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Creating a System-Agnostic Roleplaying Game Module

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ABSTRACT

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The main objective of this thesis was to create a tabletop roleplaying game adventure, designed to work independently of any pre-existing game system, thereby making it system-agnostic. The reason for making it system-agnostic was to maximize the number of people who could use it, rather than being limited to a specific system or ruleset. The thesis documents the steps of this process. It is divided into pre-production, production, playtesting, and iteration.

As an introduction to the topic, a brief overview of roleplaying games was included. The history of roleplaying games and elements such as rules and resolution mechanics were discussed. Popular rule systems were compared, and guidelines were outlined for the system-agnostic adventure. The specific roles of individuals in a roleplaying game were analysed, and concepts such as player agendas, aesthetics, and social contracts in roleplaying were discussed.

The tabletop roleplaying game market sector was researched to provide useful sales estimates to anyone interested in publishing or creating content for leading marketplaces.

The outcome of this thesis is a set of best practices to use for a player focused game design, including an understanding of player motivations and how to fulfil them to create engaging gameplay. They serve as general-purpose tools that can be used in other contexts besides tabletop roleplaying games.

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Key words: games, tabletop roleplaying game, game design, roleplaying, level design

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

AC	Armour Class, a value representing how hard it is for an attack to hit its target.
Agenda	What each player wants out of the game. The motivation and preferred way of exploring the shared imaginary.
D&D	Dungeons & Dragons, the world's most popular roleplaying game. The first commercially available roleplaying game with formalized rules.
HP	Hit points, a value representing health, or the amount of damage that the character or object can withstand before being destroyed.
GM	Gamemaster. The referee, facilitator and organizer of the game. The gamemaster narrates the story, plays all the non-player characters, and determines the challenges and results of the player actions.
GNS	Gamist, Narrativist, and Simulationist. Ron Edwards' theory on taxonomy of various types of players.
Level	A measure of the character's prowess, popularised by Dungeons & Dragons
MDA	Mechanics-Dynamics-Aesthetics, a game design framework describing how rules create systems that produce "fun", i.e., how mechanics produce dynamic system behaviour, in turn leading to aesthetic experiences.
Module	A pre-written adventure, setting or a playable scenario. Commonly includes maps for the locations, rules and descriptions for the characters and creatures, and goals and rewards for the players.
NPC	Non-player character, characters controlled by the gamemaster in the roleplaying games

OGL	Open Game License, published by Wizards of the Coast to allow third-party publishers to produce material compatible with Dungeons & Dragons
PC	Player character, the fictional character controlled by one of the players.
RPG	Roleplaying game, a collaborative storytelling game in which the players assume the roles of characters and interact with the world run by the gamemaster.
Stats	The attributes and abilities of a player character, usually given as numerical values or grades.
System-agnostic	Not conforming to any specific game's rule system, but generally applicable. Also referred to as rules neutral, generic, universal, or any system.
Theatre of the Mind	Term originating from radio dramas where various techniques are used to conjure up a vivid stories imagined by the listeners. In the RPG context, it refers to a style of play when no physical props are used.

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis presents a system-agnostic roleplaying game module and explains how and why the mechanics within are designed in a rules neutral way, rather than adhering to any specific roleplaying game system. The project chapter will demonstrate in a linear way how the locations, challenges, characters, and and other relevant elements were constructed for a roleplaying game module for ease of use for the end user.

The thesis begins with an overview and history of modern roleplaying games. Afterwards there is an analysis and a breakdown of the core ways in which people engage with roleplaying games, using such tools as Ron Edward's GNS theory and aesthetics of play from the Mechanics-Dynamics-Aesthetics framework developed by Hunicke, LeBlanc and Zubek. Recognizing how these different player agendas function and how to cater to them specifically helps in designing a more broadly appealing game experience. In addition, acknowledging them as a game designer can help to understand the strengths of the module and the areas the designer might be lacking in. This should serve as a practical guideline for anyone interested in topics such as level design or managing and meeting player expectations in context beyond the scope of just roleplaying games.

2   ROLEPLAYING GAMES

2.1   Overview of tabletop roleplaying games

A tabletop roleplaying game is typically played with pencils, paper, and dice (Picture 1). It is a form of collaborative storytelling where the joint imaginations of the people participating shape the game. Players create characters who explore and interact in an imaginary world, presented to them by one player who assumes the role of the gamemaster, a kind of referee controlling the movements and actions of non-player characters and monsters (Halliwell, Priestley, Davis, Bambra & Gallagher 1986, 9).

An essential part of roleplaying games is the social contract. It means that there is an implicit understanding in the group that the players will be adventurous and active, the gamemaster is entrusted to control the challenge and be fair (Moldvay 1981, 60). Every participant is expected to not engage in antagonistic play, such as exploiting knowledge outside of the game setting (Huizinga 1955, 10).

The gamemaster facilitates the players navigating the world with rulings and descriptions of the events and outcomes that happen during play. The players are presented with a scene in which they describe what their characters do, sometimes rolling polyhedral dice to determine the outcome of their actions when the gamemaster deems that the outcome of an action is uncertain. This kind of play sequence was established by the first published roleplaying game, Dungeons and Dragons.

Roleplaying games are often played using scenarios, or modules. These are adventures written by game designers that come ready with plenty of material for the gamemaster to use. Modules generally include the story, NPCs, monsters, and locations that the players will run into during play (Halliwell et al. 1986, 301).

PICTURE 1. Roleplaying game session in progress (Sampo Jumisko 2022)

### 2.1.1 History of modern roleplaying

Dungeons & Dragons (Gygax & Arneson 1974) was the first commercially available fully realized tabletop roleplaying game. *D&D* has its roots in miniature wargaming, a type of strategy gaming derivative of chess simulating combat between armies composed of figurines (Peterson 2012). In 1971 Jeff Perren and Gary Gygax, two members of a wargaming club, collaborated to create a medieval miniature wargame with a mass combat focus called Chainmail. Chainmail's rules included a fantasy supplement, allowing for powerful figures such as heroes and wizards to be used in the game.

At around the same time, Dave Arneson began developing a medieval variation of David Weseley's Napoleonic wargame campaign called Braunstein. Arneson's game was set in a fantasy medieval barony of Blackmoor, a land where his players controlled individual fantasy versions of themselves instead of controlling armies. Arneson used the system in Chainmail to resolve combats. As the campaign of play progressed, Arneson added innovations such as

character classes, experience points, level advancement, armour class, and others. This type of gameplay would be recognizable to modern D&D players (Graves & Morgan III 2019).

Arneson and Gygax had partnered to work together previously on a naval battle game, Arneson introduced Gygax to his Blackmoor game and the two then collaborated on developing the game that became Dungeons & Dragons (Picture 2), with the final edit done by Gygax and published in 1974 by TSR, Inc (Gygax & Arneson 1974).
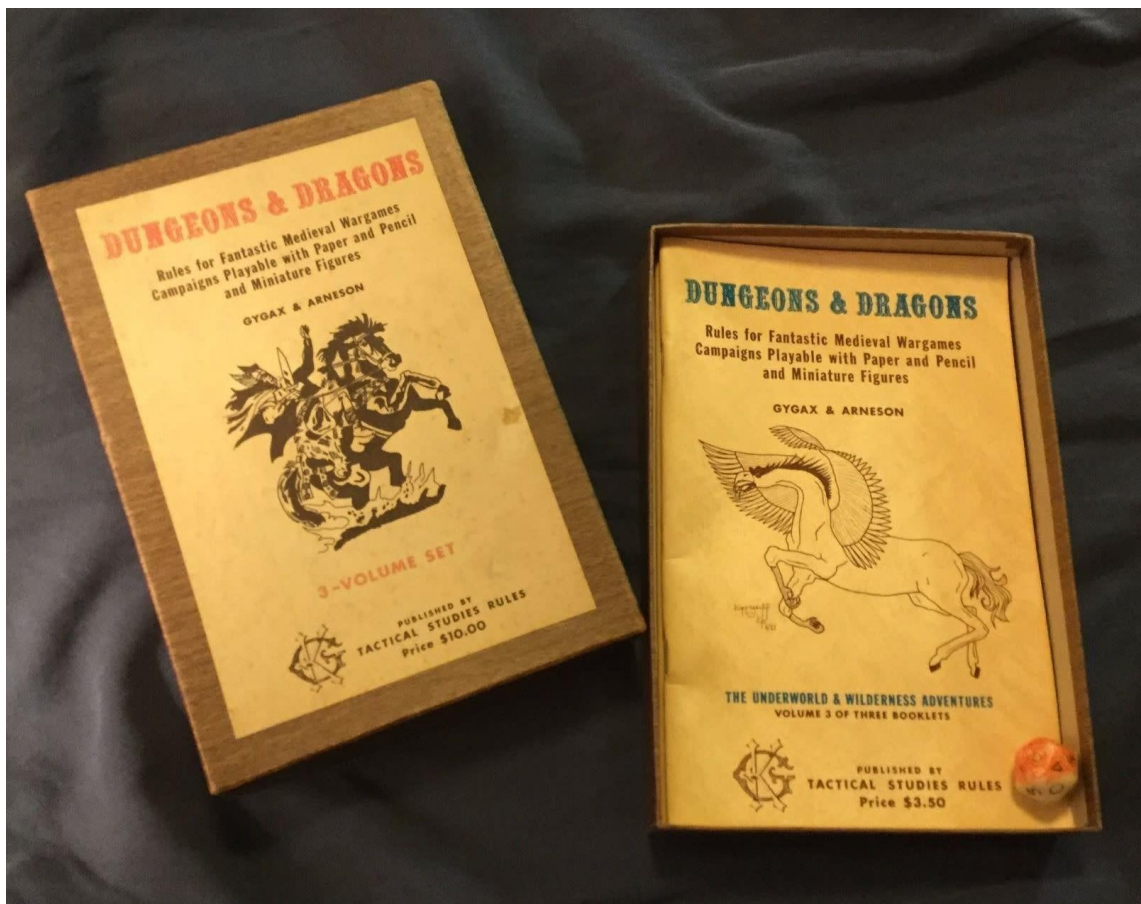
PICTURE 2. A first edition set of D&D, sold on Ebay (EditorJan_1 2016)

2.1.2 Dominance of Dungeons & Dragons

Dungeons & Dragons established itself early on as the de facto leader of the tabletop roleplaying game industry, having essentially innovated the style of play, and has continued to grow steadily. While there were other competing

systems and settings established during these early years, D&D remained relevant, in part, due to its unsubstantiated controversies regarding occultism that kept D&D in the public awareness (Picture 3).

PICTURE 3. Example of mid-80s anti-RPG paranoia (Chick 1984)

The final push that saw D&D proliferate the industry was the birth of the modern D&D. In 1997, the publisher **Wizards of the Coast** acquired TSR and set to create the third edition of Dungeons & Dragons. This new edition came with the D20 system and launched the Open Game License, which enabled third-party authors to produce compatible material. The well received innovations of the third edition saw the game streamline its resolution mechanics and offer a larger variety of player options than before. (Cook, Tweet & Williams 2000, 90, Wizards of the Coast 2000)

Nowadays D&D's market position is such that it has become a generic trademark, to the point where, when people discuss roleplaying games they are ostensibly talking about D&D (Cook 2007). D&D stratified and formalized many of the systems at play throughout the genre that are considered ubiquitous. Systems such as level advancement, classes, alignment, and armour class were all established in D&D.

2.2   Core elements of roleplaying games

At the core of the roleplaying game experience is what the fifth edition of Dungeons & Dragons calls the Three Pillars of Adventure. These pillars are the

broad categories that the activities of the players fall into during the game: **exploration**, **social interaction**, and **combat**. (Figure 1)

Exploration is the interaction and movement of the player characters. On a larger scale, this could be a week-long trek through a jungle while mapping out the unknown. On a smaller scale, this could be just opening the door at the end of a corridor. Social interaction refers to the player characters engaging with others, typically through communication. For instance, this could involve gossiping with a shopkeeper or persuading the guards to look the other way. Combat involves the player characters swinging weapons and casting spells, taking turns to methodically track the action between all the participants. This is the part of the game that has the most structure and rules associated with it. These categories can and will overlap during play, flowing from one focus to the other as characters might engage with social interaction in the middle of a battle (Mearls et al. 2014a, 8).
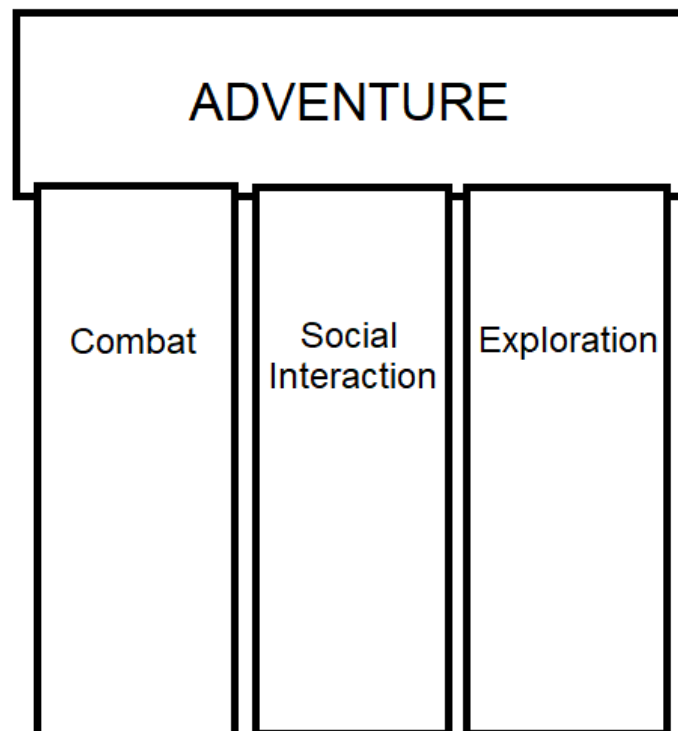

FIGURE 1. Three separate player agendas support the adventure jointly

The Three Pillars of Adventure are designed to entice different player styles and agendas by changing the objective of play from moment to moment, giving each

player agenda a spotlight in turn. This kind of generic appeal is one of the strengths of the system and likely a big part of its success.

2.2.1 Exploration

Exploration is among the hardest tenets of roleplaying games to define, and the mechanical systems employed are often ignored by most play groups. It is however one of the primary driving motivations for players who might be engaged and interested in the discovery of locations, creatures, items or whatever there might be to uncover.

In the older editions of D&D, there was a greater focus on travel and exploration gameplay. The published adventure modules often provided vast areas of wilderness, that the gamemaster could use to simulate the long treks between adventure locations and civilized areas. This style of play is commonly referred to as **hexcrawls**, a term derived from the hexagonal grid of the map typically used, with each hex usually representing six miles across.

Exploration most directly connects to the player agenda of discovery in Marc LeBlanc's aesthetics of play taxonomy. (Hunicke, LeBlanc & Zubek 2004, 2)

2.2.2 Social interaction

Social interaction within this context refers to the actions of the characters interacting within the game world rather than the players interacting with each other at the table. Interactions such as talking to the gamemaster controlled non-player characters or characters talking amongst themselves, this part of the game is usually the least mechanically driven and most freeform.

Beyond just conversing however, the characters may wish to influence the NPCs more directly, or attempt to sway entire crowds with rousing speeches or negotiate the release of hostages with an enemy leader, in these cases the

resolution mechanics for charm, deception, haggling, etc. are used. (Mearls et al. 2014c, 244)

2.2.3 Combat

For many tabletop roleplaying games, combat tends to be the primary focus or driving force in the game. As an example, in D&D the bulk of the game's rules revolve around combat mechanics and options. Most of the player's character options and features focus on what style of engagement they offer as a combatant. Roughly 70 percent of the class features and character sheet have to do with rules and statistics that are required during combat (Picture 4).

Physical conflict, slaying of dragons and vanquishing foes is also a common element of the sword & sorcery type literature that inspired many of the writers and players of the roleplaying games. This is to be expected from a style of game that evolved from miniature wargaming.
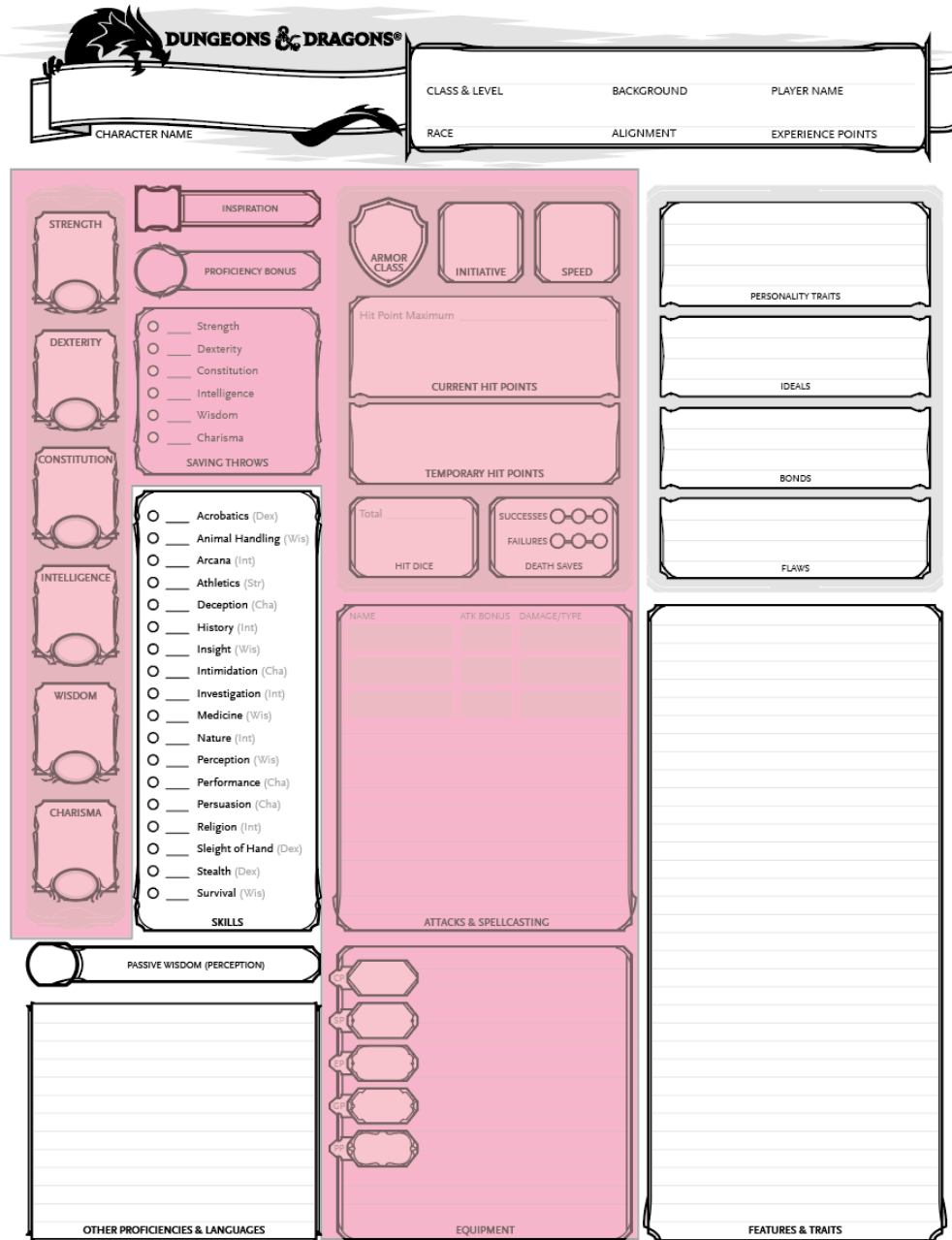
PICTURE 4. D&D character sheet with combat focused information tinted red (Wizards of the Coast 2014)

2.3 Player agenda theories

The Three Pillars of Adventure could be seen as a response to a preceding theory called The GNS theory. It was put forward by Ron Edwards and it concerns three player agendas, **Gamist**, **Narrativist**, and **Simulationist** (Edwards 2001). This theory itself was inspired by the Threefold Model theory

that defined Drama-, Simulation-, and Game-oriented as the three paradigms of roleplaying games (Kim 1998).

Edwards' GNS theory proposes that all the participants in a roleplaying game hold one of three mutually exclusive goals or perspective, the player agenda (Figure 2). The game systems should focus on only one of these agendas and it is a mistake trying to satisfy all the types with a generic roleplaying game system. The three player goals that he defined are; Gamism, where the goal is competition and winning; Narrativism, where the goal is the creation of story and characterization; Simulationism, where the goal is exploration and internal logic (Edwards 2001).

NARRATIVISM

GAMISM   SIMULATIONISM
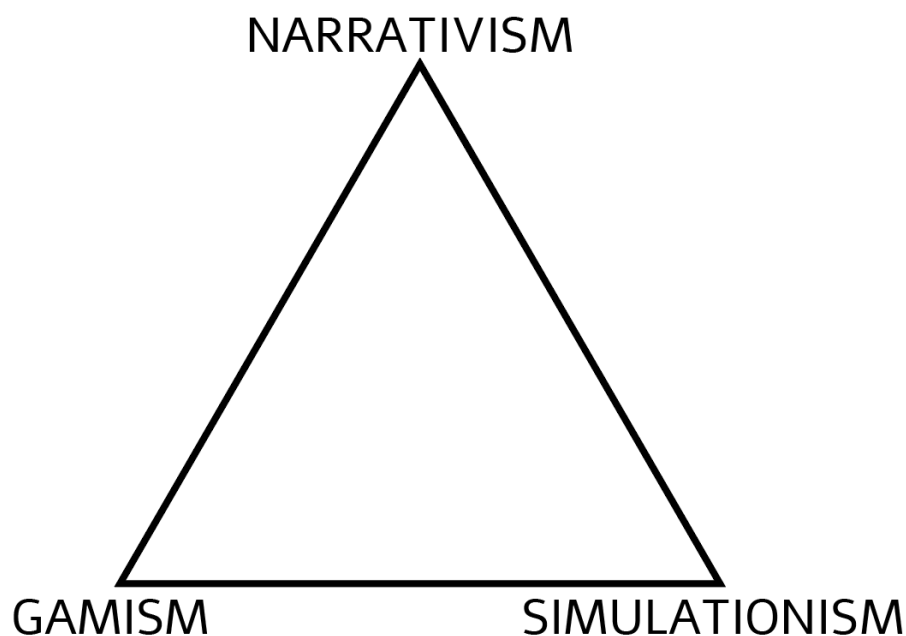
FIGURE 2. Three separate player agendas are mutually exclusive

The Threefold Model typically looks at the gamemaster's decision and style: Dramatist is the style that values a satisfying narrative, Gamist is the style that values setting up challenges for the players (as opposed to the player characters), and Simulationist is the style that values resolving events without meta-game concerns. The Threefold Model acknowledges that a gamemaster is not going to be pigeonholed into just one style of play and will likely use a mix of all three but with a preference to one style (Kim 1998).

The Mechanics-Dynamics-Aesthetics framework, presented in a research paper by Hunicke, LeBlanc, and Zubek (2004), is based on lectures taught at Game Developers Conference. The paper is a formal framework examining the interaction between the game designer and the player. The game designer creates the **mechanics**, or the rules of the game. Mechanics provide systems that interact with each other, referred to as **dynamics**. The **aesthetics** describe how the player interacts with the system, and how they experience the desired emotional response, or the fun. The eight aesthetics of play are:

- sensory pleasure
- fantasy
- narrative
- challenge
- fellowship
- discovery
- expression
- submission. (Hunicke, LeBlanc & Zubek 2004, 2.)

These eight aesthetics, interpreted and defined to fit the tabletop roleplaying game experience, provided a useful heuristic tool for the thesis project, offering a framework for analyzing and quantifying player feedback. The goal was to understand the preferred way that the player engages with the game, thus determining their player agenda.

2.4   Resolution mechanics

Whenever a situation arises in the game where the players are challenged by an obstacle or a foe to overcome, be it dodging a rolling boulder or hitting a target, some form of resolution mechanic is commonly employed. To determine the chance of a skill check, players combine their ability score characteristic and a relevant skill.

The most common way is to roll a die or several dice and attempt to hit a target number. Other games might use a points or a resource system, rock paper

scissor or a deck of cards. These kinds of randomization methods are key to the strategic and tactical aspects of the game, and often enhance the dramatic flow of the game, for example when the whole group at the table might lean in to determine the outcome of one fateful dice roll.

Resolution mechanic is essentially at the core of the specific roleplaying system used, and it determines where the focus of a game system lies and what kind of audience it intends to attract. Terms such as **rules lite** and **crunchy** generally refer to how complex the game system is. Rules lite or light games have an easy, generally applicable resolution mechanic, whereas crunchy game systems have multi-stage resolution mechanics and several intricacies or options that add detail.

The rules light games are often favoured by players interested in a narrative or story focused game with a lot of expression and low stakes, and crunchy games are more appealing to players with a simulationist or gamist agenda. An example of a rules lite game would be Grant Howitt's one page RPG The Witch is Dead, which contains all its rules and play scenario on a single page. In contrast, a game system like Rolemaster from 1982 is known as particularly complex and its boxed set contains 3 books, 2 booklets and 8 charts (Picture 5).

PICTURE 5. Rolemaster box set (Wayne's Books 2023)

2.5 Miniatures and play aids

Due to tabletop roleplaying games having their roots in historical tabletop wargaming, miniatures and maps have been a part of the experience from the start (Picture 6). For the most part, the games usually employ a theatre of the mind approach, where each participant is simply imagining the game and situations as they happen (RPG Museum 2020). Miniatures and maps however can be almost mandatory in a more complex game where positioning of characters and enemies can be important for the outcome of something like a spell effect (Halliwell et al. 1986, 63).

PICTURE 6. Example of miniature and terrain play aids

Play aids for this kind of game can be anything from tokens to denote characters and graph paper to work out player positions to something excessively elaborate, such as detailed terrain pieces, or even projectors and smoke machines. As well as providing helpful reference, they appeal to players who value the sense pleasure of play (Hunicke, LeBlanc & Zubek 2004, 2).

Many gamemasters go to the trouble of setting up audio systems and providing beautiful props for player handouts and this added spectacle enriches the experience. Aristotle's book Poetics (350 BCE) deals with dramatic theory, performance, and the elements of theatre. One of these elements is the spectacle, that includes visual elements such as sets, costumes, and props, and provides the "most vivid of pleasures" (Aristotle, 350 BCE). And whilst Aristotle criticizes these elements for pandering to the common people, the mass appeal of spectacle should not be ignored. While an old button serves the role of a token just as effectively as a beautifully painted custom miniature it would not be visually as stimulating.

3 ROLEPLAYING GAME MODULES

3.1 Market overview

The tabletop roleplaying game market is hard to assess. It's split up to physical and digital products that are sold through various physical or digital storefronts. Because the tabletop roleplaying game market is so fragmented, getting an accurate market overview is very difficult. At best one can extrapolate on the data that is available on virtual tabletop services that publish some of their user data (Figure 3; Figure 4). It is even more challenging to estimate the number of physical copies of games that are sold in bookstores, specialist gaming stores or hobbyist conventions (Abadía 2023).

But it is easy to recognize that the Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition is the dominant brand, controlling over half of the market share, with the rest of the competition vying for the remainder. The most successful among those is garnering merely 4 to 5 percent of the shares. (Roll20 2020). To further consolidate their control, Hasbro, the parent company controlling Wizards of the Coast, acquired the online toolset D&D Beyond in 2022, and at the time, it was reported to have 10 million users (Hall 2022).

SYSTEM	ACCOUNT %
D&D 5E	58.48%
Uncategorized	13.23%
Call of Cthulhu (Any Edition)	6.96%
Pathfinder	3.78%
Pathfinder Second Edition	1.58%
Warhammer (FANTASY, 40K, WRATH & GLORY, ETC)	1.24%
World of Darkness (VAMPIRE, WEREWOLF, ETC)	1.07%
D&D 3.5	1.02%
Apocalypse World System (ANY EDITION)	0.83%
Star Wars (ANY EDITION)	0.70%
Other Games (EVERYTHING ELSE)	11.13%

THE ORR GROUP INDUSTRY REPORT Q1 | 2021 AS LOGGED IN Roll20

FIGURE 3. Percentage of Roll20 users and the game systems used (Roll20 2021)
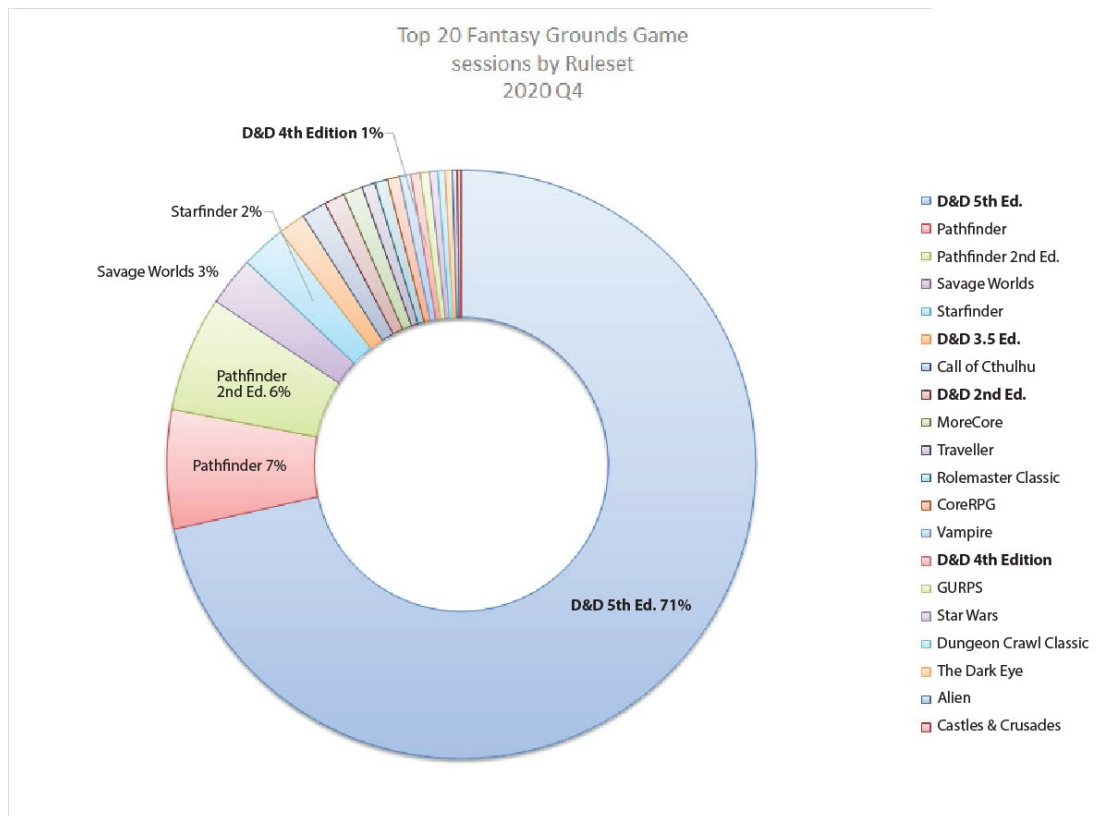
FIGURE 4. Percentage of Fantasy Grounds users and the games systems used (Fantasy Grounds 2020, edited)

For an aspiring roleplaying game designer, digital distribution via DriveThru RPG is the most viable option. DriveThru RPG is the most established and self-proclaimed largest digital storefront for tabletop RPGs (DriveThru RPG 2024).

3.2   DriveThru RPG publishing

Even though DriveThru RPG is the most popular marketplace for digital distribution of roleplaying game modules and supplements, less than 30% of products make it beyond selling more than 50 units (Figure 5). With over 100,000 products listed it can be difficult to stand out.

FIGURE 5. Number of products with more than 50 sales (Troy Press 2019)

Bestselling titles on the platform often share some commonalities. Primarily, the audience is already pre-existing, meaning these individuals are already aware of the author. Having a successful YouTube channel, being a published author, or anyone with some level of fame will have an elevated position when it comes to sales (Milton 2024). Additionally, presentation matters, and products with flashy covers or high-quality art assets attract more attention.

3.3   Open Game License Controversy

Many of the modules created for D&D are made by third-party writers publishing their compatible adventures and material under the Open Game License, published by Wizards of the Coast in 2000. This was accepted by the roleplaying game community and caused D&D to flourish and have plenty of material produced for it. It also offered more variety, support, and innovators to contribute to the game (Cook 2007).

In January 2023 Wizards of the Coast announced that they would change the previously irrevocable Open Game License, or OGL for short. These changes included third-party publishers being required to pay 25% of their revenue made using the license and to hand over the rights to publish and profit from the material to Wizards of the Coast. Furthermore, it stated that all content

previously published under the old license would need to be moved on to the new version, or risk legal action.

The backlash was immediate, and Wizards of the Coast had to backpedal, first offering a revised version of the OGL with a softened stance but several loopholes left in allowing WotC to render the contract void and being solely in control of determining what they deem to be hateful conduct and the third-party creator having to give up all rights to fight that decision.

Ultimately, Wizards gave up, having heard the public outcry as protest actions began to take shape and people started campaigns to unsubscribe from the D&D Beyond service en masse. Not only was the original version of OGL reinstated, but they also went as far as putting the core rules under the Creative Commons (Abbot 2023).

The effects of the OGL controversy had long-lasting effects. The trust of the community is slow to rebuild, and many third-parties moved on to try and secure alternatives to D&D. Wizards of the Coast demonstrated that it cannot be trusted and another attempt to update an irrevocable licenses is only a matter of time.

4   SYSTEM-AGNOSTICISM

4.1   Universal roleplaying rules

System-agnosticism, also referred to as **rules neutral**, is used to describe scenarios or supplements that are not tied to any specific game system (Smith 2022). These materials are often **setting neutral** as well, meaning they don't include any specific creatures or locations that would be unique to any particular game system. For example, the world of Greyhawk in Dungeons & Dragons is a setting that is specific to the game.

The advantage of writing a scenario in a system-agnostic way is the high degree of usability that it provides to the gamemaster. As an example, a system neutral adventure could be written to outline the plotline for a heist, with complications, challenges, characters, and their motivations. This general outline could then be easily adapted and played out by different groups using various rulesets. One group would play the adventure as a science fiction adventure on some casino satellite while the other group could play the scenario set in a medieval fantasy town. Another beneficial feature is the more approachable natural language used, such as real-world measurements and comparisons. This allows gamemasters to easily translate elements from the real world into their games. Moreover, the OGL controversy discussed in the previous chapter also makes a compelling argument on why creating supplements not relying on specific systems is a good idea.

4.2   Comparative analysis of different rule systems

There are hundreds of tabletop roleplaying game systems, but most of them can be divided into two categories: Class-based systems and skill-based systems. In a class-based system, such as Dungeons & Dragons, a player has a character that belongs to a class, for example an archetypal hero who possesses abilities such as spellcasting for a wizard, great fighting abilities for fighter and so on.

Regardless of what the characters do as their occupation, be they blacksmiths or scribes, they have the unique class features of the archetype of their choosing. As they advance and grow stronger in this class, they will increase in level, gain more abilities and prowess, and typically increase their hit points (Picture 7).

THE CLERIC

Level	Proficiency Bonus	Features	Cantrips Known	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
1st	+2	Spellcasting, Divine Domain	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2nd	+2	Channel Divinity (1/rest), Divine Domain feature	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3rd	+2	—	3	4	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4th	+2	Ability Score Improvement	4	4	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5th	+3	Destroy Undead (CR 1/2)	4	4	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
6th	+3	Channel Divinity (2/rest), Divine Domain feature	4	4	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—
7th	+3	—	4	4	3	3	1	—	—	—	—	—
8th	+3	Ability Score Improvement, Destroy Undead (CR 1), Divine Domain feature	4	4	3	3	2	—	—	—	—	—
9th	+4	—	4	4	3	3	3	1	—	—	—	—
10th	+4	Divine Intervention	5	4	3	3	3	2	—	—	—	—
11th	+4	Destroy Undead (CR 2)	5	4	3	3	3	2	1	—	—	—
12th	+4	Ability Score Improvement	5	4	3	3	3	2	1	—	—	—
13th	+5	—	5	4	3	3	3	2	1	1	—	—
14th	+5	Destroy Undead (CR 3)	5	4	3	3	3	2	1	1	—	—
15th	+5	—	5	4	3	3	3	2	1	1	1	—
16th	+5	Ability Score Improvement	5	4	3	3	3	2	1	1	1	—
17th	+6	Destroy Undead (CR 4), Divine Domain feature	5	4	3	3	3	2	1	1	1	1
18th	+6	Channel Divinity (3/rest)	5	4	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	1
19th	+6	Ability Score Improvement	5	4	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	1
20th	+6	Divine Intervention improvement	5	4	3	3	3	3	2	2	1	1

PICTURE 7. Excerpt from D&D Cleric class table, showing how the prowess and features are tied to the level advancement (Wizards of the Coast 2014)

Conversely, in a standard skill-based roleplaying game system, the characters derive their skills and abilities from a general pool of skills accessible to any character (Picture 8). These skills are usually organised to a group of skills belonging to a career path or a background, so a player with a sailor character would possess skills such as swimming, navigating, etc. while a university professor character would likely have a vastly different skillset. There are of course outliers and several games that have a more hybrid approach, but most games lean more heavily into one of these two categories.

PICTURE 8. Excerpt from Cyberpunk 2020 character sheet (R. Talsorian Games 1991)

The biggest difference between these systems is usually in the combat mechanics of the games. What's usually the case is that in a class-based system, regardless of character class, the players grow in power relatively and will only be challenged by tougher and stronger opponents. Contrasted with a skill-based game such as Cyberpunk, where the characters might improve their fighting skills as they become more experienced, but their ability to survive getting shot in the head does not really change regardless of how good at shooting they are themselves.

Each system has its own advantages and disadvantages. The biggest advantage in a class-based system is the clearly defined scaling that comes with the levels. A gamemaster can adjust the challenge more easily to better fit their players when they have a predictable power level that the characters possess, and it's less likely that they will have to adjust during the play as some obstacle proves more dangerous than intended, after unlucky dice rolls.

4.2.1 Core mechanics

At the core of most roleplaying games there is some kind of a resolution mechanism. Whenever the outcome of an action is an uncertainty or in conflict or simply for dramatic reasons, a resolution mechanic is used to determine the result. These can be broadly categorized into three types:

- random resolution system
- deterministic resolution system
- a judgemental resolution system.

Random resolution is the most common of the three, and it means that the outcome is determined by the game mechanics with a random element such as using dice or drawing cards. In a game such as D&D, a player will typically roll dice and add variables, such as ability bonuses, and compare against a target number that signifies the level of difficulty. In contrast, deterministic resolution systems have an expected result. This is determined by comparing the abilities, the challenge, and by spending resources. If a player wishes to succeed, they will spend more resources and likely trade in successes now for failures later. A judgemental resolution system is typically used in games that are more narratively focused, and it means that the gamemaster decides on all outcomes based on the choices of the players.

Most of the games will employ a mechanic dealing with chance, like previously mentioned. The most common systems either roll one or several dice and will try to either score high to beat a target number or score low to be below a threshold.

4.2.2 Combat simulations

For a system-agnostic approach, it would be impossible to give specific numbers on how tough the monsters are or how much damage they cause, because each game system arrives at these numbers differently. A fighter in D&D with 60 hit points is not equivalent to a soldier in Warhammer Roleplaying Game with 15 wounds, even though both are used to determine how resilient the character is.

In Dungeons & Dragons, the threat posed by an enemy is given as a challenge rating value, shortened as CR. It is a system that conveys how challenging a single monster is when fighting against a party of four player characters. So, a party of four first level characters should be able to defeat a creature with challenge rating of 1 without any significant trouble. Different game systems also typically have a way of easily communicating this kind of scaling, such as the slaughter margin in Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay Game or Hit Dice values in the retro clones of the first edition of Dungeons & Dragons, or simply difficulty value in Shadow of the Demon Lord.

However, the challenge rating doesn't consider the context of the combat. Essentially the fight takes place in a vacuum, derived of complications such as terrain, distance, or other dangers. But in the context of the play, the lowly goblin enemies are far more dangerous if the gamemaster is using their abilities to the fullest. With this consideration, the challenge rating remains a valuable tool for estimating the average monster health, the damage they inflict and how many turns the fight will last, and it provides a predictable result for the combat.

To conduct a comparative analysis, D&D was used as a base and the outcomes were determined for several combat encounters over ten rounds between a 1st level Fighter against monsters ranging from challenge rating ¼, ½, 1 and 2 (Table 1). The monsters were chosen specifically for their prevalence: goblin, orc, bugbear and ogre. Additionally, they are straightforward monsters with basic attacks and no special features, making them a good baseline representation of their challenge rating.

TABLE 1. Example of the combat simulation table

D&D	Fighter	Goblin
Armour Class	17	15
Hit point	12	7
Damage	D8+3	D6+2
Avg. damage	8	6
Chance to hit	55%	40%
Initiative	2nd	1st

Using this method, it was determined that on average the fighter would defeat the goblin in two attacks, with one hit required. This combat simulation method was then used to determine the outcomes of the encounters with an orc, a bugbear, and an ogre. With this data, I prepared a system that uses the relative threat that a monster has, as the ranking that can be adapted by the gamemaster for general use. The monikers used for the categories are Fodder, Grunt, Champion and Monstrous.

4.2.3 Guidelines and best practices

Writing any system-agnostic material requires that it is written in a way that does not refer to specific game mechanics. The ideas should be presented in a way that can be understood intuitively. For example, light sources are typically presented in a mechanical way in games and utilizing imperial units of measurement; a candle weighs 0.5 lbs and emits Bright Light in a 5-foot radius and Dim Light in a 20-foot radius and lasts for 6 turns. With the game-specific mechanics stripped, it's best to just write something like "here is a candle" and trust the gamemaster to determine necessary rulings.

Other considerations that arise are the values and costs of things. It can be best to set out a generic denominator for currency, call that c for coin or currency, and specify that in this material it is assumed that a loaf of bread costs 2 c and a sword costs 100 c. The gamemaster should be given enough data to be able

to extrapolate the rest of the values as befits the economy of their preferred game system.

When describing creatures, objects, or locations, referring to real-world examples rather than game mechanics or terms is preferred. A troll living under a bridge described "as strong as a gorilla and the size of a bear" provides useful and relatable information. Furthermore, one can describe useful information in other diegetic ways, stating for example that the troll's thick skin "defends as leather armour" or his claws "damage as swords", providing common concepts for the gamemaster to refer to (Smith 2022).

5 PROJECT: SYSTEM-AGNOSTIC MODULE

5.1 Concept phase

The created module features a classic haunted house scenario. The adventure was originally written to be a scenario for my own roleplaying group of five people that I run as the gamemaster. We were going to play it on Halloween, so I decided on an old, haunted manor for the players to experience. The scenario was titled The Mittenmeier Manor, after its primary location.

Early in the design process I made a point for the scenario to be kept as general and self-contained as possible, so that it might be inserted into any other system or setting as effortlessly as possible. A lot of fantasy settings in roleplaying game systems are heavily anachronistic. Nobles, knights, castles, and peasants are all included in these settings for the flavor and aesthetic, while the actual social structure and feudalism are rarely a factor. I'm a bit of a stickler for historical accuracy but I permitted myself a wider timeframe for the inspiration of the design of the manor. Colen Campbell's "Vitruvius Britannicus" (1715-1725) featured many engravings, particularly in the Palladian style, that influenced my creation of the manor floorplans and the sort of rooms that could be included (Picture 9).
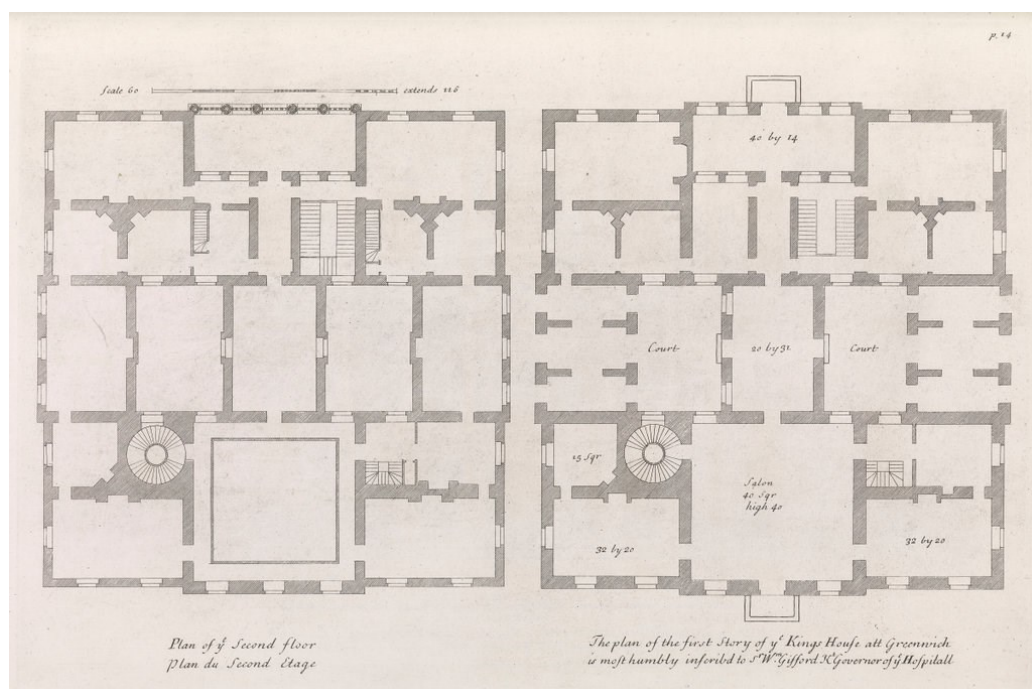
PICTURE 9. Palladian style architecture plan (Campbell 1715-1725)

The playability of the space was also considered. Most groups use physical props such as miniatures and graph paper, where the grid is commonly spaced out to be in 5-foot square increments, and a token or miniature of a creature is presumed to take up one of these squares. Thus, locations designed for gameplay require more space than would be necessary for such a room in real life. This allows for things such as combat encounters happening in a space that is not too limited for tactical play, in case they involve positioning and movement.

By the end of the production the manor consisted of 68 rooms, 4 levels of elevation, and 73 locations in total, including the grounds and facilities (Picture 10). This would turn out to be excessive later.
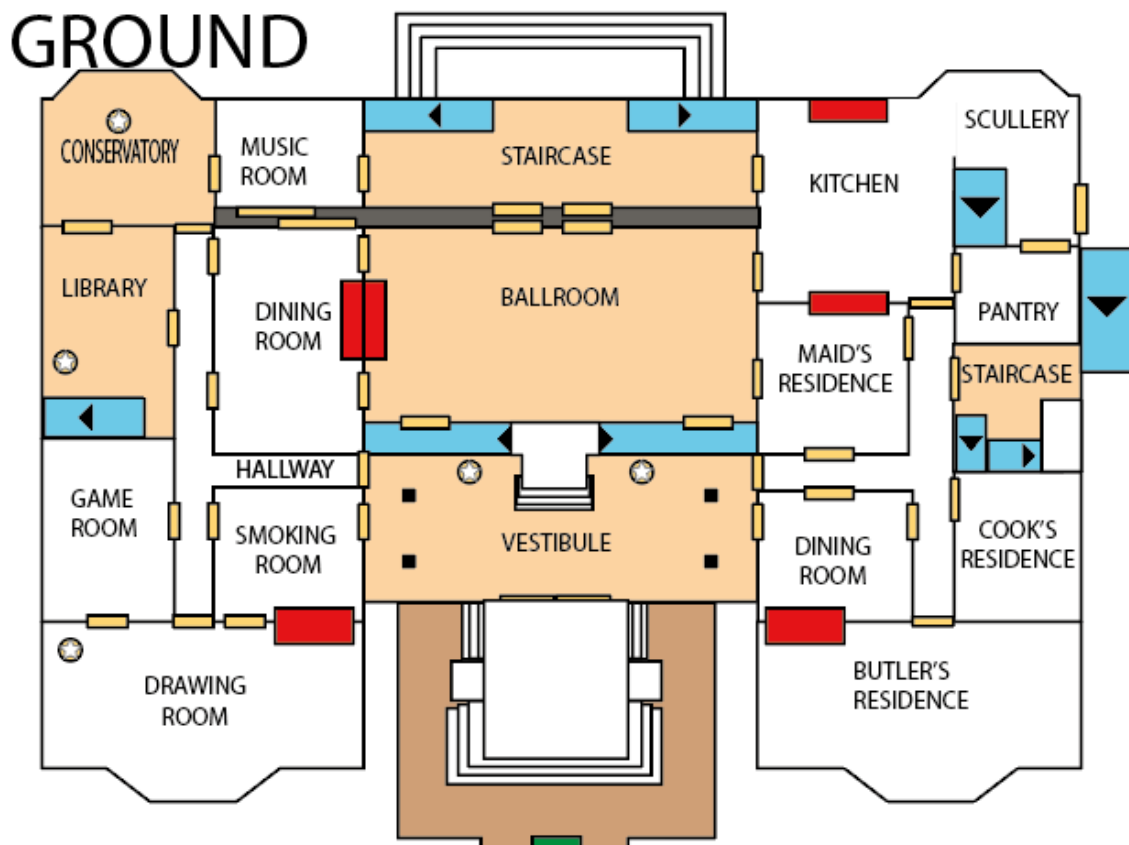
PICTURE 10. Map concept for the manor 2021

5.2 Pre-production phase

When it comes to map design, there is a balance to be struck when considering the verisimilitude of building a believable place, that still functions as a playable area. The playability should come first as a consideration, and after the playtests there were some discoveries that could only be discovered through actual play.

A 3D model of the manor was created to serve as a concept. It helped with visualization and with establishing architectural dimensions, such as ceiling heights and the overall height of the building. Additionally, it gave insights into the line of sight from one room to another, as well as from the interior to the exterior, and vice versa. Using an interactive first-person view camera enabled an assessment of the spatial adequacy of each room. (Picture 11).
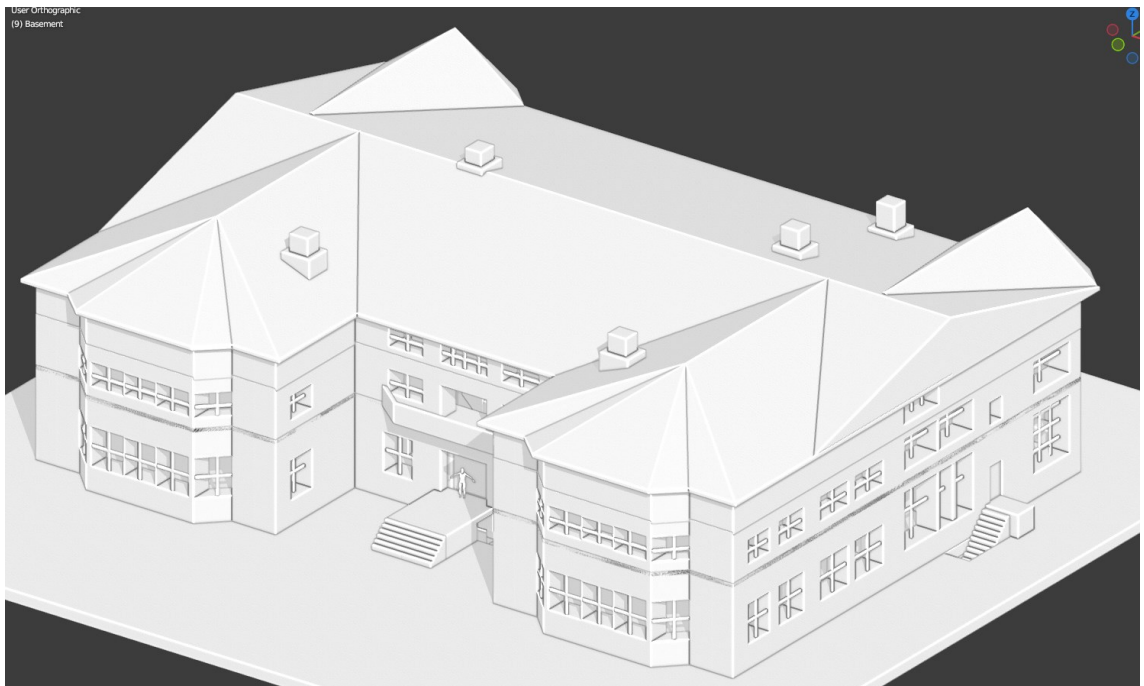
PICTURE 11. 3D modeled concept for the manor 2021

This principle of playability applies to the design of mysteries, clues, etc. as well. A balance must be struck where, when the player stops to investigate a cupboard for keys, the gamemaster must consider if they should just hand the key to the player since the expectation for discoveries is already there.

There is a concept called Xandering the Dungeon used in game design. It is named after the game designer Justin Alexander who was inspired by another designer and artist Jennell Jaquays, who worked on several D&D adventures of note. The goal is to present viable options for the players to choose in which to approach the dungeon. Rather than having a linear path through the dungeon, multiple paths of entrance and an overall fractal structure are used, meaning loops within loops of passages that the players can travel (Alexander 2010).

Another point of consideration is dungeon ecology. In most older modules the monsters are essentially expected to be suspended in their rooms until the players arrive. In these instances, playability overshadows the verisimilitude of the game to a detriment. At its worst you have rooms next to each other where a pack of different monsters just wait for the players to walk in and fight them.

When designing a dungeon, consider whether it's inhabitants would live in these spaces with a more satisfying reasoning than "it's magic". Undead creatures often serve as excellent adversaries due to their adaptability across various locations.

Haunted houses and crypts offer opportunities for gamemasters to unleash hordes of ghosts and skeletons when tension demands escalation. Other powerful or elemental forces such as demons or mad wizards also serve as good primary antagonists, acting as a linchpin to hang up all these opposing forces on in a plausible way.

When using thinking and reasoning opponents, such as tribes of goblins or similar, figuring out how and why they co-habit and sustain in a limited living space can become a murky issue, but gamemasters should not be too discouraged from creating their dungeon design around this. One just has to be aware that it takes more effort to make it work and these things need to be considered.

5.3   Production phase

During the production of the Mittenmeier Manor module, I wrote descriptions of the rooms, all about a paragraph in length, including such details as room dimensions and materials. I also had an overall features description for things such as furnishings and style, source of illumination and other sense descriptors, such as scents and sounds.

Whilst evocative, having so many descriptions in such detail was ultimately a lot of wasted effort and not helpful for the gamemaster using the adventure. I decided to pare down the descriptions of the rooms and include a longer overall description that is generally applicable throughout a larger area. Another issue is that the longer the description goes, the easier it is for the players to miss out on the actionable detail.

For instance, if we were to describe a hallway in a dungeon with a large chasm, drawbridge across it, and a goblin sentry seated at a table on the other side we must supply enough information for the players to make meaningful choices but not too much to drown out the important details. Things such as obvious levers or things we want the players to interact with must be presented, but being too obvious can break the fantasy immersion and limit the player agency to just choosing from what they view as the only available interactions. A lot of roleplay exists in the simulation and breaking of the limitations, so why choose between pulling one of two levers when the player can hack down the door with an axe. There should be several options available for the players, and their consequences should be meaningful (Upton 2015, 110).

An effective way to describe the rooms is to state the function and the general size of the room and the most important feature in it. The paragraph long description for the room, such as the library does have all the necessary data for the players to deduce that it is a library, what with the bookshelves and all, but during actual play the excessive description is swamping the players with too much information and not enough actionable data.

A sentence long description clearly stating that it's a large library with several bookcases and a staircase already gives the players plenty to engage with, and additional description is only warranted when the player is asking for more information.

G3. DRAWING ROOM
The drawing room is large and ostentatious, with plenty of art hung up on the walls, and statues, and sculptures provided as entertainment for the guests. The bay windows to the south have cushions set upon the sills for lounging. There are two suits of ornate armor each holding a tarnished polearm.

According to Vuorela (2021), when describing these features, such as fountains or sculptures, it is best to use relative size rather than accurate dimensions for better clarity. For example, the statue is the size of a man, the fountain is as big as a car. Although using something as modern as a car for the descriptor can be immersion breaking, it is preferable to be clear and concise.

For the non-player characters featured in the adventure I illustrated portraits. Having a visual aid helps the gamemaster and the players distinguish who they might be interacting with and can be more memorable than a written description or name. The illustration style is kept sketchy and vague, both to leave room for interpretation and to have striking features done in exaggerated caricature. (Picture 12). This style is also much quicker to produce than something more carefully rendered.

PICTURE 12. Sample of portrait illustrations

The module contains things such as written dialogue and journal entries. Due to the unpredictable nature of the players, writing strict dialogue or monologues for characters is ill-advised. A lot of the times the situation might not be suited for the tone of the dialogue that is written, or the player characters could interject in any number of ways, such as with questions or outright hostile actions. Written out dialogue takes up space and is inconvenient for the reader, so it is often preferable to describe the conversation from the gamemaster's perspective (Vuorela 2021). Simply providing the outline of what information the character possesses, and if they are willing to share, allows the gamemaster to adjust the language used to what is most fitting for their group.

5.4 Module playtest

As mentioned before, the Mittenmeier Manor was played over the 2021 Halloween weekend and the playtest had five participants, consisting of four players and the gamemaster. The adventure took two sessions between six to eight hours to complete, and the group played in person, except for one player who attended by video call.

The narrow corridors worked for the benefit of the game, yet the labyrinthine nature of a large manor with multiple rooms detracted from the experience. There was significant fatigue that set on when the party moved from room to room and did not discover anything that would have immediately prompted them to take action.

Running the game, I was initially describing the rooms using all the data available, but I felt it had diminishing returns after having painted the general picture. The players should be able to infer that all the rooms in a wealthy manor are going to be well-furnished, unless otherwise specified.

Another sticking point was the use of imperial measurements. Imperial measurements are the standard for most games and written modules due to the prevalence of the North American market, and even though I'm accustomed to them, some of the players were not. In practice it meant that if I were to describe a room being 40ft deep and 20ft wide with a 20ft ceiling, I would then also have to clarify that it is about 12 meters deep, six meters wide and six meters high. And after that, since some players may have a loose grasp of judging distances, I would have to just say that it's a large room. This was indeed one of the insights gained, as for the game to run easily granular detail such as exact dimensions are not generally required.

5.4.1 Survey analysis

I had prepared a two-part survey for the players to fill out after concluding the adventure. The questions ranged from overall feedback, player experience, and more in-depth questions regarding the player preferences and expectations.

From the responses to the survey, some trends arise. The unexpected and random events experienced by the players were noted as enjoyable (Appendix 2). Players were generally most likely to engage, recall and respond positively to events that specifically related to their character. This reinforces the crux of the thesis: designing the scenario with attention paid to the various player agendas is recommended, and options should be provided to cater to all tastes and the redundancies discarded.

Conversely, the negative feedback was focused on events where the players felt they had less options or were otherwise hindered. This is not the same as the character being hindered. As an example, there were moments when the characters were pinned down or carried off by enemies or moved about by magic force, and this was not perceived as a negative or unfair. But a player not having an opportunity to use their spells or abilities would be regarded as a disappointment (Appendix 2).

Player agency and positive response to the feeling of control is also evident across the surveys. The encounters and events where the players had most effect or had the most options available were rated highly (Picture 13).

Why that particular combat encounter? *

The demon made for great final, pushed the narrative a lot and made the world feel dangerous. Gargoyles was more jolly and I rolled well so it was fun. Special mention for carnivorous plant, I like enemies you can work around without direct combat.

Why that particular combat encounter? *

It felt like we had many possible approaches and could've probably solved it without combat altogether as well

Why that particular combat encounter? *

i thought it was really fun that we got to solve the encounters in different ways than regular combat. the bedridden lady was a really cool enemy but i didn't really participate in that much.

PICTURE 13. Highlighted trends from the survey 2022

Exploration was also highly regarded. Across the survey there was a sentiment that the unexpected anomalies in the manor kept tension and excitement high (Picture 14). Sense of discovery is one of the primary player agendas that gets

most attention in tabletop roleplaying games (Hunicke et al. 2004, 2). And as setting for that, a haunted house dungeon is tailored to amply provide this.

Novelty of an encounter is likewise a positive trait. Experienced players have naturally become used to fighting common monstrosities such as undead, but a prancing bathtub charging across the bathroom is a new unfamiliar danger. In addition to being memorable, tension can be created by presenting an unknown threat, as the players cannot gauge how dangerous it may be.

What was the most satisfying part of the exploration? *

Peeking into a room and not knowing what to expect. When the manor got re-invented and I went about looking into rooms I had explored before.

What was your favorite moment or aspect of what you just played? *

Random events, the unexpected magic shenanigans like climbing the stairs area.

What was your favorite moment or aspect of what you just played? *

Players getting separated, disappearing and appearing in random places was cool

PICTURE 14. Highlighted trends from the survey 2022

The data provided by the survey serves as a guide on the aspects that should be prioritized when creating a roleplaying game module. The most highly rated aesthetics are fantasy, narrative, fellowship, and expression. Therefore, the focus should be to create an adventure that allows player freedom within a consistent shared imaginary space, and where the narratives have a satisfying setup and payoff.

5.4.2 Player agendas

The questionnaire aimed to find out the preferred player agendas within the group. By asking questions related to player agendas twice, the survey aimed to control for comprehension and to reduce the response bias. Participants were first asked to numerically rate the importance of various player agendas and later to arrange them in order of preference.

The basis that I used in evaluating the player motivations was founded on the Mechanics-Dynamics-Aesthetics framework, which I adapted to fit the survey (Picture 15). I used the eight aesthetics presented in the paper, interpreting and defining them to fit the tabletop roleplaying game experience based on my understanding. (Hunicke et al. 2004, 2.)

Sensation, or sense pleasure: Rolling physical dice, player handouts, tokens, maps, miniatures, art & illustrations, terrain pieces and paper stands
Fantasy: Losing yourself in an imaginary world. Escapism, immersion and playing something you're not.
Narrative: Stories and the drama you witness or experience, the beginnings and incitements leading to pay-offs and resolutions.
Challenge: Overcoming the obstacles in the game, whether it's solving puzzles, dodging traps, sneaking past guards or defeating foes. Not to be confused with difficulty.
Fellowship: Camaraderie, playing with others and working together as a team. Social interaction and cooperation between players. To clarify, this is the interaction between players, not player characters.
Discovery: Exploration and the thrill of finding out what there is to be found out. Not just exploring the map but also self-discovery, learning something about your character through play.
Expression: Imposing your creative will. Describing character actions and having authorship of certain world details.
Submission: The "Beer & Pretzels" style of playing. Turning your brain off and enjoying effortless things. Go down into a dungeon, kick down doors, kill orcs, take their loot, go back to town.

PICTURE 15. Eight aesthetics of play, defined in the survey 2022

The insights from the data revealed that on average, players rated fantasy and narrative as the highest-rating concepts (Table 2). Fellowship came third, which reinforces the idea that players are primarily focused on themselves and their character. Anecdotally, this holds true for most roleplaying game groups. When embarking on a fantasy adventure, players seek not only the immersion of fantastical worlds but also the shared camaraderie of collaborative storytelling.

However, what stands out even more is the low rating assigned to the concepts of submission and challenge. This finding warrants cautious interpretation. The player agenda of submission was perhaps inadequately conveyed during the survey and thus ended up as the least favoured option, likely considered a safe

but unexciting choice. Additionally, the low rating for challenge suggests that players may struggle to express their true preferences.

Challenge adds tension, drama, and stakes, and it seems contradictory to simultaneously rate both challenge and submission, which means the effortless easy-going experience, as low. Perhaps the missing option would be medium, a balance struck between desire for challenge without the fear of outright defeat.

Additionally, individual player insights emerged. Playgroups often comprise individuals with diverse play agendas that don't always align seamlessly. For gamemasters who play with regular groups, conducting surveys would be an asset. Quantifying player preferences provides a deeper understanding of their desires and ensures a more tailored gaming experience for that group.

TABLE 2. Aesthetics rated highest to lowest

Highest	Fantasy
	Narrative
	Fellowship
	Expression
	Discovery
	Sense Pleasure
	Challenge
Lowest	Submission

5.4.3 Challenges and complications

Other reported sticking points can be connected to player agenda compatibility. Some players naturally prefer a different style of play and pacing. Whilst one player could wish to methodically search and move cautiously, the other player might wish to proceed faster. Subjectively this kind of natural inter-party tension is natural, and not entirely undesired, as tension creates drama and provides an overall more dynamic game for the entire group. Others may disagree and wish to have player groups where player agendas align.

The survey also contained questions regarding the rewards provided by exploration and traps and secrets. During playtesting, however, the group did not encounter any of the traps and secrets. These were all featured in the scenario, but the players never did search for or encounter any of it. Despite some of the traps and secret doors being explicitly presented in a room, the players did not engage with these features, possibly due to risk aversion.

This leads to some interesting introspection – how much should the gamemaster interject with the player's decision? The ideal is that the gamemaster presents the situation and the players deliberate on how to proceed. But should the gamemaster outright break the immersion and hint that this location looks like there would be some valuables or secret doors to discover?

As an example, early on during the scenario the group entered a building that had sleeping bags and backpacks in it, containing useful resources such as healing items. The players did not search the contents of the backpacks and later one lamented at the lack of healing items as the character had become wounded.

The game is a constant push and pull of the gamemaster providing actionable detail and the players choosing to act. However, should the gamemaster take over and have the characters take actions that would be obvious in the fantasy of the shared imaginings. A common recommendation is to favour the players, for they cannot imagine the situation as the gamemaster does, no matter how well it is described.

The true playtest of the scenario is not necessarily the one conducted by the creator of the module, either. Issues such as legibility, and how practical and useful the module is as a game aide, is only truly tested when the scenario is run by a different gamemaster. But the testing and analysis for this would be challenging, as the tabletop roleplaying game experience is improvised in large parts and therefore the separate sessions can be hard to compare.

5.5   Revisions after playtesting

Starting out, the adventure had up to 68 rooms, 4 levels of elevation, and 73 locations in total including the grounds and facilities. This was stripped down to a more practical 30 rooms, 4 levels and just 34 locations in total, including the grounds and facilities (Picture 16).
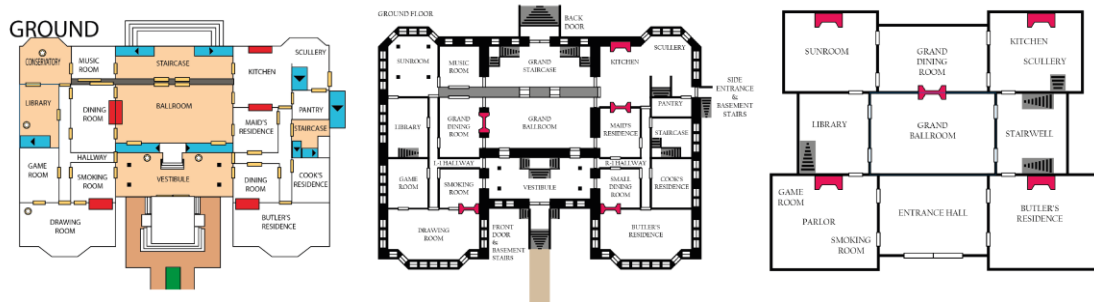
PICTURE 16. Revision progress of the map 2021

The first things that had to go were the hallways, and for a good reason. The copious hallways were essentially a waste of space in play terms. A player travelling in a hallway is essentially just moving from point of interest to another, and the time in between is often just dead air. They were also a waste in terms of believable living space. Very few actual manor houses have corridors leading from room to room, as it is a frivolous waste of space and building resources.

The final revision made to the maps improved labelling of the rooms and locations. Each location was assigned a letter prefix that corresponds with its map level. Therefore, all locations on the ground floor received a **G**-prefix, while those on the upper floor were given a **U**-prefix. This modification helps the gamemaster understand the spatial relation between rooms on different floors (Picture 17).
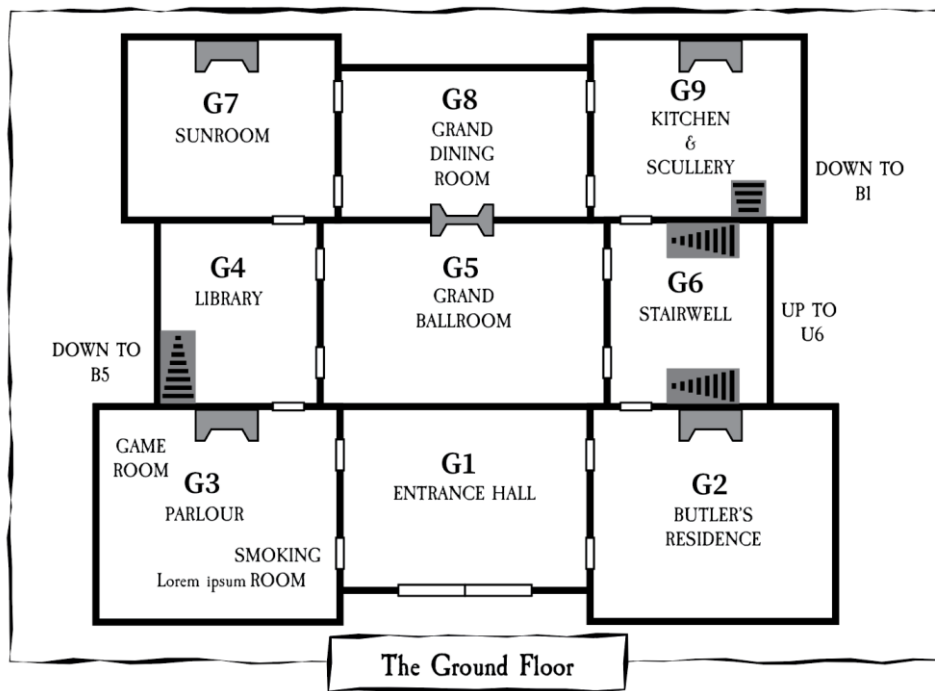
PICTURE 17. Finalized version of the map 2023

The NPCs and their essential stats were summarized and collated to the end of the module with the rest of the reference material. This helps the gamemaster by eliminating the need to browse through or bookmark the chapter where the NPCs are presented in fuller detail (Vuorela 2021).

Another pragmatic adjustment was removing detailed lists of specific treasure and objects that any room might contain. Instead, relevant data was collated into three categories of treasure that the players could discover and arranged into tables for:

- books
- arms and armour
- various valuables

Lastly, two characters were combined into one and other unnecessary NPCs were removed. Initially there were a total of 21 NPCs, including ten members of the household staff. Since the household started out so vast, these redundant characters were mostly additional domestic staff, such as a lady's maid, a valet, and a footman. The characters already had a lot of crossovers and a similar purpose in the adventure, so merging or omitting them to streamline the NPC count down to 17 was rather effortless.

6 DISCUSSION

Having reviewed the market analysis data, it can be somewhat discouraging to conclude that writing for a popular system or setting would have a significantly better audience. However, the Open Game License controversy of 2023 has taught us to be wary of trusting large publishers such as Wizards of the Coast. Moreover, this project was never about being successful in the monetary sense, it was about creating something usable that could be shared freely or played with anybody regardless of their game system preferences. The roleplaying game community is filled with enthusiastic creators writing fanzines and fostering a free exchange of ideas.

Any creative person aspiring to write a system-agnostic adventure should be aware of some of the inherent pitfalls. The product is not ready to be played straight out of the box, because every gamemaster and group has unique needs. It is unlikely that any gamemaster will run an adventure strictly as written, as the nature of the roleplaying game is improvisation and adapting to the player choice.

Some criticism argues that omitting creature stats and rules is lazy and should be included in any purchased material. But including stats and covering multiple game systems would quickly inflate the page count. Creating a system-neutral product means attempting to please everyone, which can result in a product that is not the first choice for anyone. Nevertheless, there is a market for system-agnostic material, and the existence of this category in marketplaces indicate that people do seek them.

Personally, I gravitate towards fresh and evocative ideas in the published modules, often discarding and modifying the contents as I see fit. Roleplaying has always been a hobby that attracts folk who will tinker and modify as they go, creating houserules and new mechanics to make something truly their own. In this regard, the The Mittenmeier Manor-module created for this thesis offers a solid framework for planning scenarios and taking notes, beneficial for other game designers.

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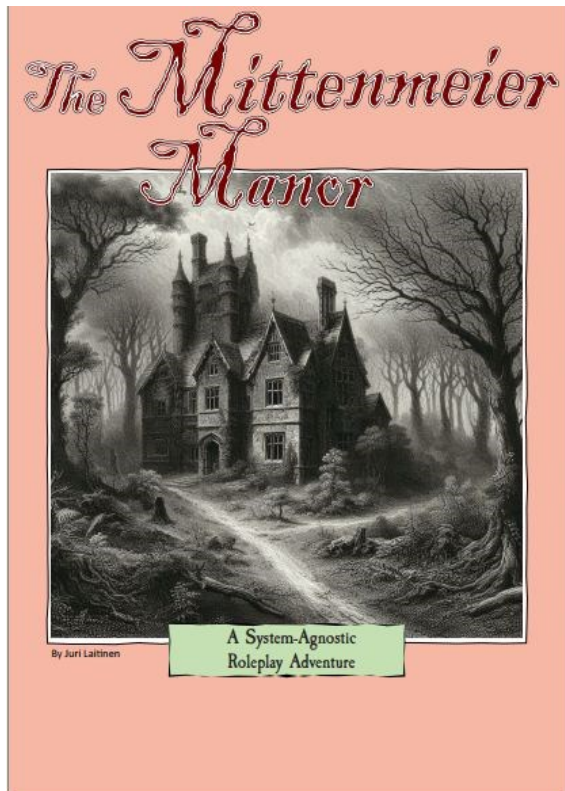https://www.praedor.net/uutiset/seikkailujen-kirjoittaminen-osa-2/

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. System-agnostic game module

The Mittenmeier Manor

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2021

A System-Agnostic Roleplay Adventure

By Juri Laitinen

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INTRODUCTION

The Mittenmeier Manor is a horror themed system agnostic adventure and thus requires some work from the gamemaster to adapt and run for your own campaign. The Mittenmeier Manor adventure has been successfully run using a d100 skill-based game system and an OS D&D style retroclone. As a system agnostic adventure, the creatures, NPCS, treasure, timelines of events and magic items are presented in a natural language, attempting to describe their properties in easily understood ways so that you may rely on a reference point and adapt them to best fit your tabletop adventures.

The Mittenmeier Manor is a classic kind of haunted house adventure, and thus it requires a lot of timing and pacing from the gamemaster, for the tension and drama to escalate it does require that you take some liberties when it comes to player agency to best put them in situations where they are put on the backfoot. There is not a lot of focus on the combat, yet the threat of the undead enemies should be formidable and relentless, pushing the action. Clever play should be rewarded and the players should be given many options to avoid or overcome their enemies.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The Mittenmeier Manor is essentially escape from a haunted house adventure, whichever hook or crook you've used to entice the characters into the manor, once noticed the demon will not allow them to leave. The haunting events and monstrosities should be used to drive the action whenever the party is spending too much time dallying. The next section covers generally how the scenario unfolds, but it is ultimately up to the players in which order or whether they'll investigate the rooms at all. The adventure contains a set of challenges, risks and rewards for those seeking them, and some moving parts that can throw a wrench into the works. It's best to familiarize yourself with the manor and it's inhabitants and run the scenario loose and on the fly, if the players are slowing down or lack direction, roll or pick a Haunting Event or drop the Cook in as a wandering monster. If they've fought too much and are licking their wounds and afraid to push on, have them encounter the friendly ghost of the Butler or the group of Brigands.

An aspect of this specific haunting is that The Mittenmeier Manor and it's premises exists in a sort of temporal anomaly, caused by the influence of the demon bound within the manor by Laurentz von Mittermeier. Time behaves erratically, and it can manifest differently from room to room. To an outside observer passing by the manor grounds, they may see the manor standing proud in it's prime, even seeing people move within whilst at another time they may come upon the derelict shell, or even just rubble and ruin. When the players arrive on the scene, the Manor presents itself as in a state of having been rundown close to fifty years, windows broken, shutters hanging and piles of debris and leaves.

Some players might be expecting more monsters to fight and great deal of treasure. The scenario can adapt to that, the tables for treasure allow for a great deal of valuables to be gathered, but most of it is in inconvenient to carry and the final confrontation with the evil in the attic may force the players to abandon any hard to carry loot.

BACKGROUND

The Mittenmeier Manor, once the esteemed seat of a noble lineage, now stands as an accursed ruin. The Mittenmeier bloodline itself was known for their ruthlessness and cunning, as well as an interest in the occult. Like other noble houses, the Mittenmeier family has amassed a hoard of wealth and a collection of rare and forbidden books over the years.

The last known Lord of the manor, Laurenz von Mittenmeier, was known as a kind and gentle man, unlike his notorious ancestry. He married a beautiful noble lady, Hilde Hauptmann, and for some time they had a happy life together. Years later as they were expecting their second child, Erik, a tragedy struck. Hilde died giving birth to Erik, and the infant Erik followed soon after. Laurenz was heartbroken and inconsolable.

Driven mad with grief, Laurenz became obsessed with finding a way to bring back his wife and son. He delved into the dark arts of necromancy and daemonology, searching for a way to cheat death itself. He prepared the ritual in his study, surrounded by his arcane texts and relics of power. He drew the summoning circle, lit the candles, and chanted the beckoning words that could not be taken back.

He succeeded in summoning a daemon, but not in the way he expected. The demon was an ancient and malevolent entity, who had no intention of helping Laurenz. Instead, the demon tricked Laurenz. The demon offered a deceptive pact: the return of Erik, but only if Laurenz would give him his soul and bind himself to the manor. Laurenz agreed, without realizing the consequences.

The demon then revealed its true nature. It did not bring back Erik as a living child, but as a twisted and monstrous creature. It also unleashed its evil influence on the manor, corrupting it and its inhabitants. The manor became a haunted place, where time and space were warped by the demon's will. The demon trapped Laurenz in his study, where he remains to this day, unaware of the extent of the horrors that have befallen his home.

Today, Mittenmeier Manor is a veritable death trap, its halls prowled by the undead and unspeakable horrors. Only those adventurers armed with nerves of steel and cunning as sharp as razor can hope to survive its dangers and unravel its mysteries. Do you dare to tread the cursed corridors of Mittenmeier Manor?

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Timeline

Laurenz was the heir and only son of Lord Jakoby von Mittermeier. When his magical talents were discovered in his youth, Jakoby von Mittermeier was concerned about the continuation of his family line and forbade Laurenz from pursuing magical studies. They hired private instructors who were bade to teach Laurenz just enough of the principles of magic to supress them and learn how to keep his talent hidden. Their silence was paid for in gold.

However, Laurenz remained interested in the realms of sorcery, he kept practicing his skills and amassed an extensive library in the arts of the alchemy, occult, cults & daemonology. He became well known in the scientific circles for being a learned man and a foremost authority on the cults and rituals, enough to warrant the interest of witch hunters, but they found no evidence that Laurenz was anything more than a curious and quirksome aristocrat and the macabre and mysterious was just one of his interests. Soon, Laurenz would be preoccupied with more pleasant interests as he met ms Hilde Hauptmann.

After a brief courting period, a marriage was arranged between Laurenz and Hilde. Their first child, Gena, was born 13 months after the marriage. Laurenz was 26 at this time, Hilde 22. 3 Years later, they tried for another child. This male child was born prematurely and died.
Laurenz & Hilde Hauptmann

OVERVIEW

The Mittenmeier Manor can be placed nearly anywhere in your campaign world, it should be remote enough to be within travel distance of a day or two from the nearest settlement where the characters have picked up on the rumours. The path to the manor grounds leading off from the main road should take roughly 6 hours. Due to the temporally unstable nature of The Mittenmeier Manor, the players may find that the path is almost overgrown yet has fresh signs of use caused by the brigands using the manor gatehouse as their hideout.

Setting the Pace:

The adventure is contained and should be viable to run in a single session, but as always every table plays at different pace. In playtesting, Mittenmeier Manor took two sessions and the breakpoint was when the players had hit the locked and warded door in the attic.
Assuming that the players don't get veer off after some minor details, the following events should play out in something like a sequence.
Start the adventure as the characters are approaching the Mittenmeier Manor, they've followed the gossip and hooks received in the nearest village and have travelled here on instructions.
The characters investigate the manor grounds, perhaps look into the gatehouse and find that it has been recently lived in. If the party is cautious and slow to enter the mansion, they will be driven inside by the horde of undead that starts creeping in or the reanimated guard dogs from the kennel.
Inside the manor the party catches their breath in relative safety as the undead outside do not enter and just amble aimlessly. Having recovered, the party should start looking for their objective, if not, throw in a blood-curdling scream coming from the basement or second floor. Unfortunate Brigand has met their end in some gruesome fashion. When the party enters the stairwell, they will be ambushed by the gargoyles that will attempt to split the party and throw them in disarray. As the manor itself warps and alters, the seperated characters will find themselves in unexpected rooms and situations. This should be a short intermission only, with a desired effect of unease and confusion but not to frustrate. The the group should be brought back together quickly as they continue to explore, for example the next exit that the seperated group takes brings them to an adjacent room as where the rest of the party is. What follows is general exploration and investigation, possible plunder and combat, until the group winds up in the attic. The doors to the gallery are locked and held shut, warded by the powers of the demon protecting it's lair and the means of escape. The players will likely seek out the key, which can be placed in various viable locations. The Butler would have one on his person, or in his rooms. Laurentz von Mittermeier of course would have it or know where he's placed it and one copy is stashed in Gena's painted world. As the party enters the gallery and atelier in the attic, the demon will finally put himself at risk as he attempts to stop the creatures from leaving in his ravenous greed. Having escaped successfully, the adventure is concluded.

GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

Following section is the guide for the game master to help in running the scenario. The Mittenmeier Manor is a system agnostic/system neutral/rules generic adventure, the game master should adjust the foes and bestiary to fit their own game, the following guide aims to give you some reference point and the foes adjusted to relative proportion of difficulty, and are described thusly.

Monster categories

The following relative proportion of difficulties presumes that the player character party is balanced and consists of four characters that work together. Each challenge level for a monster is titled and is as follows, in increasing difficulty; Fodder, Grunt, Champion and **Monstrous**.

- **Fodder** is an opponent that is easily defeated by a player character, struck down in one or two hits and only poses a danger when ambushing and outnumbering the characters, which they often do. Generally speaking, a goblin is a typical Weakling.
- **A Grunt** is an opponent that is a closer match to the character, capable of going blow for blow with the character for a round or two, but in a straight up fight would still ultimately lose the encounter. They fight a little smarter and employ tactics. Generally speaking, an orc would be a typical Grunt.
- **A Champion** is an opponent that poses a serious challenge, these monsters often lead groups of weaker opponents. Fighting one-on-one could spell doom for a non-martial player character, Champions are typically brought down by focused attack by the whole party. Bugbear is a typical Champion type opponent.
- **Monstrous** is an overwhelming opponent, capable of wiping out the group of players in an even fight. The key to this kind of monster's defeat lies in using every advantage and resource available, teamwork, underhanded tactics and planning. And even then, running away could always be a sensible option. Ogre is a typical Monstrous type opponent.

Treasure

Likewise the monetary value of things might differ in your campaign. As a baseline for reasonable adjustment, I've tried to present the values working from the assumption that the currency is based on *coins*, referred to as *c* from now, adventurer's daily expenses are 10 *c* and a weapon such as a sword costs 100 *c*.

Corporeal Undead

Corporeal undead include the monsters such as the reanimated guard dogs from the manor ground kennels, the taxidermied or topiary animals, or the manor staff such as the cook. The corporeal undead is kept moving by the daemon's corruptive powers and will not be truly destroyed unless burnt, hacked to pieces, decapitated or consecrated. This toughness manifest in a way where only the upper half of any damage caused is registered, unless caused by fire, spells or magical or divine powers. (i.e. an attack causing *d6* for damage, only the score of 4, 5 or 6 would cause harm) Invoking divine powers such as consecrations, blessings, holy water or turn undead are particularly effective. The corporeal undead can be ultimately defeated if their mortal remains are buried and laid to rest.

Spectral Undead

Spectral undead are the lingering spirit presence left behind by the negative energies of the ill-treated manor staff or guests of the manor. Spectral undead cannot physically interact with the player characters and conversely the player characters cannot interact with the spectral undead. However, if enraged these spirits have enough sympathetic energy with the manor's physical objects to interact with them. They can indirectly attack the player characters through poltergeist activity, such as slamming doors, hurling furniture, cutlery and other miscellenea. Through this same connection, the player characters may attack the spectral undead using these items, driving them away easily. Spectral undead can also be harmed by spells and magic or divine powers. Invoking divine powers such as consecrations, blessings, holy water or turn undead are particularly effective. The spectral undead can be ultimately defeated if their mortal remains are buried and laid to rest.

Daemon

Daemons are powerful creatures that exists on multiple planes of existence simultaneously. They are immune to fire, poison, mind-affecting spells such as charm or enchantments and only take half of all physical damage. Only spells, magic weapons or divine powers inflict their full damage. However, daemons are suspectible to being dismissed, banished or bound into objects of power such as holy symbols or magic items. To have this control over a daemon, a spellcaster must learn it's true name, conduct a ritual while protected within a magic circle and overpower the daemon in a battle of wills.

ADVENTURE HOOKS
How to involve the Characters

for the Mittenmeier Manor scenario could be the following. Whatever hook or crook you use to get the adventures in, it can be beneficial to use more than one, because if their sole motivation is to plunder or capture outlaws, the adventurers could break off and leave the Manor before they hit any major obstacles and much of the tension and enjoyment of exploration is lost.

The adventurers can be hired by almost anyone, or they may be enticed by the gossips overheard while carousing in nearby towns or inns. Local nobles, merchants, sergeant-at-arms could all provide the commission for a group of bold adventurers.

Fortune & Glory!

This is the simplest adventure hook for the characters. Allured by promises of riches and driven by greed, they search the manor for treasure, hoping to find gold, jewels, or other valuables left by its former owners and previous unfortunate explorers. Alternatively the adventurers are hired to locate a bottle of rare vintage wine from the von Mittenmeier's wine cellar or to crack the vault rumored to be in the master's study. The adventurers must brave the manor's dangers and compete with other treasure seekers with similar goals. They may also find more than they bargained for, as some treasures may come at a cost.
Brief: The adventurers, motivated by desire or hired, seek treasure in the manor. They must endure its hazards, outdo other treasure hunters, and potentially face unforeseen consequences.

Shelter from the Storm!

This adventure hook works best when the adventures need a scenario while traveling on the road or roughing it. Sudden unseasonal weather conditions, such as a severe thunderstorm or blizzard, drives the party to seek shelter. Or they may be pursued by an adversary or a ferocious pack of wolves is tracking them, leaving no option but to enter the protecting and warmth of the manor out in the distance. However, upon entry, they will quickly realize their error. The manor is not as it seems, and they find themselves trapped within by an evil force. They must find a way to escape before they succumb to the horrors of the mansion or their pursuers catch up with them.
Brief: The party seeks shelter from inclement weather or pursuers. They take refuge in the manor, which appears safe but proves otherwise. They must now escape before they meet their demise or are captured.

Stop the Ritual!

A sinister plot is unfolding in Mittenmeier Manor. A group of foul cultists or henchmen of a wicked sorcerer, having learned of the of the demon that haunts the manor, aim to harness its power or learn its secrets. They've infiltrated the manor, bringing with them a helpless victim to be sacrificed during a ritual. This captive is someone dear to one of the adventurers, perhaps a friend, accomplice, or a child of a wealthy patron or local noble who has hired the adventurers for a rescue mission. The adventurers must act swiftly to halt the ritual, confronting the manor's horrors and the demon's wrath.
Brief: Evil cultists or a sorcerer aim to exploit the manor's demon. They've kidnapped someone close to the adventurers for a sacrifice. The adventurers must stop them and rescue the victim, all while dealing with the manor's perils.

Bounty Hunting!

A band of outlaws plaguing the region is said to be hiding in the old manor grounds. The adventurers, having tracked them for a while, finally have them cornered. As they approach the gatehouse where the outlaws have been sheltering, they are spotted and the outlaws are seen fleeing into the manor. The adventurers pursue, hoping to claim their bounty, but soon realize they've entered a trap. The manor, a nightmare realm where time and space are warped by the demon's will, also traps the outlaws, who might cooperate with the adventurers to escape or betray them at any moment.
Brief: Outlaws that the adventurers are hunting take refuge in the manor. The adventurers give chase, but become trapped in the manor as well. They may ally with the outlaws to stand a better chance of survival, but should beware treachery.

Find the Relic!

The adventurers are tasked with recovering an important item within the manor. It could be a powerful artifact, a book of forbidden lore, or another arcane item that has been lost or stolen over the years. Alternatively, it could be something specific, like a signet ring, a coat of arms, or family records that a distant Mittenmeier relative needs to inherit a fortune or prove their lineage. The adventurers must scour the manor for clues, overcome its obstacles, and confront its inhabitants. They may also discover secrets about the manor and its history that may change their perspective on their quest. Could it be that one of the adventurers is a distant Mittenmeier relative and a potential heir to the fortune — or is this a manipulative trick employed by the daemon?
Brief: The adventurers are hired to find an item in the manor, ranging from a magical relic to a record. They must explore the manor, face its challenges, and uncover its secrets.

GOSSIPS

D12

1	Travellers describe the manor often in very different state. Some say it looks long abandoned, others claim it looks lived in, chimneys smoking and lights and movement in the windows, some even that naught exists on the plot but a thicket of woods, or field of grass with ruin of a stone foundation belying where once chimneys stood.
2	The Von Mittermeier manor is rumored to be haunted, and for a good reason. The manor has stood there abandoned for more than forty years.
3	The master of the house, Laurenz von Mittermeier, was famous for having a grand library and an eclectic collection, including tomes of almost all natural philosophies
4	Laurenz von Mittermeier had a secret library of forbidden lore! Perhaps books on necromancy, alchemy, astronomical premonitions or something magickal in nature.
5	Laurenz von Mittermeier's wine cellar was lauded as one of the finest in the land. There is a particular bottle of such esteemed and rare vintage, that a nobleman is offering a princely sum for it.
6	The weather around the mansion is temperamental, people have reported unusuals torrential rains, lightning and thunder from clear skies and worse, even snow buffets with hails of ice.
7	Many adventurers have attempted to plunder the Mittenmeier Manor over the years. It is said that the family had a collection of rare artifacts and considerable wealth, and that the lord of the manor had a secret vault in his office.
8	Laurenz apparently also studied strange alchemy and other weird sciences and philosophies.
9	After the loss of his wife and infant son, the rumors circulated about his dabbling in the dark magic and arcane lore.
10	The last known mentions of Laurenz concern his content living, his beautiful daughter and pregnant wife - and the tragedy of the childbirth soon after.
11	There have been other dark and secretive folk asking after the Mittenmeier Manor, their motives unknown but surely something untoward.
12	There is a group of outlaws that have been targeting merchants and passengers alike, striking out and hiding out in the ruin of the old manor house.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Von Mittermeier Family;

Laurenz von Mittermeier
Laurenz is a nobleman in his late 50s, once a reasonable man mostly spurred by his family responsibilities, the loss of his infant son Erik and his wife Hilde drove him mad with grief and into the machinations of the demon Ozmodias.
Location: Laurenz can be encountered in the secret laboratory(B5) in the Basement or in the library(A5) in the Attic.
Difficulty: Laurenz is non-hostile but if provoked will fight back as a Champion magic-user
Trappings: Nobleman's garb, spellbook, coin purse & jewelry worth 1d6 x 100c
Laurenz's Spellbook - written on the walls of his study; there are spells that can be deciphered with careful study by a magic-user

Hilde von Mittermeier, née Hauptmann.
As an undead Hilde has fused to her deathbed, tethered by spiritual chains caused by her prolonged suffering, transforming her to a horrifying wailing mother. The bed itself walks on it's legs, lashing out with chains and Hilde's piercing wails cause dibilitating fear in all living things.

Gena von Mittermeier
Gena carries on the Mittermeier family's penchant for magic, she had great talent for painting and as she grew older and her magical prower manifested she found that she was capable of painting landscapes and scenes of such

Erik von Mittermeier
Erik died from birth complications and while his spirit should have been able to move on, it was the grief of his father that pulled him back and trapped his spirit within the haunted Mittermeier manor.
Location: Erik's corporeal body can be found in Hilde's chambers (U1) or in a crib in the nursery (U3), his spirit is a wandering poltergeist and can cause disturbance anywhere in the manor, knocking over furniture or throwing items.
Difficulty: Erik is incorporeal and can't be attacked through normal means, his spirit can be communicated with but he does not understand or respond well to talking.

Gardener Joseph Baum
Joseph Baum had not been part of the staff for long, he was in fact a rogue who's plan was to become familiar with the Mittenmeier Manor and the riches within and once an opportunity would have risen he was going to steal what he could and disappear into the night. He has amassed a little stash of stolen goods over time hidden in his bedside trunk, worth 1d6x10GP. He had his eye on the young scullery maid, Tina, and would woo her with his charm and tall-tales but had no real commitment.
Location: Joseph's corporeal

Scullery Maid Tina Leinbach
The youngest of the household staff, in her life Tina Leinbach was an obedient, pretty and humble maid. She was rather infatuated with the Gardener, who made lofty promises of one day getting rich and striking it out with her. She had put aside little wealth, her jewelry and earnings, in preparation for this. These were kept in a little jewelry box under her pillow.
Location: Tina's spirit can be encountered wandering the ground floor and basement, mostly in the kitchen, ballroom and dining room areas. She's often carrying dishes on trays and will be startled by the player character's interacting with her, causing a haunting effect of poltergeist attack.

Chamber Maid Isabella Döhn
Isabella Döhn was responsible for maintaining the chambers of the Mittermeier family and setting up the nursery. She's a kind and gentle older woman and was looking forward to doting on the newborn and was terribly shook up by the events. Location: Isabella's corporeal body can be found huddled up next to the fresh bed linen in the room U2. Her wandering spirit can be encountered wandering carrying out her duties anywhere in the upper floor.

Mittermeier Manor Staff;

Butler Hans Schrödinger
Hans Schrödinger was the longest serving member and the head of the household staff and a trusted close servant to Laurenz and his family. He kept record in his journal of the terrible events and the desperate attempts of resurrecting his wife and child that Laurenz did.
Location: Hans Schrödinger can be encountered in spectral form going over his journals, paperwork, payroll and other duties in his residence G2 in the library G4 or in the Lord's office at U7. His corporeal remains can be found in his residence, crumpled up in a chair at his desk. His spirit is absent minded and seemingly unaware of the state of the manor as it is currently, he will assume that any PCs conversing with him are new hires or there for interview about being employed as members of the household. The PCs can use this to their advantage to question more about the manor, it's other staff and layout. If the questions get too personal or greedy in nature, such as "Where is the vault, the most valuable items, etc?" Hans will become suspicious and then enraged.
Difficulty: Hans is non-hostile, disjointed and confused so even when he's been enraged, he is essentially not a thret beyond scaring the PCs.

Cook Helmer Gross
Helmer Gross was an imposing and mean-tempered man who commanded great authority in his kitchen and lorded over the staff, only Hans the butler nominally superceded his authority among the staff and they clashed often. He would act sycophantically towards the Mittermeier family. Helmer did not die but rather mutated into a horrific corruption of his former self, twisting into a beastly piggish monstrosity. Location: Helmer can be found butchering or cooking his former wife in the kitchen or hanging up corpses in the larder.

Parlor Maid Clara Gross
Clara Gross was the long-suffering wife of Helmer the Cook and also the senior house-maid, reporting to the Butler Hans Schrödinger. In life she was responsible in keeping the ground floor rooms in presentable form and handing out the duties to the other maids. Clara suffered terrible fate as the demon took over the mansion. In a twist of irony, she was mutated into a piggish creature and is butchered and served forever by the cook. Location: She is found in the kitchen, roasting on a spit in the fireplace or hung up to a meathook in the larder.

Others

Brigand Leader Georg Holm
Georg Holm is a scruffy and wiry looking scoundrel. He fancies himself as a dashing folk-hero type like Robin Hood, but he often skimps on the charity part of the role. He's self-serving but not needlessly vicious. He's the leader of the gang of brigands but refers to them as a band of adventurers. When encountered, he will prefer caution and to be diplomatic, even working together with the Player Characters to get out of the haunted manor.
Location: Georg and the brigands can be encountered in the manor grounds or in the ground floor rooms of the manor, they have been sheltering the gatehouse for some days and are planning to loot the old manor for valuables.

The Brigands - Dieter, Leopold, Anders, Hanna
The brigands are all rough-living and crass indivdiuals from poor backgrounds

Daemon - Ozmodias the Nightdrifter
Ozmodias the Nightdrifter is a demon, stranded and bound to the manor by the summoning ritual conducted by Laurenz von Mittermeier.

Homunculus - Creature
This pitiable monstrosity is a vat-grown humanoid, an empty vessel of flesh created by Laurenz in one of his experiments where he was searching for a way to tether Erik's spirit to an alchemically manufactured human body. Laurenz abandoned this avenue after many failed experiments, but the creature has slowly matured and manifested some semblance of instinctual thinking. It has existed in the basement, subsisting on vermin, and will lash out at the player characters like a frenzied wild animal.

BESTIARY

Bedbound Banshee — Hilde von Mittenmeier — **Champion, Corporeal**
Hilde von Mittenmeier's anguish is not over and she remains chained into her deathbed through chains of suffering. The bed itself is animated through malevolent energy, standing on it's iron shod legs. In combat, Hilde will shriek loud and shrill, crying out due to her suffering and deafening all within earshot for as long as she's capable of shrieking. Spellcasting fails 75% of the time due to her screaming. The chains that bound her to the bed will also move independently and lash out in range, reaching out to 20' and grabbing and restricting their targets. Hilde can hold on to two characters at a time and her other attack is to charge and ram anyone on a straight line with her iron bedframe.

Ghosts of former staff and guests — **Grunt, Spectral**
These ghosts

Gargoyles — **Weakling**

Barging Bathtub —

Vermin Swarm — **Weakling**

Reanimated dog — **Weakling, Corporeal**

Brigand Leader — Georg Holm — **Champion**
George Holm is a capable fighter but quite rattled and on edge by the ordeals at the manor. He will put on a brave face to keep his band of brigands in control but should the fight go poorly, his morale will easily break. He wears medium armour and has martial weapons and a bow.

Brigands — Hanna, Anders, Jens, Bloopus — **Grunts**
The Brigands are likewise equipped for fighting, preferring to hit their targets from ambush with their bows or bullying their victims to submission by just a show of force. Their morale is poor and they would prefer not to fight unless necessary.

Topiary Animals — **Weakling, Corporeal**
The topiary animals are overgrown hedges and nigh mindless, they have difficulty moving quickly and will aimlessly amble after the adventurers if they have been provoked

Taxidermy Animals — **Grunt, Corporeal**
The taxidermy animals, foxes, wolves, bears, badgers and such, are quite fierce due to their close proximity to the daemon. Their glass eyes have a glimmer of evil presence and they prefer to wait and use ambush tactics before clawing and biting at the adventurers. Even the heads of elks and boars mounted on the walls will attempt to gore any character who gets too close.

Cook — Gross — **Champion**
Helmer Gross has been mutated to a twisted piggish monstrosity and his already surly temperament has been twisted to a creature of cruel malice. In the repeating nightmare of the manor, Helmer Gross butchers and prepares other household staff as dinner to be cooked on the firepit

Painted Creature — **Champion**

Carnivorous Plant — Audrey III — **Monstrous**

Homunculi — **Champion**

Renimated Dead - **Weakling, Corporeal**
Reanimated corpses, unlucky adventurers trapped in the manor grounds, household staff or other unfortunate folk. They attack mindlessly, grasping and gnawing at the living in an attempt to wrestle them to the ground and bite and claw them dead.

Poltergeist Baby — **Weakling, Spectral**
Erik's spirit has been twisted into a haunting spectre, delighting in misery and suffering. Whenever the characters encounter Haunting Events or are on edge, they might be attacked by poltergeist phenomena of furniture being knocked over or door slamming on them, followed by a gleeful giggle of a baby. Erik's remains are in the crib in the nursery, and if he is laid to rest this poltergeist activity will cease and his mother, the Bedbound Banshee, won't attack the characters anymore, either.

Daemon — Ozmodias the Nightdrinker — **Monstrous, Daemon**
Ozmodias has been bound inside the Mittenmeier Manor and the manor grounds and buildings within have become interlinked to his presence, his essence possesses all within to a degree and he can sense the living things moving within through the tendrils of his psyche. He prefers to toy with his prey, feeding on their mounting fear and paranoia until their souls have become succulent and marinated in dread. He keeps his true form hidden until the characters dare to enter the atelier in the attic, the one means of escape Ozmodias hasn't been able to close off. When Ozmodias makes himself known, he can communicate telepathically to the characters, and his foul presence projects fear in an aura around him and sets combustible things on fire. His appearance is an amalgamation of animalistic twisted features that are ever changing, and he can extend out a pair of Tentacle like appendages that behave as **Grunts**

HAUNTING EVENTS

1. Character gets warped during staircase and lands on a different level than intended
2. Character gets warped while moving through a doorway and exits out another doorway
3. Character gets warped while moving past a painting, to another room with a matching painting
4. Character gets warped while climbing through a chimney and can come out of any other fireplace
5. Ghosts of the mansion staff are in the room as the characters enter, mundanely attending to work
6. The staircase seems to go on forever and extends beyond visible range, as the characters climb it, the air turns piercing cold and there are galeful winds as snow begins to fall.
7. A book has writing in it that is directly addressing the character reading it, giving an ill premonition how another party member is going to kill them
8. Characters enter a room and find a huddled group of remains in a corner of the room, if they investigate the group seems to remains of themselves.
9. Furniture comes to life and lashes out and attacks the character
10. A malicious ghost is in the room and will attack, toppling over shelves, pulling rugs, exploding glass or hurling furniture and cutler
11. A nearby object is hurled at the characters or broken out of sight
12. The characters enter a room that they've been to before and some objects like statues or suits of armour have clearly moved. This could happen when they are momentarily distracted by a sound of scraping on a wall or glass, also
13. The room groans and tilts back and forth, the floor turns to tar like viscosity and the characters start sinking into it. In addition, if they try to get out the hand of some creature grabs the last character by the ankle and starts pulling them under.
14. A footman or lackey stumbles with a platter, and the food tumbles onto the ground. The heartless guests at the table will almost certainly not help him in any way, and will probably ridicule him. Will he be motivated to take brutal revenge at a later time?
15. The curtains and furniture in the room start smoldering and catch on fire, spreading quickly. If there is a fireplace in the room, it will emit a beastlike roar as flames and thick black smoke spew forth. The conflagration will
16. The door slams shut, sending a character sprawling on the ground and splitting the group. The room then starts shrinking down.
17. Character steps through a door and steps out through a mirror in another room. If they turn around, they seem themselves staring at themselves with a mocking smirk on their face and will withdraw a weapon or a piece of broken glass to cut their own throat.
18. The characters enter a room that seems to be in pristine condition, with guests or manor staff or Mittenmeier family members about and doing their business without paying much attention. If they are interacted with directly they will turn to crystalline ice statues, temperature in the room will turn to freezing cold and all light will be snuffed out. Touching these statues will send them crashing down on the floor and explode into razor sharp shards.
19. The characters enter a room and catch sight of another group of people just leaving. If they rush after them and leave through that door, they'll be bursting back into the room they just left and catch a glimpse of themselves leaving the room. If they don't chase, or call after the group leaving, the door will be opened again and they will see themselves peeking into the room, give a startled yelp and slam the door shut.
20. Walking past a window, a character will catch a glimpse of the moon. The moon's surface has turned to an evil scowling face and it will lock eyes with the character, glaring at them menacingly. If the character does not avert their eyes, the moon will seem to grow larger and larger until it fills
21. Character's purse or scabbard suddenly becomes loose and falls to the ground. The character is startled to find the culprit that knocked the item down, a disembodied hand that is reaching out from their pocket, from under their shirt, etc. and upon being discovered will slither back to it's hiding place inside the character's clothing, never to be seen again.

Temporally unstable:
Flickers between a state of wholeness and decay
Door bites the hand
Lights go out
Fireplace
A paper from Laurenz von Mittermeier's journal is found. It is a feverish writing of a desperate man detailing various attempts of both science and occult nature of him researching methods to bring back the dead. It finishes with

WORK IN PROGRESS

WORK IN PROGRESS

The Mittenmeier Manor

ENTERING THE MANOR:
Upon their arrival into the manor, it will be in a decrepit and rundown state. The windows broken, some of the interior walls and ceiling buckled and collapsed, leaves, dirt and litter cluttered about inside. The staircase looks unsafe and only few doors are still hung up on their hinges. It looks abandoned and like it has been derelict for years.

Overview of the manor grounds buildings.
The buildings are weatherworn and rotted, their roofs buckled and broken in some places and letting the weather in, the windows are broken and their hatches hanging crooked by the iron hinges. The Carriagehouse and the gatehouse have solid stonework foundation and their roofs are shingled with tiles and have withstood the wear better. There is a chimney poking out from the gatehouse.

G. COUCH-HOUSE
The couch-house is 30' high and has steep stairs leading up to the loft in the back, behind the decrepit carriage. The carriage is not operable, the main axle having given away and the entire vehicle is slumped and stooped with bent wheels and peeling lacquer. Inside the carriage, however after some searching one could find loose coinage in between the seat cushions. Hung on spokes on the walls are half rotted leather horse collars, straps, bridles and other spares and parts for the carriage. Up on the loft is midway hay piles and a scattering of rusted bands remaining from barrels that have rotted away. Amongst the refuse is an angry nest of vicious rats, and the remains of the cabby's purse. If more than one character climbs up on the stairs or on the loft at a time, the loft will groan and the boards will collapse, sending the players and most of the loft crashing down. HAZARD + TREASURE
Rats, rotted loft & stairs

STURM UND DRANG

It is recommended that there is a thunderstorm brewing during the scenario, it builds up and darkens the skies as the players approach the manor. This serves both to make the characters seek shelter from the upcoming rain, set the befitting mood for a horror scenario and mask the movements of the undead forces that start moving in towards the characters once they've broken the perimeter of the mansion grounds. Referee should be sure to regularly mention the storm rumbling, the pounding of the rain and the cracks of lightning at opportune dramatic moments.

FIREPLACES & CHIMNEYS
The fireplaces and chimneys of the Mittenmeier Manor have transformed into an interconnected network of otherwordly portals. Should a character crawl or look inside a fireplace, or when a Haunting Event is called for, the character is swept inside and carried off in a swirl of fire and smoke by unknown forces and unceremoniously dumped out through another fireplace. Either roll or choose from the Chimney Table. The Fireplaces in the Attic are seperated to their own table, for the Atelier (A4) and Gallery (A3) fireplaces would be best not accessed the end of the adventure.

FLOOR	FIREPLACE	D12			
Ground	G5	1	Upper	U5	7
Ground	G2	2	Upper	U2	8
Ground	G3	3	Upper	U7	9
Ground	G7	4	Upper	U9	10
Ground	G8	5	Upper	U1	11
Ground	G9	6	Upper	U3	12
		D4			
Attic	A2	1			
Attic	A3	2			
Attic	A4	3			
Attic	A6	4			

G. STABLE
The stable is single story, 12' high wooden building. It is connected to the carriagehouse by a door and there are stalls for six horses. There's naught but remains here, however, and all the bridles, brushes and brooms on the wall are in a sorry state and no longer of any worth. The copperplates on the stall doors are tarnished beyond legibility and inside each stall one can make out the bleached remains of horse skeletons.

G. GATEHOUSE
The gatehouse looks like it would have been quite cozy at a time, there is a fireplace on the door facing wall and it looks like it has been in use not too long ago, with heat still lingering in the old bricks. The broken windows also look to have been boarded up recently, with straw and scraps of sackcloth stuffed in the gaps. On the floor you can see 5 sleeping bags and an oilcloth backpack. TREASURE

G. KENNEL
The kennel is little more than a shed, with a slanted wooden shake roof. The wall height is 9' and the building is 15' wide and 10' deep. The kennel looks weatherworn and rotted, with only small windows for light and ventilation high up on the wall. Inside the kennel there is a strong animal scent and it is divided into four separate cages with a rusted wire mesh that is now mostly bent and broken.

G. FOUNTAIN
The fountain is 8' high and 20' in diameter, the basin cracked and filled with a compost of leaves and dirt and the once pure limestone construction now yellowed and pockmarked. The fountain has a pair of human figures dancing in the center, and the broken remains of another scattered about in the basin. On the basin is written the motto and the family name: "Difficulties are nothing when faced with Determination. - von Mittermeier"

Overview of the Ground Level.
The road of limestone paving stones leads up to the staired manor porch that is the main entrance. Under the porch there are steps leading down to the basement entrance. An overgrown path leads around the right wing of the manor to the servant's entrance deck, where there is also a narrow staircase leading down to the basement wing of servants' quarters. Near the foundation of the manor the filth encrusted windows of the basement can be seen, and a small character might be able to squeeze through. All the way back around the building is the back door entrance and stairs. The supporting and exterior walls are sturdy brick. The inner walls are timbered frame with plaster and

G. VESTIBULE
The vestibule has grand mosaic marble flooring, adding to the opulence is large draping grey curtains on the south wall and paintings hung on the northern wall. The wide staircase climbs up 10' to a landing where it forks to two leading up further 5' to the mezzanine balcony on the second floor. There are plinths with busts on them on the west and east wall, in between the doors leading out of the hall. The balcony overlooking the hall is supported by pillars and the room is lit by a massive chandelier and two wrought iron candelabras flanking the staircase.

G. SMOKING ROOM
This square room smells strongly of tobacco, firewood and smoke. The southern wall has a fireplace and it is surrounded by several buck heads hung up on the walls. The fireplace is circled by four well-worn leather armchairs, most of them have a small table beside them with ashtrays. Against the west wall there is a cupboard with a glass case and a bar, containing several boxes and pouches, the source of the smells. The room is typically lit by the fireplace, candelabra or a on the mantle.
Treasure: searching the cupboard will net the character a collection of snuffs, tobaccos, smoked teas, lump of hashish and a lump of opium, and a tincture of opium (Laudanum) (euphoric sedative)
Haunting: The four seats are taken by four noble looking gentlemen in decades old garb, they seem to be inebriated and are chattering mirthfully. A serviceman enters carrying a platter bearing glasses of spirits, he is tripped by the walking cane of one of the ghosts playing a mean trick. As the servant crashes down with the glasses, the spirits start berating and mocking him, until they are frothing at the mouth and beating the serviceman with their canes and hurling tables and furniture around in a savage fury. Their eyes glint evilly and they melt into the furniture, that then attacks the characters! Armchair, ottoman, side table, couch. All considered Fodder, except for the couch that is a Grunt.

G. DRAWING ROOM
The drawing room is large and ostentatious, with plenty of art hung up on the walls, and statues, and sculptures provided as entertainment for the guests. The bay windows to the south have cushions set upon the sills for lounging. There are two suits of ornate armor each holding a tarnished polearm.
Treasure: The suit of armor is in reasonably good condition and three pieces of it may be salvaged to be worn. However it is not fitted properly and will only count as 1 armor point. The bronze polearms are suitable weapons and will inflict damage as normal against the incorporeal enemies in the

G. GAME ROOM

There is a large rich wood table with an enbanked play area of green felt, and tables with equipment such as the maces, mallets and cues. Additional equipment including the "arch" (related to the croquet hoop), "port" (a different hoop) and "king" pin are placed on tables on the northern wall.
Haunting: Three gentlemen are playing a game of billiards and conversing in generally genial manner until one begins accusing the other of cheating on the scorecards or redoing a shot, there is obviously money on the line and the verbal turns into a physical scuffle and they start wailing at each other with the cues and maces.

G. LIBRARY
The large windows on the western go all the way up, yet the room has plenty of dark shadows due to it's high shelves stacked full of books. On the southern end of the room, there is a mechanical staircase with a connected gear driven machinery and a crank for raising and lowering the staircase. The staircase is currently halfway up. Lowering it to the ground level will stop the machinery. But if the crank is pulled out and turned over and inserted back into the machinery, the staircase can be cranked to lower the staircase into the basement. This same action will also lower the secret staircase on the library balcony to access the secret attic library.
Haunting: Man in a

G. GRAND DINING ROOM
Large fireplace with a
Two 20ft long tables with seats for 30 people and a staggering amount of soups, fish, poultry, meat, and roast dishes. As a centerpiece on each of the tables is a large covered platter. Lifting the cover, reveals steaming roast made out of half of the character lifting the cover, the other half is on the second platter.
Treasure: There is 190 shillings worth of cutlery in the room.

G. SUNROOM
The room smells strongly of soil and plant matter and has a thick, musty atmosphere. The room would be well lit by the generous windows on both the west and north wall reaching all the way up to the second story, but it is lush and overgrown with vegetation. There are creeper vines curling up along the walls, snaking along the curtains and curling up the pillars to get to the balconied second story. There is a set of wrought iron patio furniture, a table and two chairs and a bench, that have been rusted through and tossed aside by the grand bulbous flower growing in the middle of the room.

G. MUSIC ROOM
This smaller room has a divider and a half stage and several couches and chairs, some stacked up and pushed behind a divider.
Treasure: A search will reveal a 20 schilling worth silver flute and one violin in good condition worth at least 70 schilling

G. GRAND STAIRCASE
On the north end of the room there is a pair of matched staircases spiraling up to the second floor floor. There is also a double door exit out into the back of the mansion. The room is lit by a two tiered chandelier and candleholders on the

G. GRAND BALLROOM
G-L HALLWAY
The hallway is carpeted and decorated with tapestries and paintings hung on the walls.
Treasure: Random painting, worth 30 schillings
G-R HALLWAY
G. KITCHEN
G. SCULLERY
G. PANTRY
G. MAID'S RESIDENCE
This modestly furnished room is clearly for a member of the staff, yet it luckily has a fireplace in it for some extra comfort. There is a simple bed against the west wall near the fireplace and a writing desk with a chair agains the east wall. On the south wall there is a small dresser and a vanity next to it.
Treasure: The vanity and dresser will net the character some cheap jewellery and bone combs and hat needles, worth 10 shillings. Study has a silvered letteropener that can count as a dagger against the incorporeal enemies.
Haunting: There is a
G. COOK'S RESIDENCE
G. BUTLER'S RESIDENCE
G. SMALL DINING ROOM
The small dining room is often used by just the family to have their breakfast and supper.
Haunting: There is an artists easel set up next to the table and the young woman is standing in front of it and painting the subject, a piece of still-life vase with fruit in it, pitcher and tall glass and a seated pregnant woman wearing a grey flowing dress
G. STAIRCASE
This unassuming staircase lacks decoration and looks to be

2. M. ANTECHAMBER

2. M. DRESSING ROOM

2. M. BEDROOM

2. L. ANTECHAMBER

2. L. DRESSING ROOM

2. L. BEDROOM

2. D. ANTECHAMBER

2. D. DRESSING ROOM

2. D. BEDROOM
The room feels colder than the other, there is even snow piled up into banks in the corner of the wall facing a large painting. There is a brass plaque under the painting, titling it "Thundersnow on the Drachenberg Summit"
In the painting, you can see furred troll-like creatures clawing at the rockface of the mountain as they're being pummelled by the blizzard. Near the summit you can just make out a tiny object that appears to be a key, suspended in midair.

2. BATHROOM
Screendividers, copper batthubs, paintings on the wall with portraits that eyes seem to follow and on the ceiling there is a mural depicting what appears to be a historical scene of classical period philosophers debating or lecturing.

2. SEWING ROOM

2. CLOSET

FLOODED and stinking of damp and mildew
B. SECRET STAIRCASE
Visible through the basement window
B. SECRET ALCHEMY LABORATORY
Equipment and shelves and a large fireplace with a large copper cauldron hung
A pitiable pale hunchbacked creature with a resemblance of human is huddled into a corner with shackles around his wrists.

Treasure:
Alchemical Base - Dilute any potion/poison that you have, 1/2 it's effects if possible but extend it's uses to create 3 poisons with 1/2 the effect
Fire Breathing potion – For one hour, drinking alcoholic beverage allows you to breathe it out as fire, similar to a dragon's breath. It takes one action to drink the beverage, and one action to breath it out. Being hit before expelling out the flames has a 1/6 chance of inhaling the flames accidentally, harming the imbiber instead
Homunculus, and a book detailing the process of creating false life titled De Natura Rerum
B. ALTAR
B. STAFF DINING ROOM
Modestly furnished
Treasure: Cutlery worth 60 shillings
B. LARDER
Rotten carcasses of animals are hung up on meathooks suspended from the ceiling
B. WINE CELLAR
Treasure: Some wines stacked high on the shelves and corked tightly have survived the damp and flooding. 1d10 bottles are in good condition and worth 1d6+2 gc each

B. SECRET PASSAGE
B. TOOL STORAGE
BASEMENT FOYER
B. FURNITURE STORAGE
B. FIREWOOD & COAL STORAGE
B. MAID'S RESIDENCE
B. GARDENER'S RESIDENCE
B. CRYPT

2. PARLOR

2. VAULT
Treasure: Safe with a combination of 11-7-40, the death of his wife & son. Inside goods and documents and gems worth 120 gc, 60 schilling
Ring of The Gourmand - While wearing this ring, the person can swallow a single object, the size of this object should be judged with DM discretion but suggested to be limited to weighing up to 440 lbs. Such as a safe, a trunk, a light cannon, halberd, etc. The creatures features stretch and distend to allow for the disturbing action of swallowing the object. Once the object has been swallowed, the creature returns to normal and the object is in an extradimensional space. Upon removing the ring, the creature will violently spew forth the object, stunned and shaken by the experience but otherwise unharmed.

2. STAIRCASE

A. STAIRCASE
A. GALLERY
There are several paintings in this room, some propped up unfinished in their stands, covered up with sheets or some just piled on top of each other on a table somewhere. There are objects like vases and bowls and bottles and glasses in this room and rotted filth where there was once fruit

A. FURNITURE STORAGE
–
A. TAXIDERMY STORAGE
Taxidermy animals attack
Scapegoat - Person who's done a great sin or suffered corruption or disease may as part of a ritualistic ablution prepare a meal of grain and shear their hair as an act of penance. The person will also draw blood and mix this, the hair and the meal together and feed it to the Scapegoat, a taxidermied mummified billygoat.

A. ATELIER
Final painting, titled "Gena's escape" depicting a mundane landscape. It is raining in the painting and drops of water are dripping out of the frame and raining out of the picture.
On the walls there are hung curtains and the floor is covered in empty pots of paint and painting supplies, used and dried up palettes and empy bottles of thinner
A. OBSERVATORY
There is a magical circle
A. SECRET LIBRARY
Spellbook - written on the walls
Liber Mortis, book of academic knowledge
A. READING ROOM

CONCLUSION
Diving through the frame of the painting, the players plunge back into the safety of the world. They've dropped into a serene location, a homestead on the river that they saw in the painting. Looking back, they can see the ripple of unreality of the frame that they stepped through, and the raging fury of the demon trapped in Mittenmeier Manor is already fading before their eyes. As the referee, you may place this homestead where and when it's convenient for your campaign. Inside the cottage lives Gena von Mittermeier, who now goes by Gena Hauptmann. She is 78.

Tables & Reference

Treasury
The Library
Arms & Armor
Curiosities
Magic Items

Map
Handouts

Helpful descriptors
Acid-ethed
Plumed
Embossed
Gem-inlaid
Filigreed
Blackened Steel
Inscribed
Gilded

Materials
Beaver fur, fox fur, marten fur, ermine fur, sable fur, squirrel fur, bear fur, velvet, silk, linen, wool, cotton, gold, gemstones, mother of pearl, platinum, jade, meteorite iron, obsidian, opal, split geode, pearls, etc.

TREASURE

D20		VALUE — 1d10 x 20c	
1	Painting	11	Fine clothing
2	Coins	12	Incense
3	Candlestick	13	Spyglass
4	Sculpture	14	Tobacco
5	Fine spirits	15	Silverware
6	Jewellery	16	Trophies
7	Reading glasses	17	Bottle of perfume
8	Gemstones	18	Artisan tools
9	Vintage bottle of wine	19	Musical Instrument
10	Hourglass	20	Spices

Guide: Whenever the Players are rummaging for loot, The Referee can quickly scrounge up some treasure from these options or roll for it. They decide that there's two objects that look interesting, scoring a 5, and a 6. Following this, they roll the 1d10 values, scoring a 10, and a 3.

Collecting the results, the Referee tells the Players there's a *bottle of fine aged spirits* stashed in a drawer and wrapped in some linen, with a *jewellery set* kept in a small case. The bottle of spirits is valued at 200c *(derived from the rolls of 10 x 20c for the value)* and the jewellery set has value of 60c *(a roll of 3 x 20c for the value)*.

THE LIBRARY

The library of von Mittermeier's is extensive and has books on various topics of interest. Half of the collection in the public library is of fiction and entertainment books, stories, poetry and musings by various authors. The other half deals in humanities and natural sciences. Some books of more esoteric knowledge might have slipped in among the volumes, but generally books containing spells, rituals, alchemical knowledge and lores of daemonology and necromancy are to be found in Laurenz' study, laboratory, private library or perhaps left lying around in his quarters.

When the Player searches for books in the library or the public rooms of the manor, roll on the Books table. On a result of 10, roll again on the Forbidden Lore table. This book is found in addition to the first, hidden behind the more mundane book.

The Base Value for books in the Entertainment collection is 1d4 x 20c (Price range 10-200 coins)
The Base Value for the books in the Science collection is 1d4 x 40c (Price range 20-400 coins)
The Base Value for the books in the Forbidden Lore is 2d4 x 60c (Price range 60-1,200 coins)

D10	ENTERTAINMENT	SCIENCES		D10	FORBIDDEN LORE
1	Theatre play	Bestiary		1	Magic
2	Poetry	Astronomy		2	Necromancy
3	Folklore	Taxidermy		3	Daemonology
4	Cookbook	Metallurgy		4	Lycanthropy
5	Gardening	Cartography		5	Alchemy
6	Music	Engineering		6	Cryptology, Ciphers & Codes
7	Philosophy	Religion		7	Torture
8	Art	Cartography		8	Forbidden Religion
9	Biography	History		9	Chiromancy
10	Erotica	Alchemy		10	Mesmerism

D4	QUALITY	VALUE MULTIPLIER
1	Printed	½
2	Printed, Woodcut Illustrations	1½
2	Manuscript	2
3	Illustrated Manuscript	2½

Guide: A Player wants to search the library for valuable or interesting books. The Referee could pick from the options or roll for it. They decide that there are no Forbidden Lore books present here and flip a coin to choose between Entertainment or Sciences. They roll for Quality, scoring a 1. Then they roll on the Entertainment table, scoring a 3.

Adding all together, the Referee tells the player that there's a *"printed book of Folklore"* here, valued at measly 10c (a roll of 1 x 20 for the value and a Printed multiplier of x ½).

ARMS & ARMOR

D4	QUALITY	VALUE MULTIPLIER
1	Ceremonial	2
2	Decorative	1½
3	Heirloom	3
4	Tarnished	½

Tarnished arms & armor are historical pieces of equipment meant for display, they have -1 penalty to their effectiveness, where appropriate.
Decorative equipment is made for display purposes. They are studded with gems and have beautiful designs and filigree detailing, but they break on a *fumbled* attack roll and have the -1 penalty
Ceremonial pieces are made or adapted to be used and worn on suitable occasions, but are descended from practical items. They are richly decorated and well maintained, in practice they function as normal.
Heirlooms are well preserved and often masterwork quality, both beautiful and practical pieces of craftsmanship. They have a +1 bonus.

D12	WEAPON	VALUE x 10c	D12	ARMOR	VALUE x 10c
1	Dagger	d6	1	Gauntlets	d6
2	Arming Sword	d10	2	Tournament Shield	d10
3	Winged Spear	d8	3	Round Shield	d8
4	Flanged Mace	d10	4	Buckler	d10
5	Halberd	d12	5	Leather Cuirass	d12
6	Battle Axe	d8	6	Chainmail	2d6
7	Great Sword	2d6	7	Breastplate	4d6
8	Rapier & Parrying Dagger	2d6	8	Half plate armor	4d10
9	Lance	d8	9	Full plate armor	6d10
10	Bow	d8	10	Open Helm	d10
11	Crossbow	d10	11	Close Helm	d12
12	Pair of Falchions	2d6	12	Horse Barding	6d6

Guide: A Player asks if there's any weapons or armor in the parlour room. The Referee decides that there would be weapons mounted on walls or displayed in cases, and perhaps a decorative suit of armor stood in the corner.

The Referee could pick from the options or roll for it. They decide there's one of each that stand out in the room. They roll first for Quality, scoring a 1 and a 3. Following this, they roll on the Weapon table, scoring 5, and again for the Armor table, scoring 8.

Collecting the results, the Referee tells the Player there's a *Ceremonial Halberd* mounted on the wall above the fireplace, with a *Heirloom quality Breastplate* resting on the mantel beneath it. The halberd is valued at 60c *(derived from a roll of 3 x 10 for the value and a Ceremonial multiplier of x2)* and the breastplate has a hefty value of 570c *(a roll of 19 x 10 for the value and a Heirloom multiplier of x3)*.

CURIOSITIES

D20	CURIOSITIES	VALUE — 1d4 x hundreds c + 1d10 x tens c
1	A horn grown from a human forehead, with a brass plaque and mounted on an oak stand. The plaque reads *Specimen: Juvenile male - Wrath*.	
2	A deformed fetus, preserved in a glass container. Whatever it was, it appears to have had six limbs or appendages.	
3	Tiny velvet cushion with a bezoar stone on it, smooth pebble about the size of a hen's egg. Attached label reads *Quinotaur - Shipwreck Coast*.	
4	An ancient, petrified thigh bone of a large unknown creature, mounted on a wall.	
5	A flayed human appendage (hand, foot, arm, leg) preserved for anatomical study. It's encased in clear resin and mounted on a stone plinth.	
6	Collection of six conserved fetal beings, appears to be the same species(cow, pig, sheep, goat, reptile, goblin) but at varying stages of growth.	
7	A corkboard display, adorned with a variety of preserved insects like beetles and butterflies. The largest among them is a dragonfly, boasting a wingspan of 10 inches.	
8	A square gold coin of unknown origin. The design has inscriptions in an obscure language. It feels heavier than its size would suggest.	
9	A stretched out hide of a large reptilian creature, possibly a snake. It feels slightly warm to the touch.	
10	A handheld silver mirror, gleaming with a polished finish, set on an intricate scrimshaw handle.	
11	Unrecognisable religious effigy, carved out of bone or horn. The features appear to have been intentionally defaced.	
12	A glass display case containing a collection of distorted skulls, both human and animal, all resting on a cushion of black velvet.	
13	Bisected bird of prey mounted on a branch of an olive tree and solidified with transparent resin. The bird's organs are displayed for anatomical study.	
14	A tobacco pipe set, carved from ivory, accompanied by a silver pipe cleaning tool.	
15	An exotic looking mask of ebony, adorned with large white plumes, depicts a contorted human visage with beast-like characteristics.	
16	Wax anatomical figure in a contrapposto pose. Detailed representation of the circulatory system, done with golden thread and embedded within it.	
17	A human head, embalmed and resin coated, is mounted on a plinth. It has been divided into four parts, each revealing a deeper layer, until it culminates in a bisection revealing only the skull.	
18	A pair of withered mandrake roots bearing a striking resemblance to a mother cradling her child. The likeness is unnerving.	
19	A mummified cat, mounted on a wooden stand. An inscribed plaque on it reads *Felis Horribilis*.	
20	A tiny wooden box embellished with intricate silver designs, containing a set ivory knitting needles.	

Guide: A Player asks what valuables are displayed in the grand ballroom of the manor. The Referee decides that there are objects displayed on plinths flanking the doors.

They could pick from the options presented or roll for it. The Referee decides to roll twice, first on the Curiosities table, scoring a 15 and 18.

After determining the value of the objects, the Referee tells the player there's a *"wooden mask adorned with feathers"* mounted on one plinth, with a *"pair of withered mandrake roots"* displayed under a glass dome on the other. The mask is valued at 460c (derived from a d4 roll of 4 for hundreds and d10 roll of 6 for tens) and the roots value at 240c (derived from a d4 roll of 2 for hundreds and d10 roll of 4 for tens).
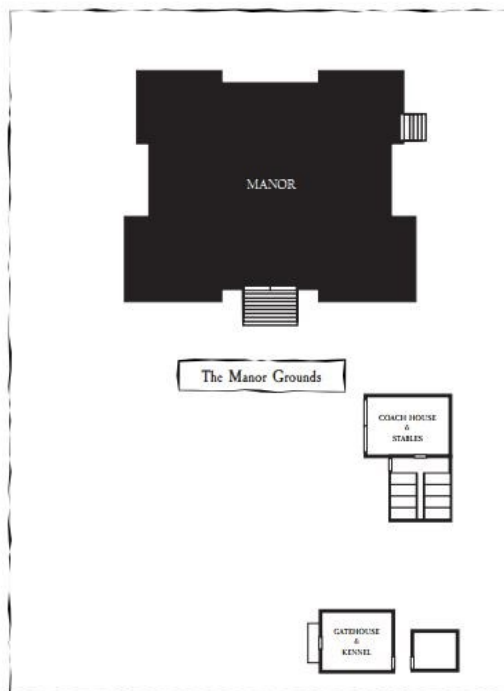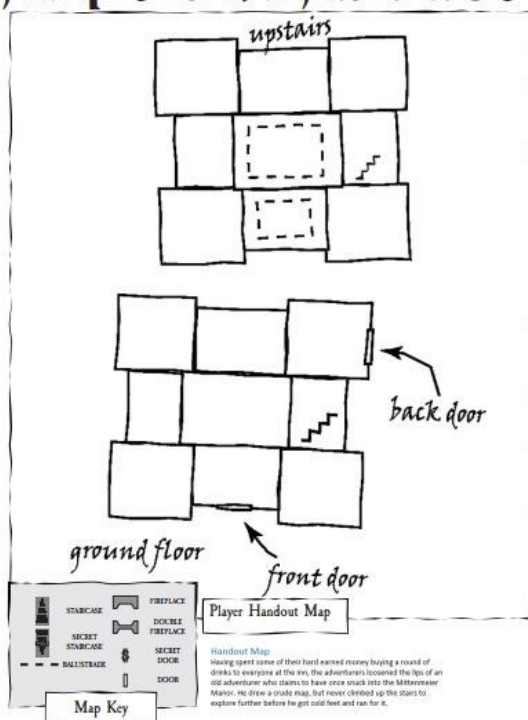
MAGIC ITEMS

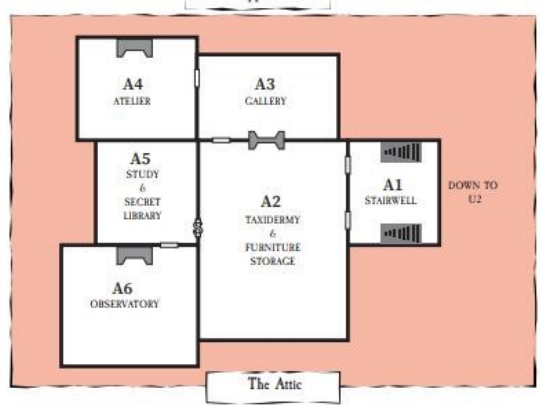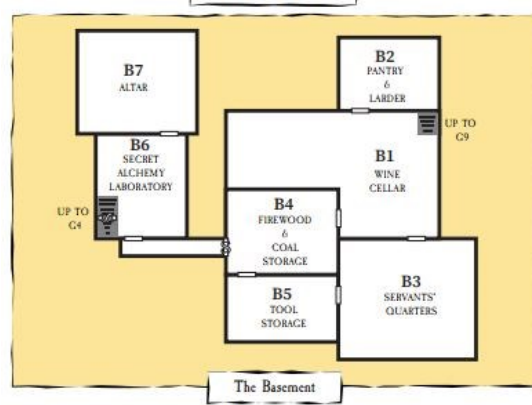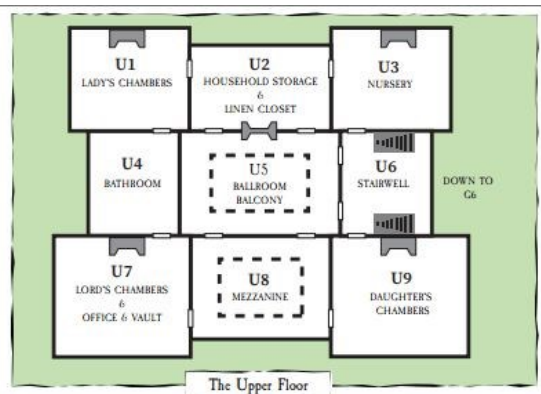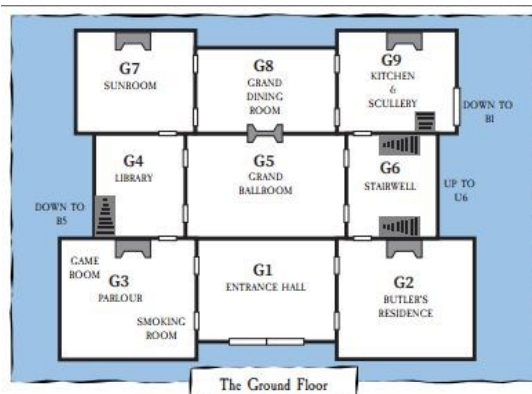1. **Patsy Doll** - This is a porcelain doll of a girl adorned in a ruffled dress. The doll possesses a unique enchantment that enables 'teledollation'. Upon uttering a command phrase, the spell swaps the positions of the creature that was previously holding the doll and Patsy the Doll. To activate the magic, one must hold the doll, chant the first part of the command, place or throw the doll where desired, and then utter the second part to conclude the spell. The magic phrases take the form of a limerick, such as 'Two owls and a hen / Four larks and a wren'

2. **Firebelly Brew** - Quaffing this highly alcoholic and combustible beverage enables the drinker to exhale it as a gust of flames, akin to a dragon's breath. It requires six seconds to consume the beverage and another six seconds to breathe it out. If the drinker is struck before they can breathe out the fire, there's a one-in-six chance they'll accidentally inhale the flames, resulting in a perilous hiccup of spontaneous combustion that harms the drinker.

3. **Ring of The Gourmand** - This ring grants the wearer the ability to swallow a single object. The maximum size of this object is subject to the referee's discretion, but suggested to be limited to weighing up to 440 lbs, or alternatively up to twice the weight of the ring's wearer. The range of objects can include items such as a safe, a trunk, a light cannon, a halberd, etc. The wearer's features stretch and distend to accommodate the unsettling act of swallowing the object. Once swallowed, the wearer's features return to normal, and the object is stored in an extradimensional space. Upon removing the ring, the wearer will violently expel the object, left stunned and shaken by the experience but otherwise unharmed.

4. **Bag Containing a Witch's Head** - This item is the severed head of a powerful witch, long deceased and withered, stuffed in a cloth bag. Her lips and eyelids have been sewn shut. If these threads are undone and an object with a strong sympathetic connection to a target creature (such as a ring, a lock of hair, or a vial of blood) is placed in her mouth, the individual clutching the witch's head while sleeping can perceive the target's dreams through this sympathetic connection. This effect continues until the object is removed from her mouth.

5. **A Book on Homunculus by Threophastus Bombastus** - This esoteric collection of research notes delves into the forbidden art of creating a homunculus, an alchemical test-tube humanoid that serves as a living servant resembling a miniature human. The creation process necessitates a laboratory, sperm, animal blood, and a vessel for the homunculus to grow in. This requires a span of 40 days and 40 weeks.

6. **Alchemical Base** - This solution can be used to dilute any potion or poison. Depending on the original effects, they are halved if possible, but the use of this solution triples the volume of the liquid, thus creating more doses. For instance, a healing potion that normally heals for 10 hitpoints would dilute into three potions, each healing for 5 hitpoints. Similarly, an invisibility potion that normally lasts for a minute would dilute into three potions, each providing 30 seconds of invisibility.

7. **Swear Jar** - At first glance, this appears to be a pickle jar filled with brine, sprigs of thyme, chunks of carrot, and silverskin onions. However, upon closer inspection, one can see bubbles displacing the brine. If a person reaches into the jar and bursts one of these bubbles, it will emit a stream of harsh, mocking profanities. This outburst stuns anyone within the range of a human shout for a full five seconds, leaving their ears ringing and their egos bruised. Once they recover, their next action will be to attack, offend, or hinder the person who burst the bubble, to the best of their abilities.

8. **Mummified Monkey's Head** - Whisper the name of a creature and kiss the monkey's lips. The monkey's eyes will open and flare up. You will then be able to see through the monkey's eyes, perceiving traces such as footsteps and handprints left behind by the creature whose name you whispered. These marks are illuminated by ethereal, flames visible only to your monkey-eyes. However, you will be blind to everything else and must hold the monkey head in your hands.

9. **Scapegoat** - is a taxidermied billy goat with bright red horns and jet-black, gleaming velvet fur. A person who has committed a grave sin or is suffering from corruption or disease may, as part of a ritualistic ablution, prepare a meal of grain and shear their hair as an act of penance. They will also draw blood and mix it with the hair and meal. This mixture is then fed to the Scapegoat.

10. **Potion of Stone Shape** - Consuming this potion results in the drinker's petrification, the duration of which is determined by the dosage. Roll a six-sided die (d6) to determine the dosage: 1 for minutes, 2 for quarters of an hour, 3 for hours, 4 for days, 5 for weeks, and 6 for months. Then, roll another d6 to determine the number of these time units. For instance, a roll of 3 and 4 would result in petrification for four hours.

MAPS & HANDOUTS

Player Handout Map

Handout Map
Having spent some of their hard earned money buying a round of drinks to everyone at the inn, the adventurers loosened the lips of an old adventurer who claims to have once snuck into the Mittenmeier Manor. He drew a crude map, but never climbed up the stairs to explore further before he got cold feet and ran for it.

Map Key
STAIRCASE · FIREPLACE · DOUBLE FIREPLACE · SECRET STAIRCASE · SECRET DOOR · BALUSTRADE · DOOR

The Manor Grounds

MANOR

COACH HOUSE & STABLES

GATEHOUSE & KENNEL

The Ground Floor

G7 SUNROOM

G8 GRAND DINING ROOM

G9 KITCHEN & SCULLERY

DOWN TO B1

G4 LIBRARY

G5 GRAND BALLROOM

G6 STAIRWELL

UP TO U6

DOWN TO B5

GAME ROOM

G3 PARLOUR

SMOKING ROOM

G1 ENTRANCE HALL

G2 BUTLER'S RESIDENCE

The Upper Floor

U1 LADY'S CHAMBERS

U2 HOUSEHOLD STORAGE & LINEN CLOSET

U3 NURSERY

U4 BATHROOM

U5 BALLROOM BALCONY

U6 STAIRWELL

DOWN TO G6

U7 LORD'S CHAMBERS & OFFICE & VAULT

U8 MEZZANINE

U9 DAUGHTER'S CHAMBERS

The Basement

B7 ALTAR

B2 PANTRY & LARDER

UP TO G9

B6 SECRET ALCHEMY LABORATORY

B1 WINE CELLAR

UP TO G4

B4 FIREWOOD & COAL STORAGE

B5 TOOL STORAGE

B3 SERVANTS' QUARTERS

The Attic

A4 ATELIER

A3 GALLERY

A5 STUDY & SECRET LIBRARY

A2 TAXIDERMY & FURNITURE STORAGE

A1 STAIRWELL

DOWN TO U2

A6 OBSERVATORY

Appendix 2. Player survey

What was the most frustrating moment or aspect of what you just played?
4 responses

It got a bit long by the end and I was kind of tuning out.

at some point i got a bit lost with what and where was happening but that probably has more to do with me not being physically at the table

Sometimes feeling like other characters did not want to participate in the same activities.

Dropping down to 2 wounds in the opening act and worrying about that through the adventure

What was your favorite moment or aspect of what you just played?
4 responses

It was a lot of fun to play the new character and play him off the other characters.

being a comet the divine manifestation of dazh

Random events, the unexpected magic shenanigans like climbing the stairs area.

Players getting separated, disappearing and appearing in random places was cool

Was there anything you wanted to do that you couldn't?
4 responses

I wanted to use dance to fight the gargoyle!!!

no

I did want to try blessing my party members weapons for effective use, but never got around for good opportunity to do so.

No

If you could change, add, or remove anything from the experience, what would it be?
4 responses

Opening the map all at once maybe made the flow a bit strange.

probably less splitting the party and cutting it in two sessions
i think after clock hit 9 i completely zoned out, so the culmination of meeting the pig kind of didn't make as big impression as it should/could have

Hard to think of anything, it is a group effort. Maybe a additional player character that does scouting and sneaking activities.

Maybe add a healing potion to the gatehouse or coach house? idk

What were you doing in the experience?
4 responses

Having fun with my friends!!

being a comet the divine manifestation of dazh + healing

Getting myself into situations that force me to use the warhammer magic system which is something to be rarely done. Miscasting a lot as a result.

exploring, looking for the brigands and/or the source of the haunting

How would you describe this game to your friends and family?
4 responses

A fun game where you collaborate with your friends and pretend to be magical people

haunted mansion adventure?

Brutal fun fantasy adventures.

A horror themed dungeon crawl in a dusty manor filled with spooks and shenanigans

Exploration & hazards

How satisfying was the exploration?   Copy
4 responses

What was the most satisfying part of the exploration?
4 responses

Finding the new rooms and the haunting me was a lot of fun

roleplaying the character during

Peeking into a room and not knowing what to expect. When the manor got re-invented and I went about looking into rooms I had explored before.

The horror anomalies

How challenging was the exploration?   Copy
4 responses

What was the most challenging part of the exploration?
4 responses

It was quite easy to just rush from room to room

being away from the table

Trying to sneak with a character that is ill-suited to sneaking.

Fear of death

(continues)

How much was there left undiscovered?

4 responses

How lost did you feel during the exploration?

4 responses

How clearly were the locations described?

4 responses

How clearly were the secret rooms signposted?

4 responses

There were traps in the mansion. Did their placement seem fair?

4 responses

Were the rewards for exploration sufficient

4 responses

Roleplay & Interactions

How enjoyable was interacting with the NPCs?

4 responses

Which NPC did you interact with the most?

4 responses
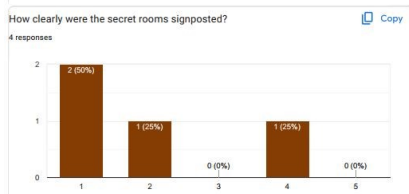
The gargoyle

none?

the.. scary pigman? I did not really interact with any NPCs outside of combat.

-

Which NPC would you have liked to have interacted with more?

4 responses

The gargoyle

none?

The brigands we were after initially.

What was the most challenging encounter

4 responses

The gargoyle

gargoyles?

The Pigman

The first one with the dogs

Why was it challenging?

4 responses

I deal terrible damage and they had a lot of armour/toughness

i was unconscious for most of it

because I have -1 to magic my options for challenging encounters are very limited.

They hit very hard

What was the least challenging encounter

4 responses

The dogs

dogs

The dogs or the Gargoyles.

The skewer piggy at the end

Why was it unchallenging?

4 responses

Because I was just running around on a horse

they die with one hit? although they messed me up first which lead to gargoyles being bad news

Attacking them to death seemed to do the trick. Lucky rolls.

Just didn't seem very lethal even with the advantage of getting a critical table roll

How challenging was the encounter with the gargoyles?   Copy

4 responses

How challenging was the encounter with the reanimated dogs?   Copy

4 responses

How challenging was the encounter with the taxidermied creatures?   Copy

4 responses

How challenging was the encounter with the cook?   Copy

4 responses

How challenging was the encounter with the carnivorous plant?   Copy

4 responses

What was the most unclear event or experience that you found hard to understand?

4 responses

Nothing in particular I think? If anything was confusing I could always just ask

Initially, me exploring the manor and having hard time understanding the actions of my party members. Should I also just sit in a room and spend time? I was wondering afterwards if the intent was that the GM would do something big instead of player explorations as I did.

Also making something out of what I saw with failed magic sense and seeing GM kind of worried about it. I didn't intent to push the narrative my own way, just winging it.

at the start i was quite confused with the rooms in the mansion as there were so many and we had the time travel thing going on.

The Pigman in the kitchen encounter

Regarding the previous answer, what could've helped to clarify this? 📋 Copy

4 responses

- Better explanation of mechanics at play
- Better narration of things that…
- Better narration of the environ…
- Visual aids such as illustratio…
- Play aids, such as miniatures…
- Hand-out map of the location
- -
- Probably just down to more e…
- being at the game physically
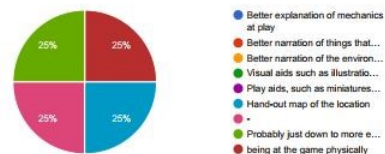
After finishing the adventure, how much do you feel there was left undiscovered? 📋 Copy

4 responses

What was the most limiting factor regarding exploring more of the manor? 📋 Copy

Legend: Least limiting | 5th most limiting | 4th most limiting | 3rd most limiting | 2nd mo…

Sense of danger, risk aversion | Running out of resources | Player fatigue and interest | Cha…

Play experience

What was the most memorable in-game experience overall?

4 responses

Getting separated from the group when Dimitri got sucked into a fireplace chimney, and later when he appeared out of nowhere and fell into the abyss while burning like a comet of Dazh

Miss-casting dark magic spell what has some really bad but as of yet unknown consequences.

i thought going into the painting to pick up the magic key was really fun!

The comet-meteor of Dazh

What was the most significant experience that happened to your character specifically?

4 responses

Getting skewered by the skewer probably

Miss-casting dark magic spell

burning to death! besides that i enjoyed talking the poltergeist down in that encounter.

Still the comet-meteor of Dazh

What was the most significant experience that happened to somebody else's character?

4 responses

Lamar blasting his loved ones to warp or some such

Death of a player character. Turning into a flying, burning comet.

Dimitri's meteor of flame moment was quite fun.

Lamar loosing fingers

Looking back on the adventure, what was your favorite combat encounter?

Copy

4 responses

- Reanimated dogs — 0 (0%)
- Gargoyles — 1 (25%)
- Cook & the skewer — 0 (0%)
- Poltergeist baby — 3 (75%)
- Bedridden lady — 0 (0%)
- Carnivorous plant — 0 (0%)
- Prancing bathtub — 2 (50%)
- The demon — 1 (25%)

Why that particular combat encounter?

4 responses

It felt like we had many possible approaches and could've probably solved it without combat altogether as well

The demon made for great final, pushed the narrative a lot and made the world feel dangerous. Gargoyles was more jolly and I rolled well so it was fun. Special mention for carnivorous plant, I like enemies you can work around without direct combat.

i thought it was really fun that we got to solve the encounters in different ways than regular combat. the bedridden lady was a really cool enemy but i didn't really participate in that much.

participated the most :)

How challenging was the encounter with the demon?

Copy

4 responses

1 — 0 (0%), 2 — 0 (0%), 3 — 2 (50%), 4 — 2 (50%), 5 — 0 (0%)

Player preferences

Physical rewards

What is your preferred way of being rewarded in game?

Copy

4 responses

- Characters search for treasure and valuables
- Characters get paid for performing a mission
- Characters loot or rob defeated enemies
- Rewards are abstracted and handed out by the gamemast...
- Character overcoming challenges and experiencing t...

(25% / 25% / 50%)

What is your preferred type of reward in game?

Copy

4 responses

- Resources and supplies
- Potions and tools
- Magic weapons
- Magic items
- Precious goods, gemstones, art objects and other valuables
- Money
- Henchmen, hirelings and animal companions
- Really depends on the situati...

(25% / 25% / 50%)

Player preferences - 2

Combat encounters

How much time do you feel that a combat encounter takes?

Copy

4 responses

1 — 0 (0%), 2 — 0 (0%), 3 — 2 (50%), 4 — 1 (25%), 5 — 1 (25%)

How many minutes do you feel that combat takes, on average

Copy

4 responses

- 20 minutes or more
- 40 minutes or more
- 60 minutes or more
- 90 minutes or more
- 30mins is probably best? Really depends on the encounter I think. Long combat experience might be exhausting but it also makes them feel like a bigger deal.

(25% / 25% / 50%)

What do you feel takes up the most time during combat?

Copy

4 responses

- Players resolving PC actions
- Gamemaster resolving NPC actions
- Players debating or planning actions
- Gamemaster futzing (looking up creature stats or options etc.)
- Gamemaster arbitrating infrequent actions (looking up...
- Bookkeeping, tallying up wou...

(25% / 25% / 50%)

If given the option, what would you choose to speed up combat?

Copy

4 responses

- Fewer combatants
- Player aids, such as sheet that includes all the action options, spell references, etc
- Institute a 3 minute timer to set pace
- I'm satisfied with the current speed of combat encounters
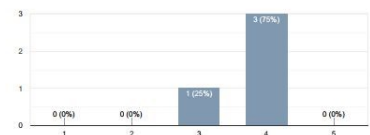- ¯_(ツ)_/¯

(25% / 25% / 50%)

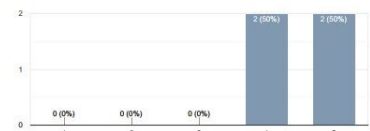Player preferences - 3A

Buzzfeed Personality test time

Sensation, or sense pleasure: Rolling physical dice, player handouts, tokens, maps, miniatures, art & illustrations, terrain pieces and paper stands
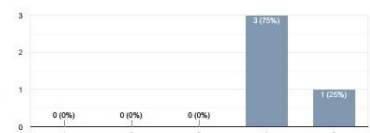
4 responses

Fantasy: Losing yourself in an imaginary world. Escapism, immersion and playing something you're not.

4 responses

Narrative: Stories and the drama you witness or experience, the beginnings and incitements leading to pay-offs and resolutions.
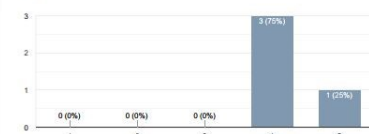
4 responses

Challenge: Overcoming the obstacles in the game, whether it's solving puzzles, dodging traps, sneaking past guards or defeating foes. Not to be confused with difficulty.
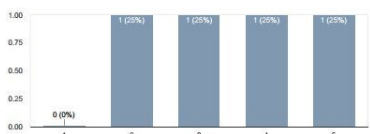
4 responses

Fellowship: Camaraderie, playing with others and working together as a team. Social interaction and cooperation between players. To clarify, this is the interaction between players, not player characters.
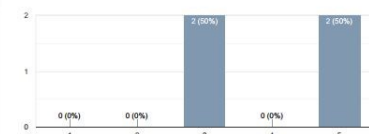
4 responses

Discovery: Exploration and the thrill of finding out what there is to be found out. Not just exploring the map but also self-discovery, learning something about your character through play.
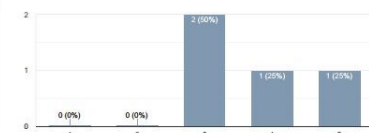
4 responses

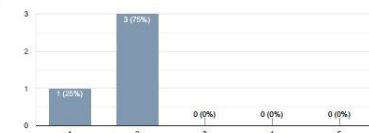Expression: Imposing your creative will. Describing character actions and having authorship of certain world details.

4 responses

Submission: The "Beer & Pretzels" style of playing. Turning your brain off and enjoying effortless things. Go down into a dungeon, kick down doors, kill orcs, take their loot, go back to town.
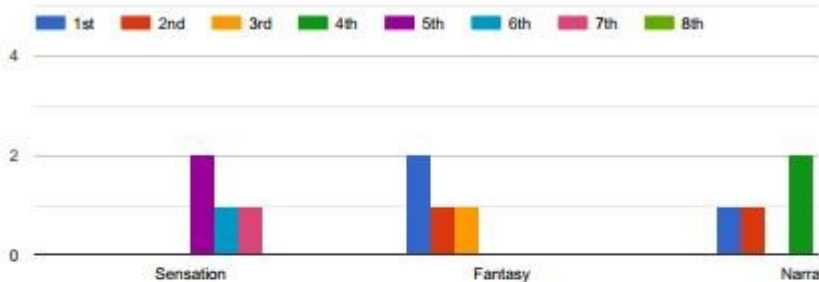
4 responses

Player preferences - 3B

Concerning roleplaying games, arrange these previously determined principles in the order of your preference

Copy

End of survey!

Gripes, questions and feedback welcome if there's anything on your mind

4 responses

In 1972, a crack commando unit was sent to prison by a military court for a crime they didn't commit. These men promptly escaped from a maximum security stockade to the Los Angeles underground. Today, still wanted by the government, they survive as soldiers of fortune. If you have a problem, if no-one else can help, and if you can find them, maybe you can hire the A-Team.

Last two parts were extremely difficult to answer and I felt some of the factors do not function independently from one another at all. Like how to rate fellowship of playing the game and discovering things in the game, oof.

this was a really fun adventure! hope the survey answers are helpful

thanks for the good gm work!!