

EX UMBRA

A collaborative map-drawing game and playable dungeon-generator.
Build dangerous labyrinths for use in your favorite role-playing game.
Designed for 1 to 4 players with a playtime of 60 minutes or more.
Created by Martin Nerurkar.



EX UMBRA

A playable dungeon-generator

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Design

Martin Nerurkar

Layout

Martin Nerurkar

Artwork

Martin Nerurkar

Special Thanks

Alexander Zacherl

Frank Duffner

Konstantinos Dimopoulos

Martin Buntz

Nils Urban

Cover Art: Le Carceri d'Invenzione - 14

Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 1750

Card Icons: Game-Icons.net

Lorc, Delapouite, Carl Olsen, Cathelineau & Skoll

Card Back: Chainspire Dungeons

Map created by Dyson Logos

Website

exumbra.sharkbombs.com

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BASICS

You (and up to three friends) sit around a campfire, in a rowdy tavern or right outside the dungeon entrance. You're huddled over a parchment, telling the stories and rumors you heard of this dangerous underground lair. Together you will try to reconstruct it from the unreliable information available to you.

In Ex Umbra you will play Dungeon Cards and make sense of how they relate to the dangerous forces of the dungeon. Together you will draw the collaborative map of the dungeon and see it slowly take shape. In the end you will have built an interesting fictional place with its unique threats and rewards.

PLAY OVERVIEW

This is the sequence of phases and turns that make up a game of Ex Umbra:

Play begins with a brief **discussion phase**. This provides space for all players to share their assumptions and expectations.

Next is the **planning phase**. Here you will determine the dungeon's Size and Difficulty and the dangers that lurk within.

Followed by the **foundation phase**. You start putting marks to paper and shaping the dungeon, its entrance and heart. This will generate an interesting starting situation for the rest of the game.

After this you move into the heart of the game: The **discovery phase**.

This contains a number of **exploration turns** based on the dungeon's Size. In each of these the active player plays Dungeon Cards, makes sense of the results and draws the architecture of the dungeon. You will gain and spend tokens to reveal and detail Threats and Rewards.

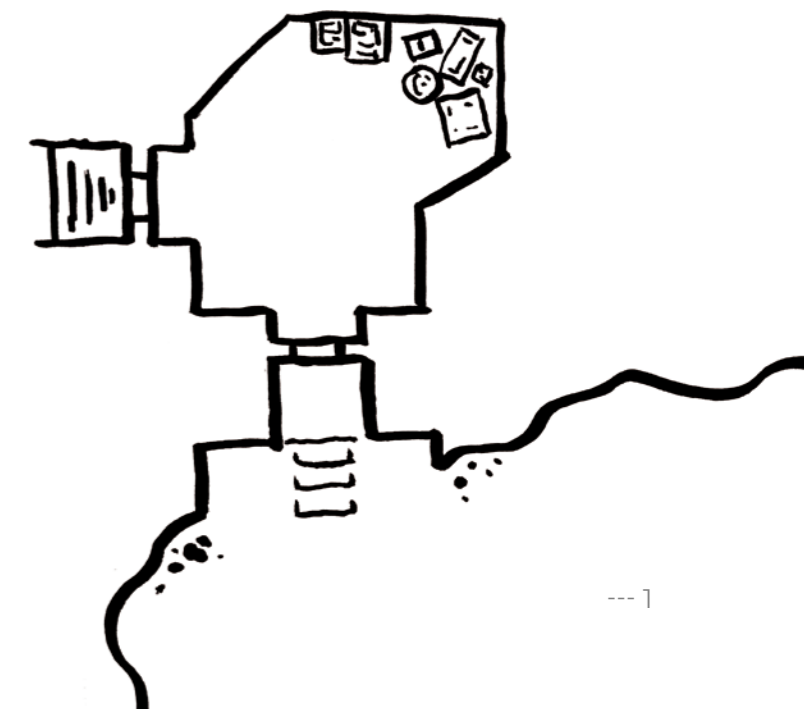
Halfway through discovery you take two special turns: In the **tremor turn** you'll discover a large-scale change to the dungeon. Then you'll move into the **heart turn**. It is similar to the exploration turns but collaborative and focused on the dungeon's heart. Afterwards you'll finish the remainder of your exploration turns.

The final phase is the **cleanup phase**. Here you'll tie off loose ends and add your finishing touches.

PREPARATION

To play Ex Umbra you will need:

- **1-4 players**, you can create a dungeon on your own or collaborate with some friends.
- **1-3 hours**, depending on the size of your dungeon and number of players
- **A set of Dungeon Cards**, that the players draw to inspire and guide them
- **25 Threat Tokens**, like glass beads, red blocks or little plastic skulls
- **25 Reward Tokens**, like pennies, blue blocks or poker chips
- **A twenty-sided dice**, abbreviated as D20 used for the tremor table
- **A large sheet of paper**, that can be comfortably seen by everyone
- **A few index cards**, to note down aspects and other interesting things
- **Pens or pencils**, simple writing implements for everyone, possibly in different colors



ELEMENTS & ACTIONS

There's a number of different game pieces that make up the dungeon. Most of these will be drawn onto the dungeon map as you play but some are tracked on index cards or are external playing pieces.

OVERVIEW

The different game elements that can be added, changed or removed are:

- **Aspects**, overarching sources of peril that make the dungeon dangerous
- **Dungeon Cards**, cards that provide creative prompts to inspire your stories
- **Guide Lines**, helpful lines that do not represent actual parts of the dungeon
- **Architecture**, the walls, floors and ordinary furnishings of the dungeon
- **Features**, noteworthy structural elements, weak and simple enemies or traps
- **Threats**, strong enemies, dangerous traps and powerful magic effects
- **Rewards**, loot of all kind: piles of gold, useful books or powerful artifacts
- **Threat & Reward Tokens**, that are spent to add Threats and Rewards to the map
- **Turn clock**, to track the turns and progress of your discovery phase

ASPECTS

A dungeon's aspect is what makes it stand out from other dungeons, its sources of danger or threats. This can include things like its inhabitants, natural hazards or mystical phenomena.

For example the **Ice Goblins** that make this place their lair is a good aspect representing inhabitants. The **Hungry Lava** that flows through the depths or the **Slippery Rocks** are excellent environmental aspects. The **Dangerous Traps** or the **Undead Magic** that protect this place are other interesting sources of danger.

Your dungeon has at least as many aspects as you have players. But you need to consider the minimum number of aspects for a dungeon: 3 plus 1 for every full 6 Size.

That means a Size 1-5 dungeon requires you to define at least 3 aspects. If you develop a Size 6-11 dungeon you'll need at least 4 aspects. And finally for a massive dungeon with Size 12 you'll need a total of 5 aspects.

Adding Aspects

During the planning phase you will define the dungeon's aspects. When you add an aspect you write it on an index card and place it close to the map so everyone can reach and read it easily. During the tremor turn aspects may be modified, replaced or added.

It is recommended to have at least one aspect to represent the natural or inanimate hazards of the dungeon and at least one aspect for its denizens.

Aspects are always used in conjunction with Dungeon Cards. When a player uses a Dungeon Card they have to play it on an aspect. The combination of aspect and card is then used as inspiration for the dungeon's Features.

DUNGEON CARDS

Dungeon Cards contain the following elements:

- **Prompt**, this is the key information of the card. These are objects that should inspire you when creating the dungeon. If there are multiple, you are free to pick however many spark ideas. Examples would be **Giant**, **Chains & Ropes** or **Voice & Word**.
- **Adjectives**, in addition to the item the card also has a few inspirational adjectives framed as questions. These provide additional inspiration and you can use or ignore them as you wish. Examples would be **Ravenous?** **Slothful?** **Gentle?** or **Fragile?** **Treasured?** **Cruel?**.

Drawing Cards

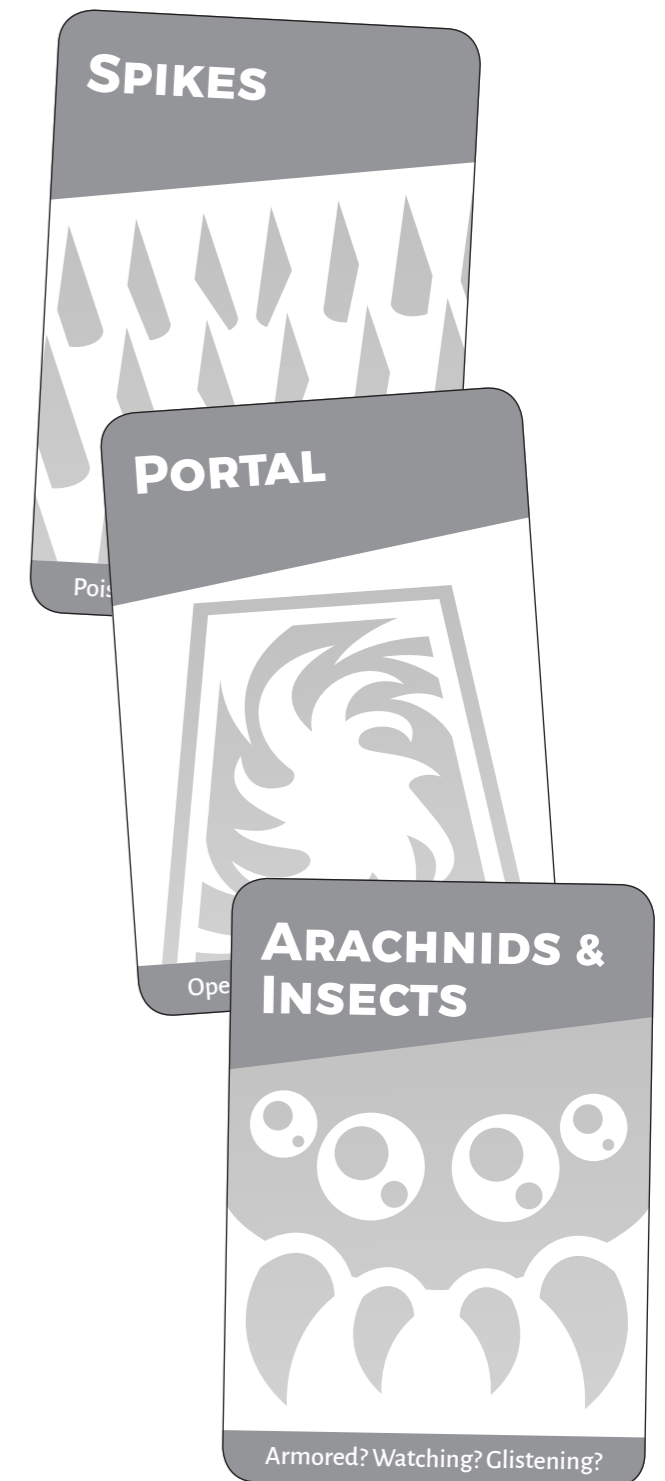
During the game you will be prompted to draw cards, then simply draw that many. Note that you may never have more than six cards. If an action would have you draw more cards, you only draw enough to your full hand size, never more.

Playing Cards

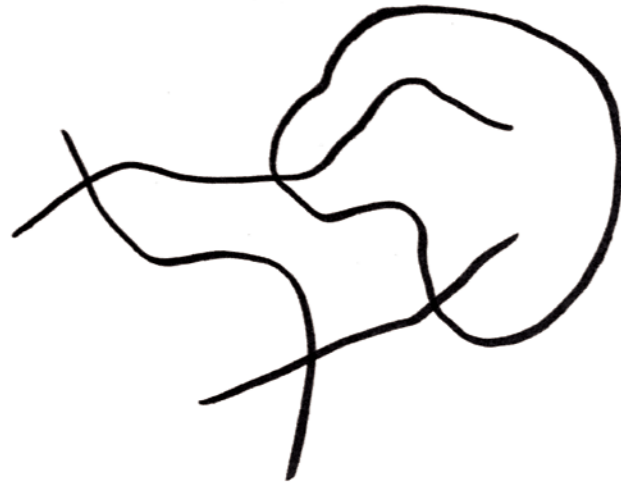
When you can play a card, always play it on one of the aspects you designed earlier. Combining the aspect with the prompt on the card is your inspiration. As you explain a combination to the other players you add a Feature to the dungeon.

Discarding Cards

At the end of your exploration turn you can discard up to one card. If your current hand is close to the maximum hand size it allows you to get rid of the cards you find uninspiring so that new ones can replace them on your next turn.



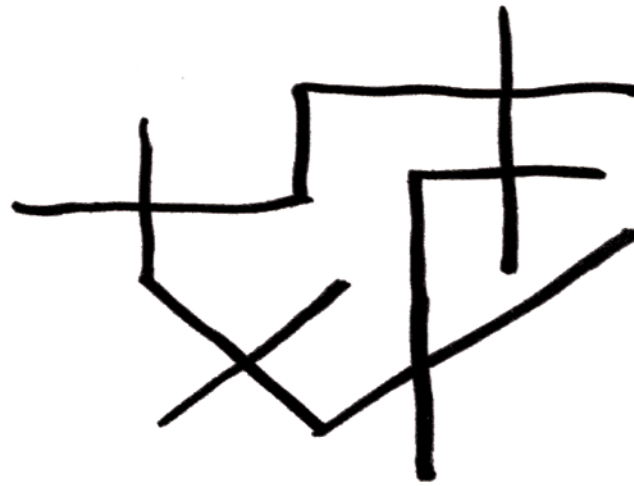
GUIDE LINES



Guide Lines are drawn onto the map during the planning phase and help you when creating the dungeon's Architecture. They do not represent any actual parts of the dungeon and are only meant to inspire and guide your exploration.

Adding Guide Lines

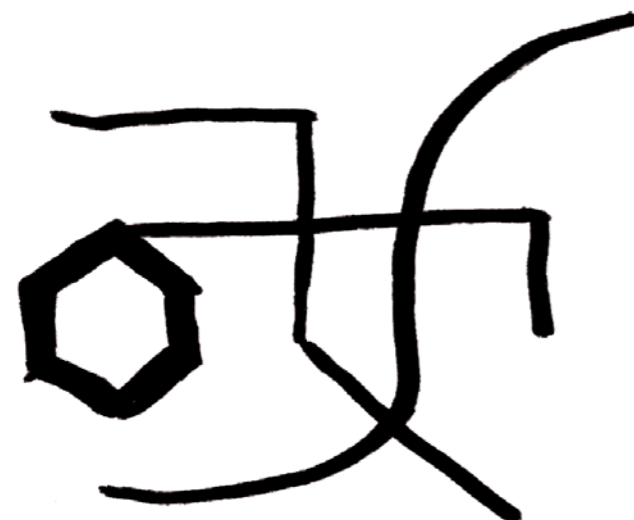
Guide Lines can be straight, sharp edged, smooth, even circular. They can contain curves or hard bends. And they can start and end anywhere on the page, even its very edges. They can even be a loop without a start or end. The only real rule is that any Guide Line after the first needs to cross or touch at least one other line.



You should also make sure that the lines roughly cover the entire area of the paper. This doesn't mean they need to be evenly balanced across the page. If you want you can bunch them up in one half of the page and then have a few solitary off-shots into the other half of the paper.

Note that smooth or ragged lines lend themselves well for natural dungeons. While straight, perpendicular or angular lines are well suited for man-made environments. You can mix these however you want but think about the dungeon type you decided on earlier when you draw your lines.

While drawing it's useful to mark them in a lighter color so that you can separate them from the real parts of the dungeon.



Adding the Heart Placeholder

This placeholder is a Guide Line shape that will be put on the map early to denote the position of the dungeon's central room. It will later on be replaced by the actual room but until then its function is to make sure there will be enough space later.

Draw a Guide Line in the form of a closed shape: Maybe a circle, a square or a simple blob for the dungeon's heart. This shape should overlap with or touch at least one Guide Line and be big enough to fit an average to large room. Note that it doesn't have to be in the center of the map, you can put it anywhere on the map.

ARCHITECTURE

When you draw the basic corridors and rooms of the dungeon you are adding its architecture. Architecture refers to all parts of the dungeon that are unremarkable, inert and/or not very significant. This includes various bits and pieces within these rooms and corridors, like furniture, stairs or bridges.

Adding Architecture

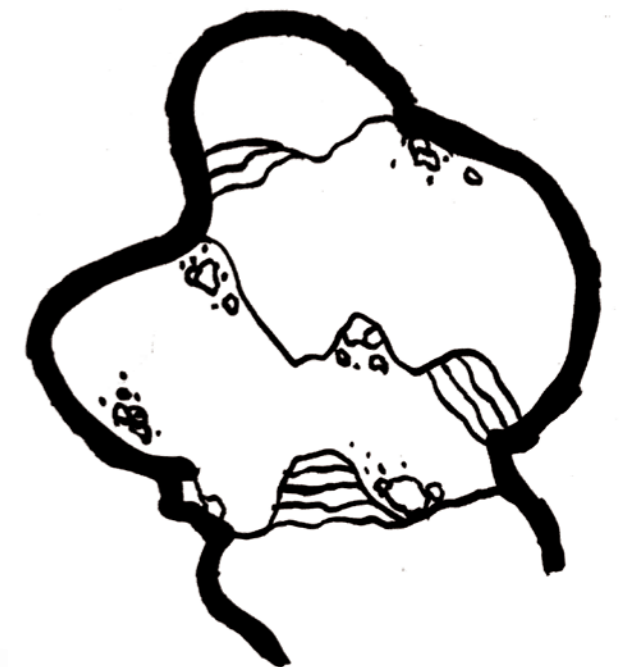
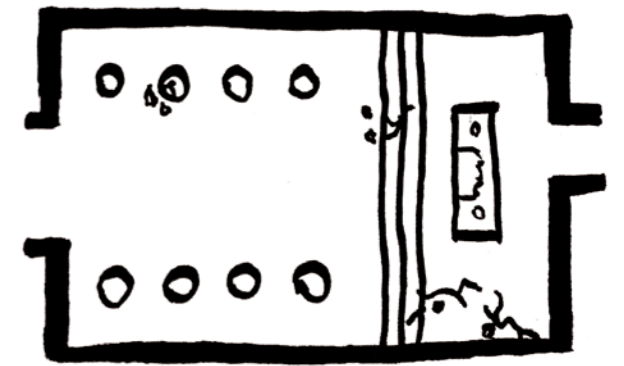
When it's time to expand the dungeon and draw on the map you tell a story about the place you're drawing. As you share your ideas, draw the architecture of one connected room and/or corridor on the map. If you want you can also only draw part of a corridor or room.

When you add Architecture be inspired by the Guide Lines. Lines can act as corridors, crossroads can inspire room shapes. You don't need to make use of every line or slavishly stick to this but it helps if you let them guide you.

Also note that when you draw Architecture, you can add it anywhere on the map. You do not need to continue along existing corridors or rooms. And you can even add connections or existing architecture where none were previously. These might simply be secret pathways or the previous information on the dungeon was contradictory or unreliable. But remember to not draw into the reserved heart space but you may want to move up to its boundaries.

Drawing Boundaries

Depending on how detailed your drawing gets the map can grow quite complex with many different lines. It is recommended to emphasize the outer walls of rooms and corridors to make the general shape of the dungeon easy to read. You can do so by drawing the boundaries with a wider stroke or a darker color.



FEATURES

Features are parts of the dungeon that stand out. This can include things like structural or architectural elements, simple traps or basic enemies. By default they are not particularly challenging, dangerous or rewarding. But by spending tokens these Features can be upgraded to Threats and/or Rewards.

Adding Features

As you draw the dungeon's Architecture, you will mention Features inspired by the combination of your played Dungeon Card and one of the dungeon's aspects. Draw these clearly on the map. You can do so directly or by using a symbol to represent the more abstract Features.

Example Features

A winding bridge over a river of molten fire (Bridge Dungeon Card + Hungry Lava aspect). It's interesting and stands out but it's not perilous or risky to traverse. At least not until a Threat Token is spent on it.

Or a small band of rookie ice goblins milling around an entrance (Guardian Dungeon Card + Ice Goblin aspect). They are easily overcome by the adventurers unless Threat Tokens are used to make them more formidable. Maybe by increasing their numbers, improving their equipment or making them more experienced.

THREATS

A Threat is a significant source of danger in the dungeon. This could be enemies, traps, environmental hazards or magical effects.

A Threat's danger depends on the number of Threat Tokens that were spent on it. A Threat with 1 Threat Token is a simple challenge. 2 tokens represent a significant challenge. 3 is truly dangerous. And 4 is a murderous opponent.

Adding Threats

Threats can be created when you spend a Threat Token on an existing Feature. Doing so you transform that Feature into a Threat. See the section on **spending tokens** below.

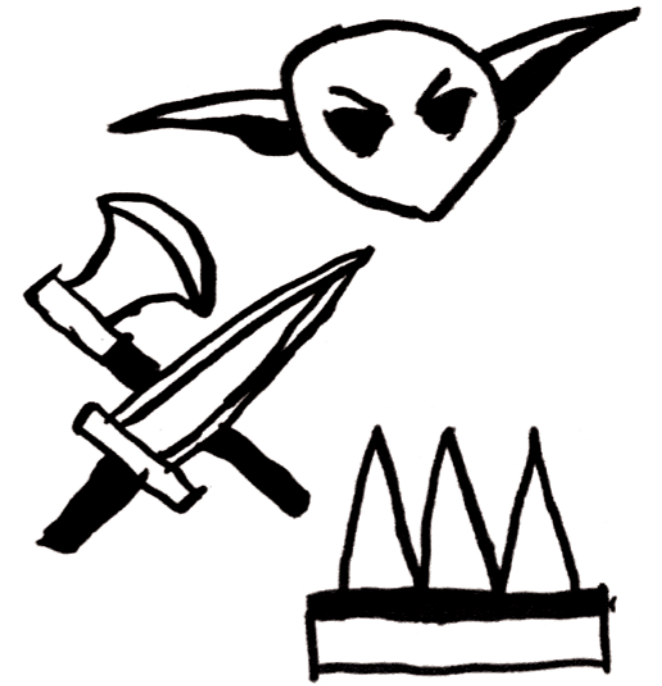
REWARDS

A Reward is a significant source of value hidden in the dungeon. Anything from simple gold coins to magical artifacts or hidden knowledge is possible. Generally if Rewards are present next to a Threat it implies that the Threat needs to be overcome to claim the Reward but that does not need to be the case.

As more Reward Tokens are spent the Reward gains in value. A Reward with 1 Reward Token is a simple Reward, 2 tokens is a significant Reward. At 3 tokens is something rare, powerful or very valuable while at the maximum of 4 tokens a Reward is truly legendary.

Adding Rewards

To create a Reward you have to spend a Reward Token. You can then create a new Reward and draw it onto the map or you can upgrade an existing Feature or Threat to a Reward. See the section on **spending tokens** below.



THREAT & REWARD TOKENS

Threat Tokens represent the force and intensity of the dungeon's hazards while Reward Tokens represent its potential treasure.

At the beginning of the game you will put a number of tokens from the **reserves** into two pools: The **dungeon pool** and the **heart pool**.

Tokens in the dungeon pool will be earned and used as you explore and build the dungeon itself. The tokens in the heart pool are reserved for the room at the dungeon's heart.

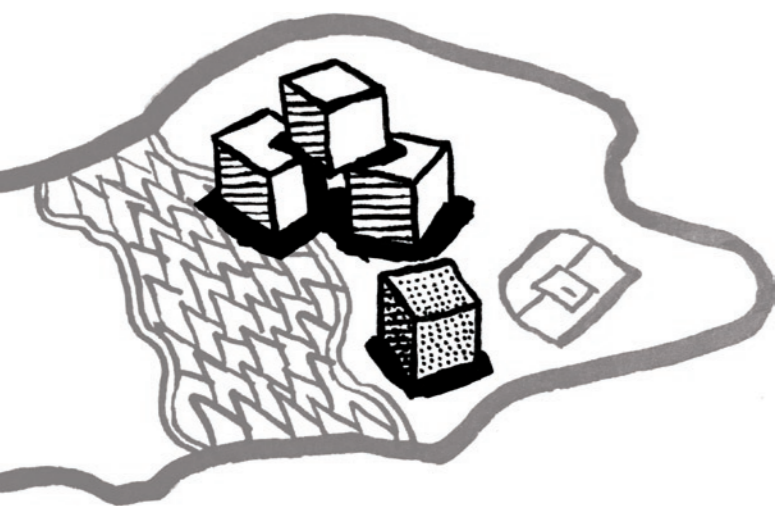
During play tokens are spent to add Threats and Rewards to the dungeon and to increase their potency.

Getting Tokens

During your exploration turn you may take a Threat Token from the dungeon's pool for each Feature you added that turn.

And you may take up again half that many (round down) Reward Tokens from the dungeon pool. You can then immediately spend these tokens or hold on to them for later use.

If your dungeon pool runs out of tokens during play then do not worry too much. You can still use whatever tokens the players hold. And if those are exhausted too that just means that the dungeon has a few areas that do not present immediate challenges.



Spending Tokens

When you spend tokens, you can use any number of tokens you hold on the dungeon's Architecture and Features, Rewards and Threats.

When you spend a Threat Token you can turn a Feature into a Threat. If you do so, describe it briefly. You can also spend a Threat Token on an existing Threat. With every additional token added to a Threat, add a narrative detail that makes it more dangerous. If you can't come up with something inspired on the spot, don't worry too much about it. A small detail like *the orc guards have really well made weapons* or *the lion is big* can be enough.

When you spend a Reward Token you can either add a new Reward to the map or turn an existing Feature into a Reward. You can even add a Reward to an existing Threat. In either case, describe the treasure briefly. You can also add Reward Tokens to existing Rewards. If you do so add another narrative detail to the Reward that makes it more valuable. As with Threats, don't worry too much about the detail if you're pressed for inspiration.

If you add a Reward Token to a Threat it remains a Threat but also becomes a Reward. Maybe the powerful rock golem actually has veins of gold running through it.

Famous Features

When you add the third Threat or Reward Token to a Threat or Reward it becomes a famous part of the dungeon. That means you get to name it and then tell a rumor about how the world outside the dungeon knows of its existence.

These rumors are questionable sources of information, unreliable documents or hearsay accounts. Once a rumor is established you may use it whenever you share an idea about the dungeon to embellish your story.

Examples would be *Grogmog the Terrible*, an age old golem sung about in a dwarven ballad or the rants of a madman describing the splendor of the *Amulet of Ta*.

TURN CLOCK

The discovery phase has different types of turns and a highly variable number and order of those. The turn clock helps you keep track of these turns. It is created during the planning phase and based on your dungeon's Size.

Turn Numbers

Your turn clock will have $[Size \times 2]$ exploration turns and 1 tremor plus 1 for every 6 Size.

Creating the Clock

To keep track of your exploration turns, mark them down as boxes, with some space between them. One box represents one exploration turn.

Then add the required tremor turns to the turn clock. With only one tremor mark it in the middle of the turn clock as a thick line between two boxes.

If you have more than one tremor then place the lines so that the distance between them and the start and end of the clock is roughly equal. Don't worry too much about perfect placement.

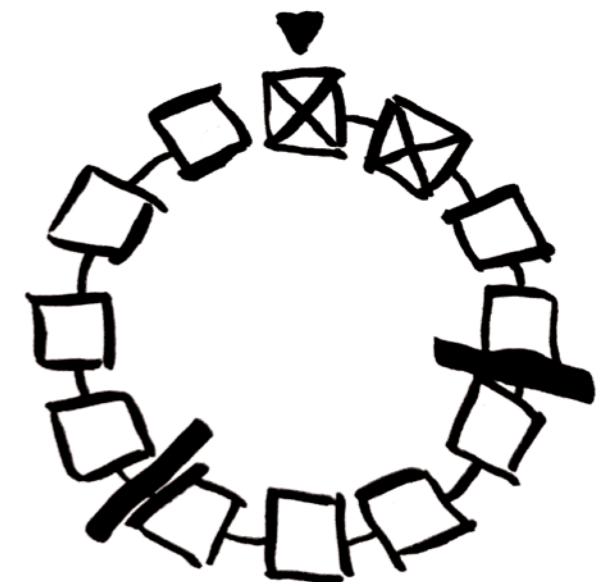
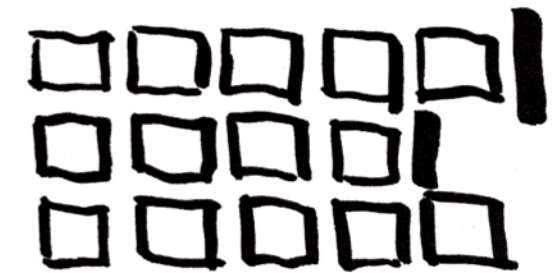
For example, a Size 7 dungeon will have 14 exploration turns and 2 tremors. You can split up your exploration turn boxes with tremor lines in any of the following combinations: **5-4-5**, **4-5-5** or **5-5-4**.

Using the Clock

When you have finished an exploration turn you check off the box and look for the next symbol. If it is another box perform another exploration turn.

If you reach the tremor line on the turn clock it is time for the tremor turn instead.

Once you have finished a tremor turn and if you have an undefined heart, it is time to perform the heart turn.



SEQUENCE OF PLAY

The game of Ex Umbra is organized into a specific sequence of phases, which contain turns. And these turns contain actions. These are all designed to help you create an interesting dungeon

Phases

Below you will find a description of the different phases and turns that you move through during the flow of the game. Phases are larger groupings of turns. You will proceed through those in a linear fashion. Each phase has different types of turns, some of which are repeated multiple times.

Turn Types

During a turn you perform the specified actions. There are two distinct types of turns: Unless indicated otherwise all turns are **collaborative turns** where all players are involved and perform the actions together. And there are **solo turns**, where an active player takes a more central role. After each solo turn the player to the left of the active player becomes the new active player.

Starting Player

To figure out who goes first simply pick the player that was last underground. Maybe they were in a cellar, an underpass or even a proper cave. They are the active player for the first solo turn. And after each solo turn the player to their left becomes the next active player

Turn Actions

Some turns have unique actions to perform, but there are a number of repeated actions that reappear in different turns, such as drawing parts of the dungeon's architecture on the map. You can find more information on the involved game elements and actions in the previous chapter.

Bending and Breaking Rules

Ex Umbra is a collaborative storytelling exercise. Its structure and rules are in the service of your shared creative goal. If at any point you, as a group, want to deviate from them, bend or break them, you are more than welcome to do so.

Maybe you want to refill your dungeon pool with some Threat Tokens late in the game. Maybe the Tremor you rolled doesn't fit your dungeon and you're rather roll again. Or you want to waive the rule that has you add details to Rewards or Threats as you add tokens.

All of that is perfectly fine.

1. DISCUSSION PHASE

The goal of the discussion phase is to make sure that all players are on the same page when it comes to their assumptions and expectations. This helps to make for a smoother experience.

Game Expectations

What does everyone want from the game? Are you just hanging out for a fun evening of making something interesting, dark or goofy together? Or are you planning to create an interesting place to use for your next role-playing session?

If half of the table is going for something serious and useful, and the other half is just going crazy, then again confusion and disappointment are likely.

Settings Assumptions

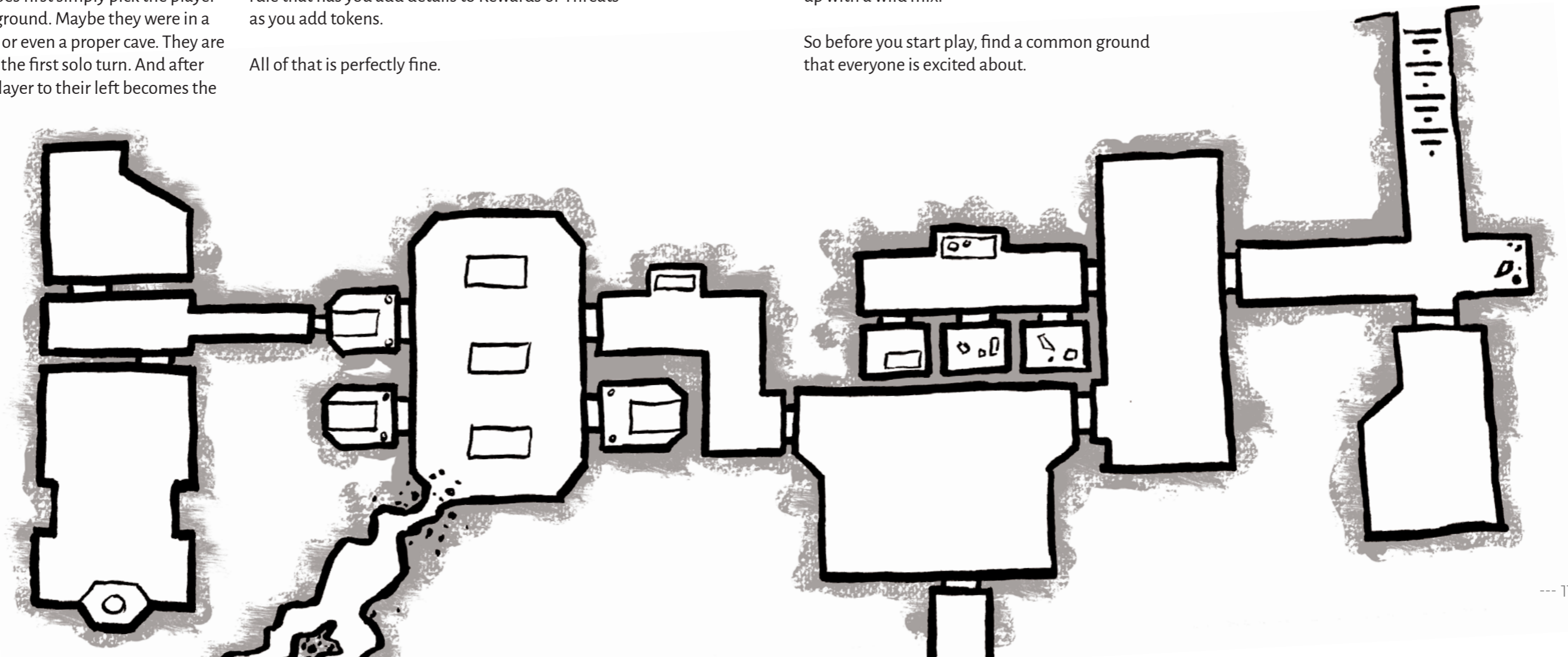
Ex Umbra is intended to generate dungeons for use in a fantasy role-playing game but the scope of possible fantasy worlds is pretty large. It can be useful to decide on a more specific setting or world for your play session, ideally one that everyone is somewhat familiar with. Otherwise you might end up with a wild mix.

So before you start play, find a common ground that everyone is excited about.

Dungeon Type

Another important thing to discuss is what type of dungeon you want to build. Is the dungeon a natural cave? A series of artificial tunnels? An underground city?

You don't need to know what its purpose is but this decision has a large impact on the shapes you'll draw so it is good to be on the same page when starting. You can leave this open if you want, and just dive right in.



2. PLANNING PHASE

In this phase you determine the higher-level bits and pieces of the dungeon as a group. Together you'll set the dungeon's Size, Difficulty and its sources of danger.

Dungeon Size

Here you determine the size of your dungeon together. This is a simple number, that should be at least 2 and no more than 12. To start out a size between 3 and 5 is recommended, with the size ideally being a multiple of the number of players.

During play you will generate a dungeon that has a slightly more than your chosen Size in rooms. A Size 4 dungeon will have about 4-5 rooms. This also obviously influences the total playtime of Ex Umbra. You can expect a session to last about 15 minutes for setup plus another 15 minutes for each Size.

The Size also determines the number of exploration turns and tremor turns. You will play $[\text{Size} \times 2]$ exploration turns and 1 tremor turn plus another 1 tremor turn for every full 6 Size. Your first tremor turn will be followed by the heart turn.

Create the turn clock accordingly.

- Pick a Size (between 2 and 12)
- Number of exploration turns: $[\text{Size} \times 2]$
- Number of tremors: $[1 + 1 \text{ for every } 6 \text{ Size}]$
- Mark exploration turn boxes on the turn clock
- Add tremor line(s) to the turn clock

Dungeon Difficulty

Discuss how dangerous (and rewarding) this dungeon should be. Difficulty ranges from 1 to 4: Safe, Risky, Dangerous, Murderous. Consider 2 the default Difficulty and a good starting choice.

Difficulty determines the number of Threat and Reward Tokens to use. Set aside $[\text{Size} \times \text{Difficulty}]$ Threat Tokens and half as many (round up) Reward Tokens. These are the dungeon pool: A set of tokens available for the general development of the dungeon. Put them next to the map.

Then set aside another set of tokens reserved for the heart pool. This is $[2 + \text{Difficulty}]$ Threat Tokens and again half as many (round up) Reward Tokens. These tokens are only used for the dungeon's heart. Put these in the middle of the map to keep them apart from the dungeon pool.

- Pick a Difficulty (between 1 and 4)
- Dungeon pool: $[\text{Size} \times \text{Difficulty}]$ Threat Tokens
- Heart pool: $[2 + \text{Difficulty}]$ Threat Tokens
- Add $[\text{Threat Tokens} / 2]$ (round up) Reward Tokens to each pool

Define Aspects

Each player adds an aspect to the dungeon by writing it on an index card. An aspect is a more general source of danger, not a specific threat.

You will need a total of 3 aspects plus 1 for every full 6 Size. If you have any remaining, design them collaboratively.

It is recommended to add at least one aspect representing the environmental or natural dangers of the dungeon (Slippery Rocks, Deadly Icicles, Crumbling Brickwork etc.).

- Number of aspect: $[3 + 1 \text{ for every } 6 \text{ Size}]$
- Write each aspect down on an index card

3. FOUNDATION PHASE

In this phase you will start preparing the foundations for the dungeon's overall shape and more. It features the first solo turns so keep the active player in mind from now on.

Draw Guide Lines (Solo)

This turn has the active player put down a Guide Line onto the map. These lines are not actual architecture but are abstract lines that will be helpful when putting the dungeon together. Repeat this turn a number of times equal to the dungeon's Size, giving you the same number of Guide Lines.

- Total Guide Lines required: $[\text{Size}]$
- Each player draws one Guide Line

Dungeon Heart (Solo)

Pick a spot on a Guide Line or an intersection of Guide Lines and draw a closed geometric shape to represent the future heart.

Pay attention to its size as it will influence the scale of your other rooms and corridors. The shape should be big enough for an average to large room.

The heart is where the dungeon's key challenge and rewards lie. Don't worry too much about what it should be right now. Just put down a simple shape. Then place the Threat and Reward Tokens you set aside for the heart pool earlier into the shape.

- Draw a guide placeholder for the dungeon heart
- Move the heart pool tokens into the now drawn guide shape.

Dungeon Entrance (Solo)

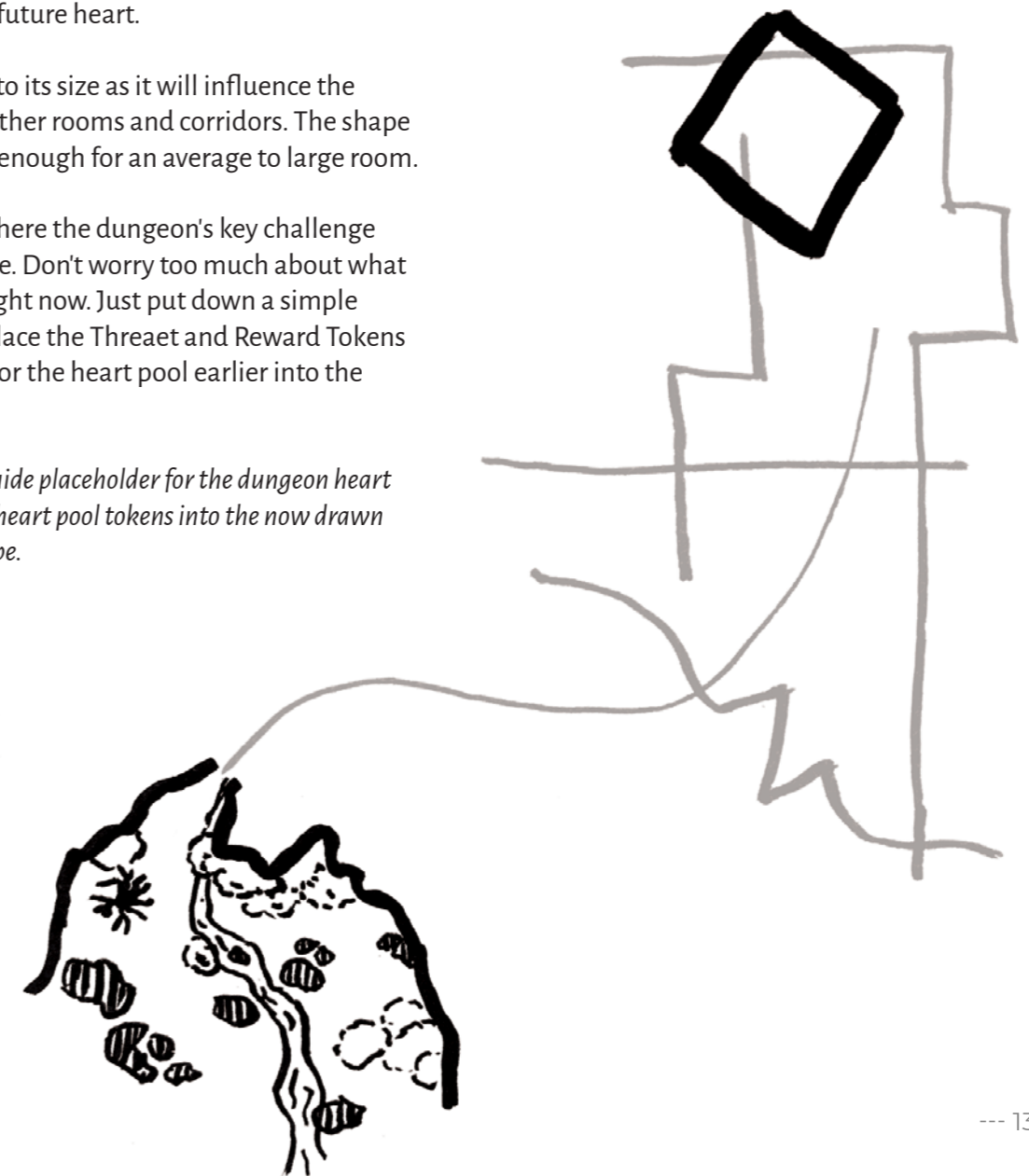
Describe the dungeon's entrance. Is it a giant door, a forgotten ravine, a trap door in a tavern? Then draw it on the map.

- Draw the dungeon entrance

Draw Dungeon Cards

Before the discovery phase can really begin, each player is dealt a starting hand of 2 Dungeon Cards.

- Deal 2 Dungeon Cards to each player



4. DISCOVERY PHASE

In this phase you will share rumors and stories about the dungeon as you draw its architecture. You will play Dungeon Cards, earn Threat and Reward Tokens and spend them to create Threats and Rewards.

Exploration Turn (Solo)

This is where most of the dungeon is created. The active player starts this turn by drawing 2 Dungeon Cards, up to a maximum hand size of 6. Then it's time to expand the dungeon.

They have to add one connected room and/or corridor to the map and explain what their addition means as they do so. They can also play up to 3 Dungeon Cards on different aspects. This can be done in any order and in a back and forth of drawing and playing cards. While drawing add Features as necessary by the cards played.

Once done drawing onto the map the active player gains tokens based on the number of Features added. One Threat Tokens for each Feature, and half as many (round down) Reward Tokens.

Then all players, starting with the acting player, may spend one Threat Tokens and one Reward Token. You're not limited to spending them on the Features created in this exploration turn.

At the end of your turn you can discard up to one Dungeon Card from your hand. Finally you mark the turn as finished in the turn clock.

- Draw 2 Dungeon Cards
- Draw the architecture of one connected room and/or corridor
- Play up to 3 Dungeon Cards on the aspects
- Add Features based on cards played
- Take a Threat Token for each Feature added from the dungeon pool
- Take half that many (round down) Reward Tokens from the dungeon pool
- Active player may spend one token of each type
- Other players may spend one token of each type
- Discard up to one Dungeon Card
- Mark turn as finished

Tremor Turn

This turn upsets the status quo and happens when you reach a tremor line in the turn clock.

Roll a D20 and look up the result on the tremor table in the back of this book. The result will modify the dungeon as it currently exists. Make sense of the result together. If there's contradictions then lean into the fact that everything is questionable rumors and unreliable stories.

Change existing Architecture, Features, Threats and Rewards or draw new ones as needed. If any Threats or Rewards are removed return their tokens back into the pool.

- Roll a D20
- Determine your Tremor
- Follow the actions given in the table

Heart Turn

After you have executed a tremor turn and if you have an undefined dungeon heart it is time to do so now by executing a heart turn together.

This turn resolves mostly like an Exploration turn with the following differences:

The Dungeon Cards are played randomly. For each aspect in your dungeon, play a random card by drawing it from the top of the deck.

Then you make sense of the cards and draw the heart together. You need to make use of at least one card-aspect combination and you have to spend all the tokens from the heart pool on the Features in the heart.

- Play a random Dungeon Card for each aspect
- Draw the architecture of the dungeon's heart
- Add Features based on the cards used (at least one)
- Spend all tokens from the heart pool

5. CLEANUP PHASE

After all the exploration turns are exhausted it's time to wrap up the dungeon. This phase ties off all the loose ends.

Close Open Ends (solo)

The active player closes one open passage of the dungeon. You can do this only through adding Architecture but you can draw simple corridors, walls, dead ends or collapses - whatever makes sense.

Repeat this turn until all your open ends of your dungeon are closed. Do make sure that all parts of your dungeon are connected and you have no unreachable islands.

Spend Remaining Tokens (Solo)

Go around and spend any tokens remaining in the dungeon pool. Players can spend either Threat or Reward Tokens as they want but you can only add them to existing Threats or Rewards, not add new ones. You add details to these Features as normal.

Once the dungeon pool is exhausted, players can spend whatever tokens they have remaining. Once all tokens are spent move to the next turn.

Make it Famous (Solo)

Each player can then make a bit of the dungeon famous. Pick a specific part of the dungeon and name it. This could be a room, corridor, Feature, Reward, Threat or anything else that makes sense to you. Then tell a rumor about how and what the world outside the dungeon has heard of it.

Lastly use this phase to double check if there are any Threats or Rewards with three or more tokens that have not been made famous. Make sure to also generate their rumors during this step.

Name the Dungeon

And the very last step is for all players to get together and come up with a suitable name for the dungeon. Write this at the top of the map.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

In the following example Martin and Renja play together. After a quick discussion phase we decide to create a simple dungeon that's primarily natural caves and set in a basic fantasy setting filled with elves, wizards and magical swords.

PLANNING & FOUNDATION

Dungeon Size

We're starting with a simple Size 4 dungeon. This means a turn clock with 8 boxes, and a tremor line after the first set of 4 turns.

Dungeon Difficulty

We go with the basic Difficulty 2. This gives us 8 Threat and 4 Reward Tokens for the dungeon. And 4 Threat and 2 Reward Tokens for the heart.

Defining Aspects

Our dungeon's 3 aspects are Cruel Ice Goblins (from Martin), Ravenous Oozes (from Renja) and we join together to add Shifting Sands.

Draw Guide Lines

Size 4 means 4 Guide Lines. For our mostly natural caves we focus on wavy and organic lines. We take turns adding these Guide Lines to the map.

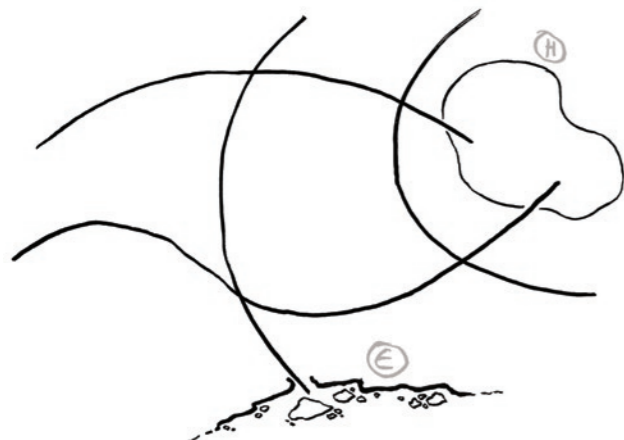
Defining Heart

Martin goes first and puts down the Heart in the upper right corner of our map as a shapeless blob.

Defining Entrance

Renja follows up with the entrance: A small crack in a desert's sandstone cliffs.

This is our map at the end of the planning phase:



DISCOVERY

1. Exploration Turn

Martin plays Cruel Ice Goblins + Bridge and creates a room with a rickety bridge slick with ice. This earns him a Threat Token that is spent on the bridge, making crossing it a risky proposition.

2. Exploration Turn

Renja follows with Ravenous Oozes + Hunter and Shifting Sands + Chasm / Holes: A winding corridor with sand pits and a skulking ooze monster.

She takes two Threat Tokens and one Reward Token and spends one of each. The ooze turns dangerous and the pits hide mummified corpses with jewelry worn smooth.

3. Exploration Turn

Martin isn't inspired by his cards and draws a simple room that has no interesting features.

At the turn's end Renja spends her remaining Threat Token on the bridge. It looks like the ice goblins installed some traps hidden in snow drifts.

4. Exploration Turn

Renja plays Shifting Sands + Arches / Columns and adds a room with a maze of sandstone columns that move and flow slowly. The Threat Token she gets remains unspent for now.



TREMOR & HEART

With the first set of exploration turns elapsed we get ready to shake up the dungeon.

Tremor Turn

Renja rolls a D20 and it shows 13: Wandering Monster. We decide on a restless, hungry ghost and draw a symbol for it in the upper right corner.

Martin adds a Threat Token and Renja adds a second token and the detail that its touch burns.

Heart Turn

We turn over the random cards and get:

- Cruel Ice Goblins + Family
- Ravenous Oozes + Ice / Cold
- Shifting Sands + Stairs

It seems a perfect fit to turn the heart into the ice goblin warrens. The goblins made this cave comfortable by using cooling oozes trapped in cages. We don't find a way to make sense of the last card and ignore it.

We take turns spending tokens on the heart making both the goblins and oozes dangerous. The two Reward Tokens from the heart pool are spent on the goblin's hoard from raided caravans. It even contains a lost magic scroll.



DISCOVERY & CLEANUP

We breeze through the remaining 4 exploration turns, adding architecture and features.

Noteworthy is a Ravenous Oozes + Poison combination leading to a small ooze creature with a highly poisonous body. But a Reward Token spent on this Threat also turns it into a Reward because this poison can be harvested, used and sold.

Cleanup

We eventually reach the cleanup phase and take turns closing off the still open routes.

Then we take care of the remaining tokens. The dungeon pool is empty so only Martin spends his last Reward Token on the poisonous ooze, adding that the poison can be turned into a powerful hallucinogenic drug through alchemy.

And finally we get to make something famous. Renja is a fan of the ice bridge and adds the rumor: A group hid in the dungeon's entrance to escape a sandstorm and some fell prey to the traps. The survivors called it Chillspike Bridge.

Martin doesn't feel inspired and skips this turn.

And as a very last thing we debate a name for our dungeon and settle on the Frozen Warrens.



APPENDIX: FURTHER MAPMAKING

This chapter offers a number of further ideas, rules options and thoughts on playing Ex Umbra. If this is your first time playing or reading Ex Umbra don't worry too much about these.

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

The dungeons generated with Ex Umbra are great to use in role-playing games. Here's some tips and thoughts on how to make use of them in that context.

Playtime

If you are planning to play the finished dungeon as part of a role-playing game campaign, you can expect about an hour of playtime for every Size. Obviously this number is highly dependent on the speed of your group and the complexity of the system you use.

Token Scale

The system of Threat and Reward Tokens is purposefully vague to provide some wiggle room as you're building the dungeon. But if you're trying to use it as a guideline for designing your Threats and Rewards, go with this:

Threat	Description
1	Safe. Success should be guaranteed but it may need some resources.
2	Risky. Success is likely but it will take some work to get there.
3	Dangerous. Success is uncertain and will exhaust a lot of resources.
4	Murderous. Success is unlikely and good preparation is vital.
Reward	Description
1	Unremarkable. Minor valuables or slightly useful items.
2	Ordinary. Helpful items or a comfortable amount of wealth.
3	Notable. Rare and potent items or desirable valuables.
4	Momentous. A powerful item or enough wealth to change lives.

In-Character Research

If you want to interweave Ex Umbra with your play session you can have your players roll dice or role-play their research into the dungeon within a normal session.

Then you can play a session of Ex Umbra with your players. However each player only gets to play a number of exploration turns based on the success of their research.

And as the game master you can then run the rest of the Ex Umbra game alone and in secret to keep some surprises for the players.

Dungeon Cards as Ingame Prompts

You can also use the set of Dungeon Cards as a more improvisational inspiration during your play sessions.

If you're in need for some inspiration, simply draw three cards and place them down in a line in front of you. Then let your creativity be moved by the combination of the prompts and adjectives on the cards before you. Feel free to interpret things metaphorically.

DRAWING DUNGEONS

Actually putting marks to paper has its own sets of pitfalls and requirements.

Scale Considerations

When you start out with the map, getting the scale of your dungeon right is tricky. This is one of the functions of the heart shape: to provide an example against which to measure all other rooms.

If you want, you can also use graph paper and define a specific size for each square (or hex) before you start. That might help with keeping your rooms and corridors at sensible sizes compared to one another.

Stay Simple

It may be tempting to make a pretty map by adding decorations, spending time on detailed features or drawing characteristic walls. But it is recommended to keep your walls as simple lines and your features symbolic while you play.

That way it is a lot easier to add secret passages and change things as you develop the dungeon. You can still clean up and embellish the map once you are done.

Standalone Map

During play you have a lot of additional information that is never actually present on the map. If you want to make your map stand alone you should take a few minutes after finishing the game to add documentation.

Write short information about your Features, Threats and Rewards directly on the map. You can either write them next to the objects on the map or use a legend. Also you can track the number of tokens used by putting triangles for Threat Tokens and circles for Reward Tokens next to these descriptions.

MAKING MORE

Here are some thoughts, tweaks and options to change the way you make dungeons:

Multi-Level Dungeon

If you want to make truly large dungeons you could increase the dungeon's Size beyond the recommended maximum of 12 but that a game starts to take too long at that point. Instead I recommend that you build truly massive dungeons in multiple parts. Either as multi-story dungeons where each heart leads to the next entrance. Or by drawing each one on its own sheet of paper, and then afterwards cutting them out, gluing them onto a larger sheet and connecting them as you desire.

This also makes it easier to add a wider variety of dangers as you'll be able to create new aspect for every level, though you might want to keep one or two from the previous level to provide some consistency.

Collaborative Heart

Instead of randomly drawing cards for the dungeon heart you can go around and have each player play one card and then draw the remaining ones randomly. This gives you a bit more control if you are unhappy with the unpredictable nature of the heart turn.

Interjection

If you want to flex your creative muscles some more give this variant a try: At the start of your exploration turn you don't draw two cards but every other player draws one card instead. Then everyone but you can play up to one card during your turn that you have to make sense of. You get Threat Tokens based on the card-aspect combinations you successfully turned into Features.

TREMOR TABLE

1	DEFEATED
	Some of the dungeon's dangers have been bested or broken. Which Threats were destroyed? Who is to blame? → Remove Threat(s) worth 3 danger tokens and return the tokens to the dungeon pool. Add a Feature of what is left behind.
2	LOOTED
	Someone has stolen some of the dungeon's treasure! Did they break in or was it an inside job? Why was this valuable to them? → Remove Reward(s) worth 3 treasure tokens and return the tokens to the dungeon pool. Add a Feature of what is left behind.
3	HIDDEN TREASURE
	A new source of wealth was discovered or brought to the dungeon. How did it change the power-dynamics? Who is tasked with exploiting or guarding it? → Add three treasure tokens from the reserves to the dungeon pool
4	HARDENED THREATS
	The Threats in the dungeon have grown more numerous or dangerous. Why are they more powerful? What price was paid for this? → Add three danger tokens from the reserves to the dungeon pool
5	OUTSIDE INFLUENCE
	Powerful forces from beyond the dungeon have taken a peculiar interest in this place and reshaped parts of it. Who are they? What do they want? And what makes this place relevant to them? → Change existing architecture and Features, Threats and Rewards as needed
6	CAVE IN
	A tunnel, a wall, a floor has collapsed. The structural integrity of the dungeon is compromised. Has this blocked something or revealed something? Was this collapse on purpose? → Change existing architecture and Features, Threats and Rewards as needed
7	FAILED EXPLORERS
	Some other group or entity tried to explore or exploit the dungeon and was lost. What did they come for? What rewards and secrets do their remains hold? → Take up to 3 tokens from the dungeon pool and add Threats and/or Rewards as appropriate.
8	REVEALED SECRET
	A new piece of information paints one of the dungeon's Aspects in a completely new light. What secret transforms it? Does that make it more dangerous? And how do we know about this? → Change an Aspect and update all Elements, Threats and Rewards related to it accordingly
9	INTERJECTION
	A powerful force from outside the dungeon has deposited or placed something into the dungeon. What did they add? And how did the dungeon adapt? → Add a Feature, Threat or Reward unrelated to any existing Aspect. Use up to (Difficulty) tokens from the reserves.
10	FORTIFIED ENTRANCE
	Whoever calls this dungeon their home made sure that the entrance itself is a Hazard. What made them set up protections? What secret makes passage for them easy? → Add (Difficulty) danger tokens from the dungeon pool and create a Threat at one of the dungeon's entrances

11	INVADERS
	Some strange danger has invaded the dungeon. Body-stealing insects, dwarves digging to greedily or simply just snakes. What attracted them? How did they get into the dungeon? → Add a new Aspect for these invaders
12	OVERGROWN
	Rampant growth has claimed many walls and rooms of the dungeon. Plants, brain-controlling mushrooms, mystical crystals. What made this growth possible? What makes it dangerous and valuable? → Add a new Aspect for this growth
13	WANDERING MONSTER
	Dangerous and strange things are roaming these halls. This wandering Threat could be found anywhere. What is makes it different from the other denizens of the dungeon? Why is it restless? → Add a wandering Threat unrelated to a meance to the map and spend danger tokens from the dungeon pool as needed.
14	ANOTHER ENTRANCE
	There's another way into this dungeon. Has this always been there? What makes it different from the other entrances? Who is using it? → Draw a second entrance on the map
15	SECRET PASSAGES
	The dungeon is rife with secret passages winding through the rock. Who made them? And who still uses them? What makes them dangerous or difficult to traverse? → Connect some of your rooms in new ways
16	UNDERGROUND TERRAIN
	Rumors revealed a large-scale terrain feature crossing through the dungeon. Maybe a river, a lake of fire or a fungal forest. What is it? How do the denizens live with it? → Add a large terrain architecture to the map as appropriate
17	FLOODED
	Parts of the dungeon are sunken below the waves. Rooms or corridors are wholly or partially flooded. What caused this? And is it really just water? → Draw in how some of your rooms are flooded
18	POWERFUL LEYLINE
	A powerful mystical line runs through the dungeon. Unnatural phenomena, mutated creatures or elemental manifestations are common along this leyline. How does it manifest? Where does this come from? → Draw a strange phenomenon along one Guide Line
19	STRANGE RULES
	In an area of the dungeon the rules of the normal world are broken. Things fall upward, time passes slower. What phenomenon is it? What causes it? Who makes use of it? → Mark an area where this phenomenon is active
20	ADDITIONAL HEART
	This dungeon has more than one heart. It's power is spread out across multiple locations. Do these places share a purpose? Or are they different, maybe even competing? → Draw the placeholder for another heart. Put tokens from the reserves into it. Complete it at the end of the discovery phase.

GAMEPLAY OVERVIEW

1. PHASE: DISCUSSION

- Discuss game and settings expectations
- Decide on overall dungeon type

2. PHASE: PLANNING

DUNGEON SIZE

- Pick a Size between 2 and 12
- Draw turn clock with [Size x 2] exploration turns
- Add [1 + 1 for every 6 Size] tremor lines to the turn clock

DUNGEON DIFFICULTY

- Pick a Difficulty between 1 and 4
- Put [Size x Difficulty] Threat Tokens in the dungeon pool
- Put [2 + Difficulty] Threat Tokens in the heart pool

DEFINE ASPECTS

- Define one Aspect per player
- If less than [3 + 1 for every 6 Size] define remaining together
- Write Aspects on index cards

3. PHASE: FOUNDATION

DRAW GUIDE LINES (SOLO)

- Total Guide Lines required: [Size]
- Each player draws one Guide Line

DUNGEON HEART (SOLO)

- Draw a guide placeholder for the dungeon heart
- Move heart pool tokens into heart placeholder

DUNGEON ENTRANCE (SOLO)

- Draw the dungeon entrance

DRAW DUNGEON CARDS

- Deal 2 Dungeon Cards to each player.

4. PHASE: DISCOVERY

EXPLORATION TURNS (SOLO)

- Active player draws 2 Dungeon Cards
- Play up to 3 Dungeon Cards
- Add Architecture and Features
- Take a Threat Token for each Feature added
- Take half as many (round down) Reward Tokens
- Players may spend one token of each type
- Discard up to one Dungeon Card
- Mark turn as finished

TREMOR TURN

- Roll a D20
- Determine your Tremor
- Follow the actions given in the table

HEART TURN

- Play a random Dungeon Card for each aspect
- Draw the architecture of the heart using at least one card
- Spend all tokens from the heart pool

5. PHASE: CLEANUP

CLOSE OPEN ENDS (SOLO)

- Close all open passages and corridors
- Make sure all areas are connected

SPEND REMAINING TOKENS (SOLO)

- Take turns spending tokens remaining in dungeon pool
- Take turns spending still owned tokens

MAKE IT FAMOUS (SOLO)

- Pick an element of the dungeon, name it and make it famous
- Check if there are any features with 3 tokens not yet famous

NAME THE DUNGEON

- Come up with a suitable name together
- Write it at the top of the map