

DOWNTIME



*...YOU ALL MEET
IN A TAVERN*

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Downtime

a game for 3-4 players and a moderator

Things You'll Need: A piece of paper, a full set of dice (d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20), and a writing implement for each player. You'll need a set of non-edible tokens of some type for the Moderator to distribute as appropriate. You should also have a place to play where you can get loud. This game could get loud.

A Note on Content: This game includes some explicit content. If you come across anything which makes you uncomfortable, or which you do not wish to include in your game, strike or change it with the author's permission.



You All Meet in the Tavern

Everyone in the game is an adventurer, recently returned from an excursion of some kind. You've all been through the dungeons a few times. You have stories to tell and the scars to prove their truth.

Player Agenda: In brief, the players need to push the story forward, make interesting decisions, complicate their own situations, work with the Moderator to tell the story, and be prepared to get weird with things.

Good? Good. Let's go.

To determine who your adventurer is, roll three d20s, one for each column.

	Descriptor	Type	Story
1	Gravetouched	Ogre	Who Has Seen Some Shit
2	Aquatic	Centaur	Who Owes Big Pat, uhhh, Big
3	Cursed	Dragon	Who Knows the Secret Word Which Will Undo the Bindings of Reality
4	Angelic	Merperson	Sworn to Suffer No Insult, No Matter How Small
5	Soulless	Snome	Seeking Their One, True Love
6	Chosen	Halfling	Who Has Died and Been Rebron, Twice
7	Runeburned	Construct	Who Wants Nothing More Than a Good, Solid Fuck
8	Broken	Demon	Hunted by the Bane of Drakentown
9	Forgetful	Dwarf	Who Needs a Barrel of McNaughtens Best Dark, Now
10	Mistrustful	Elf	Whose Pockets Overflow With Gold and Gemstone
11	Exacting	Human	Carrying the Axe of Ultimate Bloodletting
12	Pious	Orc	Here to Kill Honest Paulie
13	Immortal	Pixie	With a Hankering for Displacer Beast Pot Pie
14	Immoral	Zombie	Carrying the Cursed Idol of Karearantark
15	Tyrannous	Kobold	With Information About the Plot to Assassinate Queen Gline
16	Spellbound	Gnoll	Whose Body is Wracked by Golden Bellflower Poison
17	Partially Petrified	Goblin	Covered in the Fianl Mortal Remains of the Buglump Pustule
18	Polymorphed	Minotaur	Carrying the Famed Talking Sword of Cragrock
19	Mindless	Devil	Plagued by a Betsy of Moaning Spirits
20	Roll Twice, Re-Roll on 20	Roll Twice, Re-Roll on 20	Who is Going to Use Their Wish Spell, Tonight

So, if you rolled 3, 18, 15, you would be a Cursed Minotaur With Information About the Plot to Assassinate Queen Gline. Pretty cool Minotaur ya got there. Be a shame if something happened to them.

Oh yeah, give your character an appropriately fantasy-sounding name. Once everyone has their name and details, move on to the next step.

That Minotaur above is named Englive of the Seven Hills, because of course they are.

The People in the Tavern

Once everyone has made and named their characters, each person rolls two d10s for each of the other characters to determine their starting relationship with that character. These may not be the same both ways; people often view things very differently from one another.

	Descriptor	Feeling
1	Sort of	Loves _____
2	Really	Hates _____
3	Eternally	Lusts After _____
4	Temporarily	Doesn't Care About _____
5	Murderously	Loathes _____
6	Happily	Envies _____
7	Sadly	Pines for _____
8	Mildly	Dreams of _____
9	Intensely	Hopes to Heal _____
10	Roll Twice, Re-Roll on 10	Want to Wish That _____ Was Never Born

Mortua the Dour, Englive of the Seven Hilltops, Bruce Stoneheart, and Loris the Plainspoken are characters made by some fictional players we're going to use for these examples. Cool? Cool.

So we've got:

- Englive of the Seven Hills, the Cursed Minotaur With Information About the Plot to Assassinate Queen Gline
- Mortua the Dour, the Exacting Construct Who Wants Nothing More Than a Good, Solid Fuck
- Bruce Stoneheart, the Spellbound Gnoll, Sworn to Suffer No Insult, No Matter How Small -and-
- Loris the Plainspoken, the Mindless Pixie With a Hankering for Displacer Beast Pot Pie

Whatever fictional player who's in charge of Englive rolls two d10s for each of the other characters.

Englive then:

- Sort of Loathes Mortua the Dour
- Happily Dreams of Bruce Stoneheart -and-
- Intensely Doesn't Care About Loris the Plainspoken

Use these relationships to inform how you interact with the other characters in the game.



What Happens at the Tavern

Adventurers come to the Tavern to blow off steam, swap stories, and make sure they get what they want between adventures. Thing is, in any good tavern, there are plenty of agendas that work as cross-purposes, not to mention rivalries, and worse. And let's face it, there's never a completely calm night at the Tavern.

Before the start of the session the Moderator will roll two d20s to determine the Event of the Evening. This is the thing which disrupts whatever you have planned for tonight and means that this night at the Tavern won't be a calm one.

		Descriptor	Feeling
1	A	Loud	Riot
2		Quiet	Mob
3		Hopeful	Dragon Attack
4		Bright	Church Ceremony
5		Dark	Tax Collector
6		Maddening	Food Fight
7		Loose	Tidal Wave
8		Poor	Fire
9		Rich	Thief
10		Bleary	Invasion
11		Smelly	Downpour
12		Limp	Lizardfolk Horde
13		Wet	Djinn
14		Dry	Zombie Gang
15		Stiff	Ghost
16		Angry	Shared Hallucination
17		Happy	Swarm of Insects
18		Sad	Pison Cloud
19		Disappointing	Messenger from the Queen
20		Roll Twice, Re-Roll 20s	Roll Twice, Re-Roll 20s

The Moderator in this case rolls a 19 and a 8, so the group has to contend with a Disappointing Fire.

sigh

It's always a shame when a group of fire elementals can't seem to muster up the combined energy to light a match. Whatever will our adventurers do about this? And if not them, what annoying, too-helpful (or too-murderous) patron steps up in their place?

The point is, the characters' night needs to be disrupted by this event, no matter how minor-seeming.



How to Do Things

You've got a full set of dice in front of you. If you're trying to do something where you could fail, or where failure is interesting, the Moderator will tell you to roll the dice. You and the Moderator will determine if what you're trying to do is something that:

- You're Really Bad at (d4)
- You're Kinda Bad at (d6)
- You're Okay at (d8)
- You're Good at (d10)
- You're Really Good at (d12)
- or-
- You're Amazing at (d20)

The Moderator will determine how difficult this thing you're trying to do is. That means they'll say if the thing is:

- Easy (2-5)
- Kinda Tricky (6-9)
- Challenging (10-13)
- Tough (14-17)
- Real Hard (18-19)
- The Gods Themselves Shouldn't Attempt This (20)

Then you roll the appropriate die and see what happens. There are degrees of success, such as:

- If you roll a 20 on any die, you succeed with such style that the Bards will sing of you for generations
- If you beat the difficulty, you do it awesomely. Bonus!
- If you meet the difficulty, you do it, no sweat
- If you miss the difficulty by one rating, you do it, but there's a complication
- If you miss the difficulty by two or more ratings, you fail
- If you roll a 1 on any die, you fail in a horrible, embarrassing way and you should be ashamed

In all cases, you should work to advance the story, even if you fail at what you're doing. After all, a plain old swing and a miss is usually not that interesting. And you're interesting, so keep things moving forward.

Bonus!

Whenever you beat the difficulty, including on a 20, you get a Bonus! Token. These tokens can be spent while playing to accomplish basically whatever you want to have happen in the game, at the discretion of the Moderator.

For example, Loris the Plainspoken is about to sit down and enjoy that displacer beast pot pie they've been craving, when someone begins to complain about how disappointing the fire is. Loris, mindless though they be, decides to use some pixie magic to boost the fire's power so they don't have to listen to the complaints while they eat.

Loris is Really Good at pixie magic, so the player grabs a d12. The Moderator thinks this is Kinda Tricky, so Loris has to hit between a 6 and a 9 to do this. They roll an 11, so they boost the fire awesomely! Bonus!

What Happens When Bad Things Happen

When you get hit, fail hard, or something similar, you take a debility. Debilities are words that get tagged onto your character until something happens in the fiction to remove it. You and the Moderator will decide what your debility is when it happens. It needs to come from what happened, so you wouldn't get the Burned debility from a waterfall, for example. It would, however, be appropriate to get the Pummeled debility from getting slugged by an angry fire giant. Heck, you might get Burned from that if you failed bad enough.

To that, typically, you'll get one debility from any appropriate failed action. If you fail critically (rolling a 1), you could take more than one.

Here's what that looks like:

A nearby fire elemental liked what Loris did with the fire in the previous example, so they get in on the act and boost the fire even more. Loris, who doesn't like things too warm, tries to counter the magic. This is more pixie magic for Loris, so they have a d12 again. However, the Moderator knows the fire elemental is in its, well, element, so they set the difficulty to Really Hard. Loris knows they can't counter that, so they spend their Bonus token to add some extra oomph. The Moderator lets them roll a d20 for that. Score!

Problem is, Loris only rolls a 15. They're able to get the fire tamed, but to do it, they have to take some of the fire into themselves. Ouch! Loris gets the debility fire boils as little pockets of fire begin erupting from their skin at random intervals. That's gonna stick around until Loris gets a cure of some kind for it.



How to Moderate All This Nonsense

So you're the one in charge, huh? Everyone is looking to you to set the scene, give the details, voice any character that's not played by someone else at the table, etc. Good! This is a fun place to be. There are a few things to keep in mind as you go about doing this; your agenda, if you will.

Keep Things Fantastic

This is a fantasy tavern and should be described as such. This game is supposed to be a little off-the-wall, so think of your favorite fantasy tropes and turn the dial up on them.

Keep Things Flavorful

Describe the smells, tastes, sights, and sounds around the characters. The ghoulish munching on a leg over in the corner doesn't just smell gross; it smells like someone killed a pair of swamp water-filled hiking boots, buried them for six weeks, dug them up, set them on fire, and then walked through a trash pile.

Complicate Things

This is a game of mild escalation. If it ends with the Tavern being burned down, so be it; it'll be back again tomorrow because magic. When the characters try to do something, make things interesting for me. Get in their way and make their respective stories engaging.

Be a Fan

You're complicating things, sure, but you need to cheer their successes, too. You're not the players' adversary; you're there to spotlight their characters and throw twists at them.

Don't Make All the Decisions

There are other minds at the table with you. Asking the players "what do you see?" "what does that feel like?" "how do you know Huldur the Becalmed?" and similar takes some of the cognitive load off of you. Share these duties. The players have their own small agenda, near the beginning of this document; expect them to do those things.

Keep Things Challenging

Unless a player is Awesome at a lot of things, the last two difficulty tiers are hard to hit. There'll be a lot of full failures or complicated successes if you make things too challenging. Find a balance that works for your group.

Bonus! Is What You Make It

You can let the players do whatever they want with the Bonus! Tokens. Creating story details, being better at certain tasks, re-rolling the dice, etc. are just a few examples. Like the previous item, find the balance that works for your group and write down what you think that currency can do.

Have Fun

That means different things for different people, but you should all agree at the top of the session what kind of fun you're looking to have.

