

ARTEFACT



mousehole press

ARTEFACT

BY JACK HARRISON

You rest, fallen or discarded in the dirt. But your body is not flesh, and you are not mortal. So, you wait.

Seasons pass in flashes—cold following heat, rain following drought, death following birth—until one day, your wait is over. Someone lifts you from the detritus, inspecting you, feeling your weight in their hands. They decide to keep you—becoming your Keeper.

Through them, you experience the world. You see them undertake great quests or, perhaps, commit atrocious sins, all with your aid. You almost forget the long time spent in the dark until, inevitably, you return.

And rest, fallen or discarded in the dirt. You do not know how long you will wait for someone new to arrive.

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HOW TO PLAY



BEFORE YOU START

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

- ⊗ An hour or two.
- ⊗ A quiet place to play, ideally one that can be darkened.
- ⊗ A journal, index cards or sheets of paper to write & draw on— or a fresh set of printed sheets from the playkit.
- ⊗ Art materials and writing implements.
- ⊗ A way to play the soundtrack, available to download or to stream at [THEARTEFACT.NOW.SH](https://theartefact.now.sh)
- ⊗ A way to track time, if not using the soundtrack.

SAFETY

This game is designed to be played alone, mitigating many of the consent issues associated with playing games together.

However, as an intentionally solitary, somewhat melancholy experience, it may not be the best thing to play when struggling with feelings of loneliness.

If the game leaves you feeling isolated, or you are already struggling, there are good online resources that might help. Mind, a mental health charity, have a series of tips & support options at [BIT.LY/MIND-LONELINESS](https://bit.ly/mind-loneliness).

You can, instead, play the game as an epistolary—taking turns writing parts of the game, potentially as a fun way to stay in contact with distant friends. If so, consider the safety of the other players—including appropriate content warnings.

GAME CONCEPTS

ITEMS

This game is about magical items, tools with incredible powers and a sentience that grows as you play. Items do not die but can be tarnished, broken, buried or otherwise lost and forgotten.

KEEPERS

An item cannot act alone—a **KEEPER** must seize it. Only then can it travel around, seeing wondrous places and having grand adventures.

Its agency is limited, shackled to its **KEEPER**, but it can influence its situation through magic, communication and force of will.

Writing the story of each **KEEPER**, consider how they obtained the item, how they treat it, what they achieve with it and how it changes them and their destiny.

TIME & REST

Magical items outlive even the most venerable **KEEPERS**.

Through death, bestowal or carelessness, a **KEEPER** relinquishes the item and your stint with them ends.

The sun turns, seasons pass and flesh & blood return to the earth. The item is at **REST**—inert and waiting. You always choose how much **TIME** passes while you wait.

Eventually, a new **KEEPER** will arrive.

TRAITS

TRAITS are characteristics describing a magical item. They might be physical or magical properties or facets of its developing personality.

Each **ARTEFACT** has a list of sensible **TRAITS** for that archetype, but always feel free to make up your own.

Don't worry about a **TRAIT'S** precise definition—they mean what you want them to.

CHANGE

Playing the game, the item evolves and develops, shaped by its experiences, **TIME** passing, and the **KEEPERS** who wield it.

At various points, you are asked to **CHANGE SOMETHING** about the item. This usually means adding, removing or modifying:

- ⊗ A **TRAIT**.
- ⊗ A detail about the physical appearance of your item.
- ⊗ A detail about something in your world—a name, faction, etc.
- ⊗ A response to one of your **ARTEFACT QUESTIONS**.

A particularly momentous change may make it sensible to do several of these things at once.

You can also make a change whenever you feel it's appropriate, even if you are not explicitly prompted.

GAME STRUCTURE

ACTS

The game takes place over three **ACTS**, forming your item's story as your game progresses. Each act has its own set of **KEEPERS** and **TIME** options to choose from.

RESOLVING A KEEPER

After choosing a **KEEPER**, you complete a series of steps to tell their story and explore the ways your item might change from the experience. You can use these steps to tell a full, detailed story, or keep things short with a brief outline of events.

1. First, you'll **describe the KEEPER**, providing their name and a few striking details. Think about how they acquired the item—was it given to them or did they find it, discarded or unguarded?
2. Then **answer the two questions** or prompts listed under the **KEEPER'S** heading.
3. Then **choose a memorable event or deed** defining your item's time with the **KEEPER**. If they achieved great things together choose from **VICTORIES & VALOUR (29)**. If the item was slighted or misused choose from **NEGLECT & MISCHIEF (30)**.
4. As your item learns from experiences you may **answer one of your ARTEFACT QUESTIONS**.
5. Finally, think about how the **KEEPER** ends their time with your item. Where and how do they lose or relinquish it?

RESOLVING A REST

As you await the next **KEEPER** to claim your item you'll **REST** in darkness or with your eyes closed. The **ACT** tells you what to think about while you wait. You can use the ambient soundtrack or wait in silence with a timer listening to the sounds around you.

Don't worry if your mind wanders while waiting—your item's mind wanders too. Eventually the silence breaks and a new **KEEPER** appears.

When you've completed your **REST** you might be asked to choose an option from a table representing time passing.

If you want to explore or change the world around your item choose from **SHIFTS & CURRENTS** (31). If you want to change your item choose from **DUST & RUST** (32).

BREAKS

At this point stop to consider if you might like to take a break.

If you're writing a lot of detail for each **KEEPER** consider playing the game over a few shorter sessions rather than one long one.

STARTING TO PLAY

CHOOSE YOUR ARTEFACT

Choose an **ARTEFACT** (11) to create. Each is an archetype of a sentient magical item. They have thoughts and desires and can communicate, directly or otherwise, with their **KEEPERS**.

The available **ARTEFACTS** are:

THE WEAPON (12)

A tool of war: a blade, axe, or something stranger.

THE SHIELD (13)

A bulwark of protection: from towering scuta to deft bucklers.

THE INSTRUMENT (14)

Produces musical sounds, conventionally or otherwise.

THE ORNAMENT (15)

Jewellery, charms and trinkets: small but potent.

THE DECK (16)

A collection of worn cards, an oracle or something stranger.

THE FOOTWEAR (17)

Shoes: they are for going places, conventionally or otherwise.

THE STAFF (18)

A conduit for magic: a focus for arcane power.

THE TOME (19)

A receptacle of knowledge, lost or forbidden.

THE AUTOMATON (20)

A self-operating machine, responsive to orders.

CREATE YOUR ITEM

After choosing a **ARTEFACT**, answer the opening questions about your item's creation. Describe the person who made the item and add three **TRAITS** (5) to describe its starting properties.

Draw the item, making your sketch large enough to easily record changes as you play. Each **ARTEFACT** has different suggestions for details you can add, but go with whatever inspires you.

Your drawing is primarily a tool for visual reference, not art. You can always create a more artistic version when the game is over.

TAKE A BREATH

For the rest of this game you inhabit your item and perceive the world through its strange, inhuman senses. When questions in the game refer to 'you' they mean your item and its evolving sentience.

This item is your character for the rest of the game.

When you have completed the instructions for your chosen **ARTEFACT** and are ready to play, empty your hands, close your eyes and take a moment to breathe.

CHOOSE YOUR FIRST KEEPER

Now open your eyes and choose the first person to take ownership of you—your first **KEEPER**.

You'll begin by turning to the first act, **NEWLY FORGED** (22).

ENDING THE GAME

THE FINAL KEEPER

Eventually you'll reach the end of the third and final act.

Having resolved your final **KEEPER**, the item is left broken beyond repair or abandoned in a cold, dark place forever.

CONVERTING ITEMS

You might reach a point where you wish to continue the item's story in a different game—for example, the next **KEEPER** could be a player character in your D&D game (or any other system!).

To do this, you'll need to convert the item into the new system. This is typically a straightforward process, using your item's **TRAITS** to create special properties or actions available in the new system. So *'Flaming'* would become *'3d6 fire damage'*, and so on.

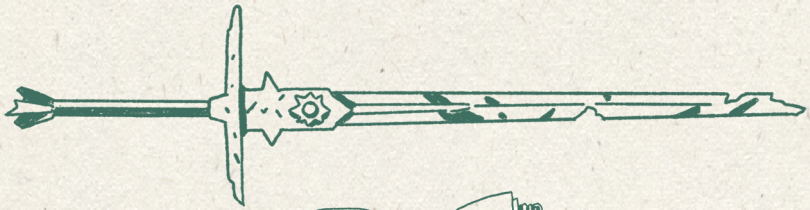
Don't try to explain every detail—leave it a mystery to unravel.

EPILOGUE

Regardless of where you leave your item, it's worth taking some time to pause at the end of the game.

Take a final moment to sit in silence in the dark. Think about how your item is remembered, if at all, through stories, art or archaeological remains in a museum. Think about the **KEEPERS** you left behind, and the twists and turns of their storied lives.

Then turn the lights back on, have a snack and stretch out as you leave your item behind—concluding your time with this game.



ARTEFACTS



THE WEAPON

A TOOL OF WAR: A BLADE, AXE OR SOMETHING STRANGER

You were tempered in the heat of a great forge by a legendary smith—describe them, their materials and their smithy.

Add three **TRAITS** describing your item then draw it. Embellish your drawing with gems, notches and other curious details.

ARTEFACT QUESTIONS

- ☉ Over time you gain a name or honorific. What is it and why?
- ☉ How do you come to think of your **KEEPERS**—as comrades in arms, thoughtless captors or something else?
- ☉ Of all the places you've seen on your travels, one stands out and you long to return. Where is it, and why?
- ☉ You were once used to kill someone your **KEEPER** was madly in love with. Describe the person they were forced to eliminate. Did you love them too?
- ☉ You dealt the killing blow to that brute. Now, the story is a popular legend. What major detail do people get wrong in the retelling?
- ☉ You are immortal; you do not grow old. What preoccupation of the **KEEPERS** is most strange to you as one that cannot die?

SUGGESTED TRAITS

Flaming, Frost, Corrosive, Silent, Warding, Dimensional, Vampiric, Fragrant, Spectral, Gelatinous, Warped, Blessed, Vindictive, Fickle, Loyal, Curious, Knowing, Devious, Romantic

THE SHIELD

A BULWARK OF PROTECTION: FROM TOWERING SCUTA TO DEFT BUCKLERS

You were hammered in the heat of a great forge by a legendary smith—describe them, their materials and their smithy.

Add three **TRAITS** describing your item then draw it. Embellish your drawing with crests, runes and other curious details.

ARTEFACT QUESTIONS

- ☉ Over time you gain a name or honorific. What is it and why?
- ☉ How do you come to think of your **KEEPERS**—as loving wards, cowardly abusers or something else?
- ☉ Of all the places you've seen on your travels, one stands out and you long to return. Where is it and why?
- ☉ You were once used to shelter someone your **KEEPER** was madly in love with. Describe the person they defended. Did you love them too?
- ☉ You defended your **KEEPER** against that brute long enough for them to best it. Now the story is a popular legend. What major detail do people get wrong in the retelling?
- ☉ You are immortal; you do not grow old. What preoccupation of the **KEEPERS** is most strange to you as one that cannot die?

SUGGESTED TRAITS

Immovable, Levitating, Balanced, Warding, Sprouted, Gigantic, Blessed, Homely, Utilitarian, Mirrored, Brash, Peaceful, Fickle, Loyal, Forceful, Knowing, Stubborn, Romantic, Discerning

THE INSTRUMENT

PRODUCES MUSICAL SOUNDS, CONVENTIONALLY OR OTHERWISE

You were carved out of exotic woods and fibres by a renowned artisan—describe them, their materials and their workshop.

Add three **TRAITS** describing your item then draw it. Embellish your drawing with trinkets, inlays and other curious details.

ARTEFACT QUESTIONS

- ☉ Over time you gain a name or honorific. What is it and why?
- ☉ How do you come to think of your **KEEPERS**—as spirited collaborators, heartless exploiters or something else?
- ☉ Of all the places you've seen on your travels, one stands out and you long to return. Where is it, and why?
- ☉ You were once played to impress someone your **KEEPER** was madly in love with. Describe the person courted, and the songs played to woo them. Did you love them too?
- ☉ You were there—your music filled the air and the brute was outclassed. Now the story is a popular legend. What major detail do people get wrong in the retelling?
- ☉ You are immortal; you do not grow old. What preoccupation of the **KEEPERS** is most strange to you as one that cannot die?

SUGGESTED TRAITS

Beguiling, Cacophonous, Reviving, Splitting, Soothing, Sustaining, Summoning, Remembering, Mathematical, Enlightening, Sardonic, Cheeky, Curious, Devious, Sublime

THE ORNAMENT

JEWELLERY, CHARMS AND TRINKETS: SMALL BUT POTENT

You were crafted from the rarest gems and metals by a master artificer—describe them, their materials and their fateful forge.

Add three **TRAITS** describing your item then draw it. Embellish your drawing with jewels, runes and other intricate details.

ARTEFACT QUESTIONS

- ☉ Over time you gain a name or honorific. What is it and why?
- ☉ How do you come to think of your **KEEPERS**—as possessive magpies, compliant marionettes or something else?
- ☉ The place you were created fills you with dread and you never wish to return. What is the root of this primeval fear?
- ☉ You were once given as a present to someone your **KEEPER** was madly in love with. They felt it was improper and returned you with a scornful retort. What made them feel that way?
- ☉ You helped your **KEEPER** outsmart the brute and take him down for good. Now the story is a popular legend. What major detail do people get wrong in the retelling?
- ☉ You are immortal; you do not grow old. What preoccupation of the **KEEPERS** is most strange to you as one that cannot die?

SUGGESTED TRAITS

Obscuring, Sensing, Protecting, Strengthening, Healing, Spectral, Whispering, Summoning, Elemental, Kindling, Clockwork, Evil, Tender, Beguiling, Tricky, Mercantile, Loyal, Curious, Blessed

THE DECK

A COLLECTION OF WORN CARDS, AN ORACLE OR SOMETHING STRANGER

GUEST ARTEFACT BY JAMILA R. NEDJADI (@TEMPORALHICCUP)

You were created by one with invincible will, great magical skill, and a desire to laugh in the face of destiny – describe them.

Add three **TRAITS** describing your item then draw it. Create bewitching patterns, strange imagery, and other mystic details.

ARTEFACT QUESTIONS

- ☉ Over time you gain a name or honorific. What is it and why?
- ☉ How do you come to think of your **KEEPERS**? As gifted heroes, doomed seekers or something else?
- ☉ At least one of your cards was taken from you, and you were changed. What card was it and what new form has it taken?
- ☉ You were once used to cruelly change the fate of someone your **KEEPER** was madly in love with. Describe the person they betrayed. Did you love them too?
- ☉ You were once used to strike a bargain with an unstoppable foe, now the story is a popular legend. What haunting truth can never be known?
- ☉ You are immortal; fate will never touch you. What do you wish you could tell your **KEEPERS** about the true nature of destiny?

SUGGESTED TRAITS

Haunting, Weird, Knowing, Quirky, Meek, Wild, Unperturbed, Stoic, Intoxicating, Ancient, Excitable, Fragile, Delirious, Wise, Deceptive, Sorrowful, Frantic, Talkative, Mesmerizing.

THE FOOTWEAR

SHOES; THEY ARE FOR GOING PLACES, CONVENTIONALLY OR OTHERWISE

GUEST ARTEFACT BY W.H. ARTHUR (@ARYL_ETHER)

You were crafted with exquisite materials by a fabled cobbler – describe them and their workshop. Add a **TRAIT** that lets your **KEEPERS** reach places otherwise inaccessible.

Then add two more **TRAITS** describing your item and draw it.

ARTEFACT QUESTIONS

- ☼ Over time you gain a name or honorific. What is it and why?
- ☼ Do the two of you always agree with each other? What is your relationship like – siblings, rivals, or something else?
- ☼ You reminisce about the taste of soil from a specific place and you wish to revisit there. Where is it and why?
- ☼ You were stolen while your **KEEPER** was being intimate with someone they were madly in love with. Describe the lover, the thief, and the story of how you were retrieved.
- ☼ Your **KEEPER** was snared in a nefarious trap set by the brutes, but with your help they escaped. Now the story is a popular legend. What do people get grievously wrong in the retelling?
- ☼ The pair of you are immortal, and you always have each other. What is most strange to you about the bonds of mortals?

SUGGESTED TRAITS

Swift, Winged, Heavy, Stealthy, Swashbuckling, Polished, Vegan, Comfortable, Sturdy, Resilient, Striking, Heeled, Stylish, Bouncy, Bickering, Mismatched, Insulated, Gripping, Elegant, Dynamic

THE STAFF

A CONDUIT FOR MAGIC; A FOCUS FOR ARCAINE POWER

GUEST ARTEFACT BY ANNA BLACKWELL (@BLACKWELLWRITER)

You were formed through a mysterious ritual by a powerful wizard—describe them, the nature of their magic and the ritual.

Add three **TRAITS** describing your item then draw it. Adorn your drawing with crystals, teeth, and other curious fetishes.

ARTEFACT QUESTIONS

- ☉ Over time you gain a name or honorific. What is it and why?
- ☉ How do you come to think of your **KEEPERS**—as teachers, students or something else?
- ☉ Of all the places you've seen on your travels, one stands out and you always long to return. What is it, and why?
- ☉ You were used to cast a spell so powerful its mark can still be found. What was the spell? **CHANGE SOMETHING** to reflect it.
- ☉ You have seen the true nature of magic but refuse to reveal its secrets to your **KEEPERS**. What are you afraid they would do with the knowledge?
- ☉ Mortals puzzle over the meaning of their short lives but you see your own purpose with crystal clarity. What are you driven towards? Have you ever had cause to question your purpose?

SUGGESTED TRAITS

Introspective, Unstable, Burning, Horrific, Scholarly, Distracted, Curious, Detached, Glowing, Delicate, Enthusiastic, Elegant, Illusory, Cryptic, Otherworldly, Mischievous, Anxious, Cold

THE TOME

A RECEPTACLE OF KNOWLEDGE, LOST OR FORBIDDEN

GUEST ARTEFACT BY KARIN MESSERVEY (@SWEETNAWFUL)

You were penned in the stale air of a library by an obsessed sage—describe them, their subject of expertise and their grand study.

Add three **TRAITS** describing your item then draw it and list its chapters. The lore contained within changes as you play.

ARTEFACT QUESTIONS

- ☉ Over time you gain a name or honorific. What is it and why?
- ☉ How do you come to think of your **KEEPERS**—as students, ingrates or something else?
- ☉ On your travels you learned something about the world that could not be found in your records. What was it?
- ☉ Your secrets were once shared with someone your **KEEPER** was madly in love with. Describe them. How did they react?
- ☉ Your magic failed to correct your **KEEPER'S** greatest regret. Now the story is a popular allegory. What lesson do people take out of this tale?
- ☉ You have concocted an intricate plan inspired by your contents. What compulsion do you encourage in the **KEEPERS** to accomplish it, knowing it may take eons?

SUGGESTED TRAITS

Beguiling, Warding, Summoning, Reviving, Divine, Eldritch, Planar, Enlightening, Cataclysmic, Eager, Sardonic, Fickle, Loyal, Curious, Knowing, Devious, Melancholic, Discerning

THE AUTOMATON

A SELF-OPERATING MACHINE, RESPONSIVE TO ORDERS

GUEST ARTEFACT BY JASON PRICE

You were the lifelong creation of a renowned inventor – describe them and their workshop. Did they work freely or under duress?

Add three **TRAITS** describing your item then draw it. Show how it can move independently and defend its **KEEPER**.

ARTEFACT QUESTIONS

- ☉ Over time you gain a name or honorific. What is it and why?
- ☉ How do you come to think of your **KEEPERS**—as masters, friends or something else?
- ☉ Of all the places you've seen on your travels only one made you feel as if you belonged there. Where is this place and why?
- ☉ You were once ordered to kill someone your **KEEPER** was madly in love with. Describe why they could not do it without you. Did you feel any regret?
- ☉ Your actions in battle once led to your **KEEPER'S** downfall. Now the story is a popular allegory about placing trust in machines. Why did people believe you acted intentionally?
- ☉ You often struggle to make sense of your **KEEPER'S** behaviour. Which of their activities or emotions do you work to relate to?

SUGGESTED TRAITS

Humanoid, Uncanny, Imposing, Compact, Ramshackle, Flying, Crawling, Rolling, Aggressive, Stoic, Romantic, Melancholy, Curious, Obedient, Rebellious, Loyal, Logical, Wise, Naive



KEEPERS & TIME



KEEPERS

I. NEWLY FORGED

Choose a **KEEPER** from below and resolve them following the process on **PAGE 4**—summarised here:

1. Describe the **KEEPER** and your acquisition.
2. Answer the **KEEPER'S** questions.
3. Choose one from tables: (29) or (30).
4. Answer an **ARTEFACT QUESTION**.
5. Consider how the **KEEPER** loses you.
6. Move to **TIME** to wait for a new **KEEPER**.

A FOLK HERO

THEY ARE WHOLESOME, HELPFUL AND A LITTLE NAIVE

- ☉ Describe the isolated village they work to protect.
- ☉ How did you help them protect their home in a time of crisis?

A YOUNG NOBLE

THEY ARE WEALTHY, EDUCATED AND FASHIONABLE

- ☉ Describe the landed family that they are descended from.
- ☉ How were you used in the nobles' cutthroat politics?

A ROGUE WITHOUT MASTER

THEY ARE DARING, CHARISMATIC AND TALENTED

- ☉ What marks them as a soul unburdened by servitude?
- ☉ How did you help them pull off their boldest stunt yet?

A REVOLUTIONARY LEADER

THEY ARE INSPIRING, REBELLIOUS AND DRIVEN

- ☉ Describe the unjust social order they wish to overthrow.
- ☉ How did you help them achieve their first major victory?

TIME

I. NEWLY FORGED

Choose the amount of **TIME** you must wait until your next **KEEPER** arrives. Follow your chosen option's instructions.

As you **REST** think about the silence and solitude of abandonment.

NO TIME AT ALL

Proceed.

Do not stop to **REST**.

A DAY

REST for five seconds.

A WEEK

REST for ten seconds.

A MONTH

REST for twenty seconds.

A YEAR

REST for forty seconds.

A DECADE

REST for one minute.

After completing your **REST** choose a new **KEEPER**.

If you have already chosen two **KEEPERS** from this act move on to **II. A TIME OF GLORY** to choose your next.

Otherwise choose from those remaining in this act.

KEEPERS

II. A TIME OF GLORY

Choose a **KEEPER** from below and resolve them following the process on **PAGE 4**—summarised here:

1. Describe the **KEEPER** and your acquisition.
2. Answer the **KEEPER'S** questions.
3. Choose one from tables: (29) or (30).
4. Answer an **ARTEFACT QUESTION**.
5. Consider how the **KEEPER** loses you.
6. Move to **TIME** to wait for a new **KEEPER**.

A RIGHTEOUS CHAMPION

THEY ARE HAUGHTY, PASSIONATE AND STEADFAST

- ⊗ Describe their religious order goals.
- ⊗ How did you help them complete an epic quest?

AN ALL-CONQUERING WARLORD

THEY ARE FEARED AND ADORED IN EQUAL MEASURES

- ⊗ Describe their empire and the armies they rule it with.
- ⊗ How did you help them establish their mighty dominion?

A BANDIT KING

THEY ARE SARDONIC, RUTHLESS AND RESPECTED

- ⊗ Describe their outlaw kingdom's seat of power.
- ⊗ How did you help them ascend to their crooked throne?

A MONSTER HUNTER

THEY ARE SHARP, FEARLESS AND IMPOSSIBLY STRONG

- ⊗ Describe the highly competitive guild they belong to.
- ⊗ How were you used to defeat a legendary beast?

TIME

II. A TIME OF GLORY

Choose the amount of **TIME** you must wait until your next **KEEPER** arrives. Follow your chosen option's instructions.

As you **REST** think about the weight of every passing day, growing imperceptibly with each sunset.

A MONTH

REST for twenty seconds.

A YEAR

REST for forty seconds.

A DECADE

REST for one minute.

A CENTURY

REST for two minutes.

Choose once on **DUST & RUST** or **SHIFTS & CURRENTS**.

CENTURIES

REST for three minutes.

Choose once on **DUST & RUST** or **SHIFTS & CURRENTS**.

A MILLENNIUM

REST for four minutes.

Choose once on **DUST & RUST** or **SHIFTS & CURRENTS**.

After completing your **REST** choose a new **KEEPER**.

If you have already chosen two **KEEPERS** from this act move on to **III. THE RUINATION** to choose your next.

Otherwise choose from those remaining in this act.

KEEPERS

III. THE RUINATION

Choose a **KEEPER** from below and resolve them following the process on **PAGE 4**—summarised here:

1. Describe the **KEEPER** and your acquisition.
2. Answer the **KEEPER'S** questions.
3. Choose one from tables: (29) or (30).
4. Answer an **ARTEFACT QUESTION**.
5. Consider how the **KEEPER** loses you.
6. Move to **TIME** to wait for a new **KEEPER**.

A PAIR OF TREASURE SEEKERS

THEY ARE OPPORTUNISTIC, ARGUMENTATIVE AND SHORT-SIGHTED

- ☉ Describe how they operate despite their mutual distrust.
- ☉ Which one of them ends up with you and at what cost?

AN ARCHIVIST-COLLECTOR

THEY ARE OBSERVANT, AUSTERE AND MANIACALLY ORGANISED

- ☉ Describe the archives they oversee and where you're stored.
- ☉ Which of your former **KEEPERS** are they keen to study?

A DOOMSDAY CULT

THEY ARE SCORES OF ACOLYTES WITH BURNING EYES & FIERCE PURPOSE

- ☉ Describe their leader and the cataclysm they wish to trigger.
- ☉ How were you used to complete their sinister, wretched ritual?

A FOOLHARDY WARRIOR

THEY ARE OPTIMISTIC, ENERGETIC AND HOPELESSLY OUTMATCHED

- ☉ Describe the forces of evil conspiring against them.
- ☉ How did you intentionally lead them to their doom?

TIME

III. THE RUINATION

Choose the amount of **TIME** you must wait until your next **KEEPER** arrives. Follow your chosen option's instructions.

As you **REST** think about the layers of dirt, sand and bone that accumulate upon the world you know, now buried and forgotten.

A DECADE

REST for one minute.

A CENTURY

REST for two minutes.

Choose once on **DUST & RUST** or **SHIFTS & CURRENTS**.

CENTURIES

REST for three minutes.

Choose once on **DUST & RUST** or **SHIFTS & CURRENTS**.

A MILLENNIUM

REST for four minutes.

Choose once on **DUST & RUST** and **SHIFTS & CURRENTS**.

AN AGE

REST for five minutes.

Choose once on **DUST & RUST** and **SHIFTS & CURRENTS**.

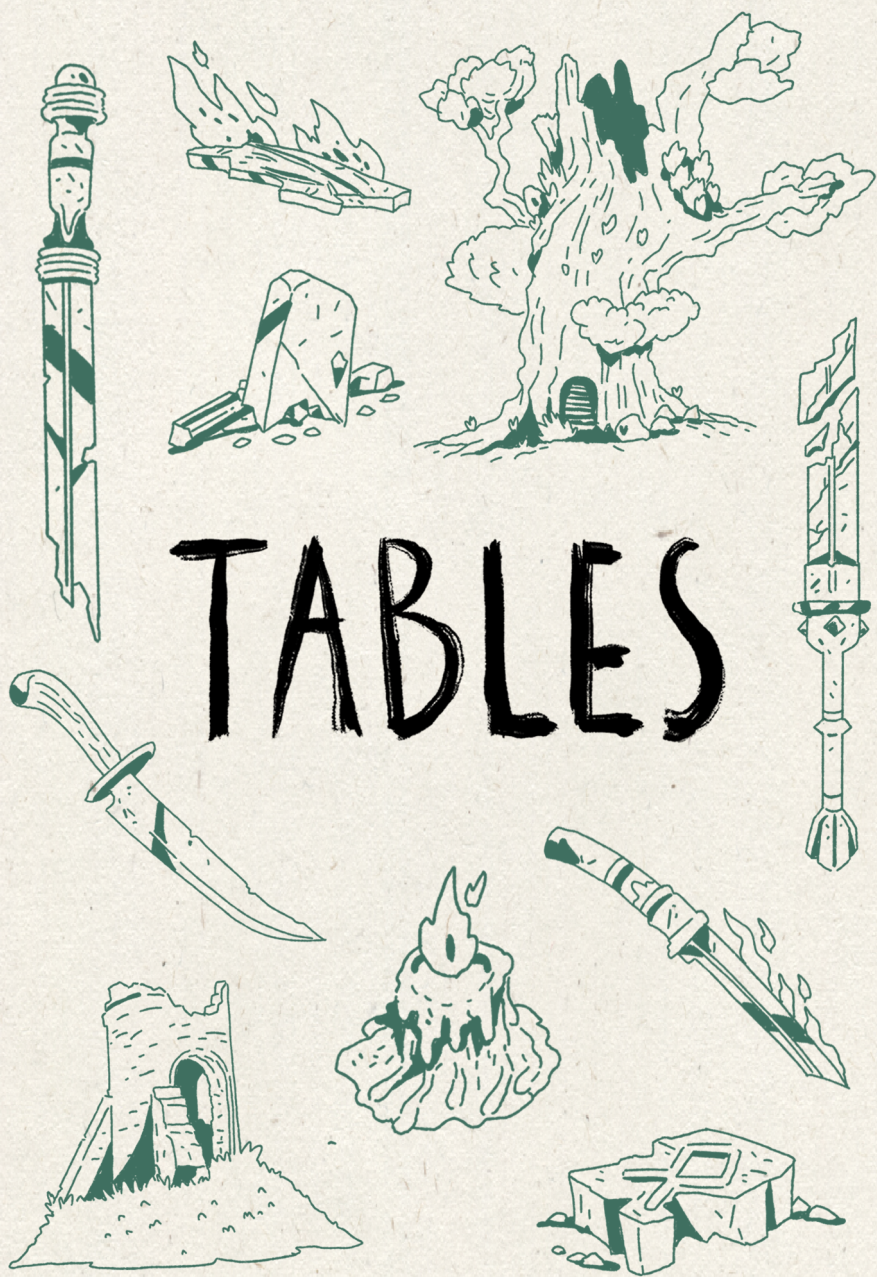
AN EPOCH

REST for six minutes.

Choose three across **DUST & RUST** or **SHIFTS & CURRENTS**.

After completing your **REST** choose a new **KEEPER** from those remaining in this act.

If you feel you've spent **ten minutes** at **REST** across the entire game, or if your story is ready to end, this **KEEPER** is your last.



VICTORIES & VALOUR

VALIANT ACTS, VANQUISHED EVIL AND INSPIRING MANOEUVRES.

Choose an option from below, answer questions and **CHANGE SOMETHING** (5) as you grow notorious, proud or legendary.

- A **TRAIT**.
 - A detail about the physical appearance of your item.
 - A response to an **ARTEFACT QUESTION**.
 - A detail about something in your world—a name, faction, etc.
- ⊗ A stronghold of great importance was attacked by a dreadful, monstrous horde. How did you help your **KEEPER** drive off the fearsome assailants?
 - ⊗ Your **KEEPER** defeated their sworn, bitter rival in a duel. Where did the contest take place and why was their animosity so severe? How did you help them win?
 - ⊗ A great warrior was trapped in an impossibly tall tower by an evil sorcerer. Why did your **KEEPER** owe them their life, and how did you help free them?
 - ⊗ A long-standing feud between two prominent factions was resolved. How did you help your **KEEPER** convince the fractious leaders to come to the negotiating table?
 - ⊗ A mythical beast or immortal guardian stood watch over an ancient treasure. With strength or trickery—and your help—your **KEEPER** overcame them. What were they protecting and why did your Keeper need it so badly?
 - ⊗ Your **KEEPER** uncovered an insidious conspiracy in their people's ruling class. With your help they exposed the devious scheme. What was the price for speaking truth to power?

NEGLECT & MISCHIEF

TREACHEROUS ACTS, TRAGIC LOSS AND DEMEANING MISUSE.

Choose an option from below, answer questions and **CHANGE SOMETHING** (5) as you become hardened, jaded or vindictive.

- A **TRAIT**.
 - A detail about the physical appearance of your item.
 - A response to an **ARTEFACT QUESTION**.
 - A detail about something in your world—a name, faction, etc.
- ☉ You were locked in a vault while poorly-made counterfeits were sold to hoodwinked adventurers. What fault in the design made these copies fail at a crucial moment?
 - ☉ You were thrown carelessly atop a huge heap of treasure. There was another sentient item within the hoard. What did you learn from this other intelligence and did you get along?
 - ☉ You were put on display to decorate a wall. You rested there for a long time, unused. What was the room like? Were you kept clean & shining or did the dust and grime pile up over the passing years?
 - ☉ Powerful magic has a toll. You corrupted your **KEEPER**, causing malaise, sickness and, eventually, death. Was this ruination intentional?
 - ☉ You intentionally deceived or refused to help your **KEEPER**, leading to their demise. What took place and why did you act in that way?
 - ☉ You were broken, split or torn into two pieces by your **KEEPER**, intentionally or otherwise. How did this happen and how were you made whole again?

SHIFTS & CURRENTS

THE SUN TURNS, EMPIRES RISE AND FALL AND HEROES FADE TO MEMORY.

Choose an option from below, answer questions and **CHANGE SOMETHING** (5) to reflect the world reshaping around you.

- A **TRAIT**.
 - A detail about the physical appearance of your item.
 - A response to an **ARTEFACT QUESTION**.
 - A detail about something in your world—a name, faction, etc.
- ☉ Time reframes the actions of one of your **KEEPERS**, once considered a selfless hero, as immoral or mercenary. What happened and what actions are twisted or reinterpreted?
 - ☉ You are collected and catalogued by a municipal institution. Through excessive bureaucracy and pen-pushing you are lost in their arcane system. Where do you eventually emerge?
 - ☉ You are obtained by a travelling merchant ignorant of your true power and rest undisturbed amongst their chests for a long time. What is the strangest place you visit as they make their extensive circuits across the known world?
 - ☉ A descendant of one of your favourite **KEEPERS** grows into a twisted mirror of their ancestor, perverting their legacy for their own selfish needs. Who are they and what do they do?
 - ☉ You are swallowed by a passing sentient ooze—translucent and hungry. Where does the strange creature make its home, and what else of note churns with you in its viscous form?
 - ☉ Your name passes into common speech as a phrase, with a meaning somehow connected to your history. What is the expression and what does it come to mean?

DUST & RUST

MUCK AND MURK, TARNISHED METAL AND SLOW, INEVITABLE EROSION.

Choose an option from below, answer questions and **CHANGE SOMETHING** (5) as you grow wiser, unstable or fade away.

- A **TRAIT**.
 - A detail about the physical appearance of your item.
 - A response to an **ARTEFACT QUESTION**.
 - A detail about something in your world—a name, faction, etc.
- ☉ Gold and silver dull. Iron rusts. Colours fade to a sepulchral grey. What would your creator say if they saw you now?
 - ☉ A colony of small creatures nest close to where you rest. You become obsessed with their daily routines and little politics watching generations pass. Describe them. Do you see their downfall or are you recovered by a **KEEPER**?
 - ☉ Whether by frost, corrosion or something stranger a prominent setting or rune is damaged irreparably. How does the damage affect one of your properties?
 - ☉ The yawning silence is deafening and you struggle to keep your mind calm and clear for such extended isolation. Can you stay composed or does something snap?
 - ☉ A vital part deteriorates and no amount of restoration can return you to your former utility. How does this fundamentally change your primary purpose?
 - ☉ A sapling grows around you and, with time, becomes a mighty, gnarled tree. How does your magic shape the tree, reflecting your inner nature?

ARTEFACT IS A STORY GAME FOR ONE PLAYER, DESIGNED FOR CONTEMPLATIVE SOLO PLAY.

In the classic dungeon crawl, you follow the lives of adventurers as they overcome challenges to gain prestige and, most importantly, magical treasures. But what were those treasures doing before the adventurers came along? How many aeons have passed in silent darkness since they were last used?

ARTEFACT shifts the focus to the perspective of a single magical item and its history as it passes through the hands of many different keepers. You'll feel the weight of time as your item is lost or abandoned again and again, the dust & decay piling around it until it's found once more by someone new.

You'll be answering questions, choosing options from tables and writing stories about the different people who wield your item over the centuries. The stories you write will be yours to keep, or you can share them with your friends as part of your regular game.



mousehole press