaslight era is concentrating on this empire. And is also the place and time where the stories of Dracula and Jekyll & Hyde are set in and Jack the Ripper is terrorizing the city for a while. The industrialization is also on its peak, slowly bringing the countries in the direction of the First World War if it comes to politics. The difference between the social classes, especially between the top 10 % and the poor, is huge. It gives the possibility to play as gentleman, but also as part from the working class fighting for their rights. And in this may be a mythos monster roaming around. Especially classic gothic horror stories are working well in this time. As a note: technically currently this setting is out of print, but a new version compatible with the current version of Call of Cthulhu will be published in December 2024

The Dark Ages

Set in Britain between 950 and 1050 this setting is concentrating on the early Middle Ages and Britain in the time where many of the Viking invasions and raids were happening. This setting can also be used as a basis for the upcoming Middle Ages, for example coming with the stats for a trebuchet. If you are in search for setting a Cthulhu game in a time people are fighting in armor and with swords, this is usually the basis for it.

The smaller ones

These are either newer settings or settings with not that many publishments available. But still, these are available for the current 7th version of Call of Cthulhu

Cthulhu Invictus

This setting is set in the time of the Roman Empire, usually in the first century after Christ. It allows you to play in a time where the Romans were controlling the whole mediterranean area including parts of Africa and fighting dark gods threatening their empire. Originally developed and published by Chaosium, Golden Goblin Press has published the setting book for the current version of Call of Cthulhu and has published a bit more around it. As a side note: Golden Goblin Press is a small publisher set in the USA. Ordering books in Europe from them may result in big costs for delivery. But the PDF option is still there. One of the interesting options here is to mix up the pantheon of the romans with the eldritch entities from the mythos, another option is to let the Empire found dark and strange things while conquering new lands.

Down Darker Trails

Same time as the Gaslight era but taking place in the USA: Cowboys herding huge herds of cattle, gunfighters and gamblers searching for their luck and people searching their luck in the frontier are a few of the things taking place here. In the huge land mass where a good part is not explored player characters may disturb things that have dwelled here for centuries. This setting also gives the possibility to explore the myths and legends of native Americans. The setting itself is quite a new one for Chaosium, but you may have some older publishments set in that time coming with own rules (in example the “Stirb aufrecht, Kultist” setting from Pegasus which is still available as PDF).

Reign of Terror

This setting is set in Paris in the time of the French revolution. It is originally a book that is a supplement for the Horror on the Orient Express campaign but can also set as an independent setting (even coming with their own character sheets). Describing Paris at the time and the background why people started revolting. It gives you a city in chaos reigned over by a terror regime that may execute you for little reasons. But it also gives eldritch horrors to come up while the people are distracted. If you want to play the Horror on the Orient Express campaign, there will be spoilers in the two scenarios in it.

Regency Cthulhu

This is the newest setting from Chaosium, playing in the world of Jane Austen’s England. It gives the historical background to that time and creates a fictional town for setting up stories that are fitting for creating stories in the style of Jane Austen, combined with eldritch horrors.

Cathulhu

Lovecraft had a love for cats, and this inspired authors for the German version of Call of Cthulhu to create an own setting for Call of Cthulhu: Cathulhu, where you can play as a cat. This comes with own rules and character sheets following the Call of Cthulhu rules and adapting it for playing as a cat. The setting also got an update for the 7th version of Call of Cthulhu, available in print and as PDF on English and as PDF only for the german version of Call of Cthulhu

Das Grausame Reich Tsan Chan

Currently a German setting only, this is set in a time Lovecraft briefly mentioned in one of his short stories. The empire of Tsan Chan exists roughly 5000 years in the future from now on. Cthulhu has awakened and taken over most of the part of planet earth. That part of humanity that is still independent lives in an empire located in parts of Asia. To survive they have searched for allies and found them in the form of serpent people and at least three Elder things. Genetic experiments have led to a partially non-human Empress currently reigning over the empire – a mutated being that can see the future and has a body that has a diameter of round about a kilometer and a height of round about a hundred meters. Different groups are struggling to reign over the empire, including a group of noble houses, a secret society of magic users and the eunuchs caring for the empress. This is a very harsh setting that is good for one shots experimenting with times where humanity is at its lowest.

The weird ones

There are some settings that are out of print (but perhaps available as PDF) or not with Chaosium anymore.

Acthung! Cthulhu

This plays in the second world war. Axis and Allies both have found ways of including magic, relicts and weird artifacts into their war machines. Cthulhu mythos entities and monsters are partially forced into working with both sides. This is a setting that must be used with a bit of caution: if it comes to the side of the Axis – the atrocities the Nazis have done is a result of humans doing the worst they can, and not because a mythos entity has taken control of the people in power.

The setting itself started with being a Call of Cthulhu setting and now is an own RPG with the publisher Modipheus using their home system for it. The stories still can be used with the old Call of Cthulhu setting, but if it comes to stats and so on it is not compatible anymore with Chaosiums system.

H.P. Lovecrafts Dreamlands

Imagine Dreams can get alive. Living their own live and creating a world they can live in. This is the base for Lovecrafts try of creating a Fantasy world. The Dreamlands are connected to the human world and connects to each dreamer on the world. Other planets with dreamers are having their own Dreamlands – but you may travel from one Dreamland to another.

But not all dreamers can visit the Dreamlands, only a part of humankind is able to go the way to this world in their dreams – and being there they are able to change it if they have enough willpower and concentration. Visiting there you will notice two things: First this world is technologically roughly 400 to 500 years after the waking world, and it is inhabited by people native to this world. The explanation for the old technology is, that the Dreams need a longer time to adapt to the change of reality, the real reason is that Lovecraft wanted to create a Fantasy setting with a medieval feeling to it, probably like what he knew from the stories of his letter pal Robert E. Howard who created the world around Conan the Barbarian. The Dreamlands are home to humans, but also monstrosities and otherworldly creatures like Moon Beasts or Men of Leng. An own Flora and Fauna grows here beside of some that is known from the waking world.

This world can be the base for Dark Fantasy RPG stories but also the base for stories that feel like LSD trips. The book itself also comes with a map of the Dreamlands which gives a basis for a trip through this world. As a note, this is also a world where especially cats can play an important role, these are able to speak and cast magic here.

Currently the Dreamlands book is out of print, the PDF can still be bought. Chaosium already announced that they will do a new Dreamlands book but also mentioned that it will probably take a few years until they have worked through their pipeline of new books until they are there.

Cthulhu Rising

Coming from Chaosium this tries to implement a Science Fiction setting for Call of Cthulhu, letting humanity evolve into a space travelling species that has colonies out in space and enhancing its control in outer space. Like the Wild West there is a frontier that is enhancing while humanity is still reigned over by a centralized government and influenced by big companies. This gives the opportunity to let humans fight against mythos horrors with advanced technology on their own planets and parallel simulate the horrors of space travel. Currently out of print and the PDF is not available anymore.

No Man's Land

This sends the player characters into the trenches of the first world war and be part of the so-called Lost Battalion. It adds eldritch horror to the already existing horrors of what war brought over the people at that time.

Atomic-Age Cthulhu

This older setting gives you the background to play in the 50s. People are still under the impression of the thread the atomic explosions bring to the world, but also with kind of an optimism if it comes to the civil use of nuclear energy. Atom spawn monsters are replacing the monsters from the horror movies of the 40s and 30s, and Rock'n'roll starts to slowly change the world of music.

Some closing words

Besides of those introduced here (which mostly concentrates on what Chaosium or Pegasus, the German publisher of Call of Cthulhu, has done) there are a lot of third-party contributions to other settings out there. In example there exists a source book for playing the musketeers created by Alexandre Dumas. This shows how flexible the Call of Cthulhu RPG can be adapted to different times and areas, even adapting fantasy worlds into it.

R'Lyehwatch

when your Baywatch RPG dreams need Eldritch Horrors

@mr.albertshiny (MelOne)

We have tried R'lyehwatch with a few stories based on the adventure generator the system comes with. For those never heard of R'lyehwatch: It is a rules light system (characters are coming with a role, one main stat out of three available, a perk, two quirks, a luck value and a grit value – and that's it) concentrating on combining the drama of Baywatch with fighting Eldritch Horrors.

If the GM decides that a challenge needs a roll she decides with which Stat this is done – Agile, Brawny or Crafty. The character gets one D6 to roll as a basis. If the character has the fitting Stat as the main stat the character gets one additional D6 to roll. If the Role is also fitting for the challenge an additional D6 goes into the roll. The GM also decides how hard the challenge is – for a normal difficulty the player needs to roll at least a 5 to be successful. A four is good for easy, a six for more demanding actions. With luck you can buy a reroll or a special action through a perk, Grit is something if you fail to avoid damage in some form – may it be an eldritch horror clawing you or the character being outdanced in a dance battle.

The roles, perks and quirks available in the magazine are going for a more pulp and less serious approach to the setting. In example your character may have as a perk a Speed Boat which helps him solving problems – Cup-holder and cooler included.

It comes without monster details or stats, but these are not really needed – you just need to have an idea as a GM how difficult the rolls you want to be and how many obstacles the characters must go through to beat an enemy – which can be shown by so-called effort tokens. The enemy loses one each time characters make a successful move against him.

For story ideas you can use the adventure generator, which are rollable tables – one for objectives, one for Locations and one for complications. I've used those as a basis for four different adventures – which I worked out more in detail based on the table entries.

If you have players that can work with small characters and build out the details on the fly while playing this will be fun. I have done my adventures with an experienced group of players that like playing out the characters. With these the whole setup is perfect. Beginner players who are trying out an RPG the first time may be a bit overstrained by improvising a lot of the characters.

SWISSRPG is the non-profit association of Switzerland that enables players all over the country to discover and play role-playing games

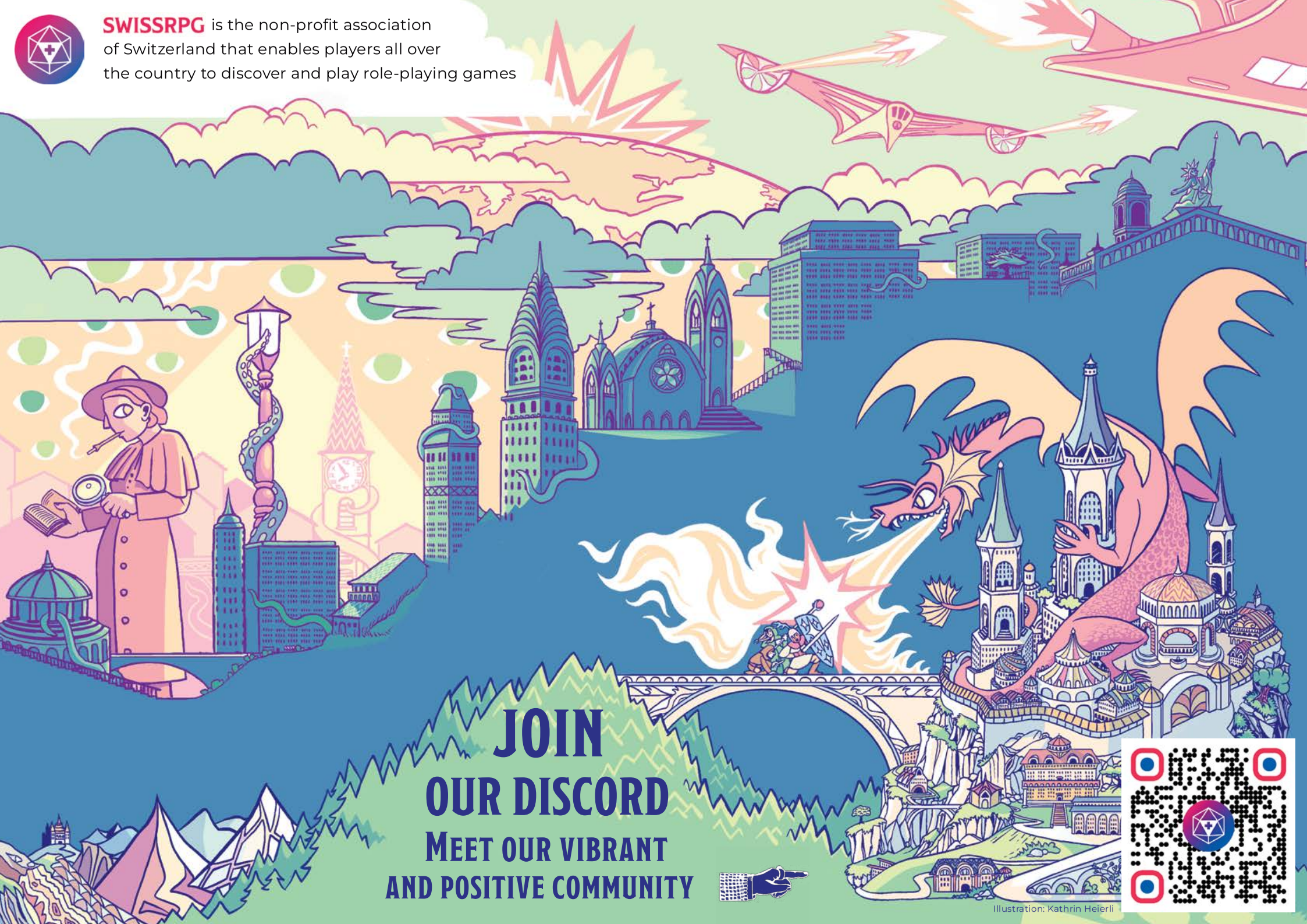

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Illustration: Kathrin Heierli