GDC

# Mansions of Madness 2nd: An App-Integrated Postmortem

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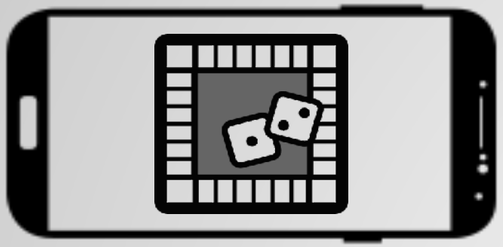
Fantasy Flight Games

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE® | MARCH 19–23, 2018 | EXPO: MARCH 21–23, 2018 #GDC18

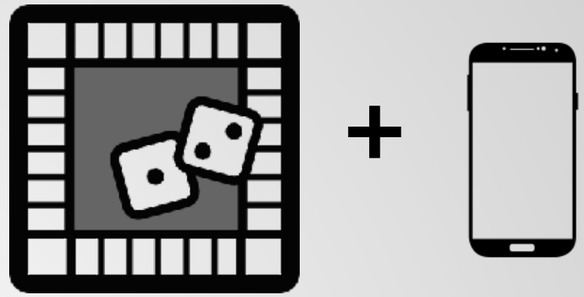
UBM

# Mansions of Madness

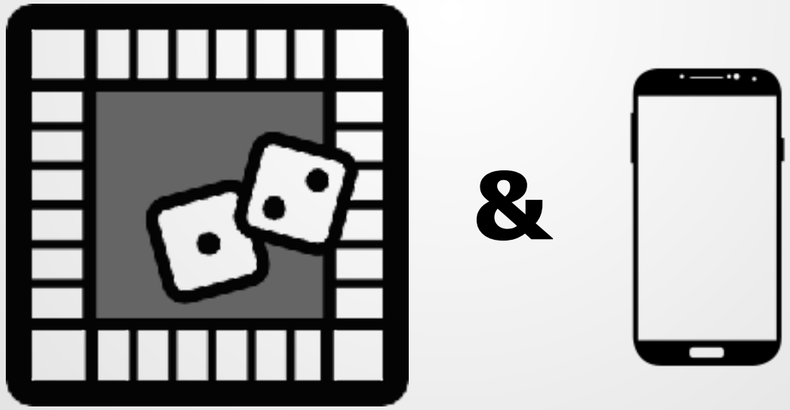
## A Lovecraftian App-integrated Board Game



✗ Digital Board Game



✗ Supplemental App



App-integrated Board Game

7
7
William Yorick
The Gravedigger
Whenever a monster is defeated, gain 1 Clue.
Strength 4
Agility 3
Observation 4
Lore 3
Influence 3
Will 4
Brass Key
Key
As you hold the key, you look around for a matching doorknob or padlock.
Shovel
Heavy Weapon
Digging holes is just one of its many uses.

An endtable stands against the wall, holding a telephone.
Search
Cancel

# History of Great Board Games

# Success with Standalone Apps

# One App-integrated game under our belt

# Tabletop

- Game map
- Action cards
- Currency
- Research cards
- Combat units
- Alien invaders

...

# Digital

- Real-time turns

# ✓ Early Prototyping

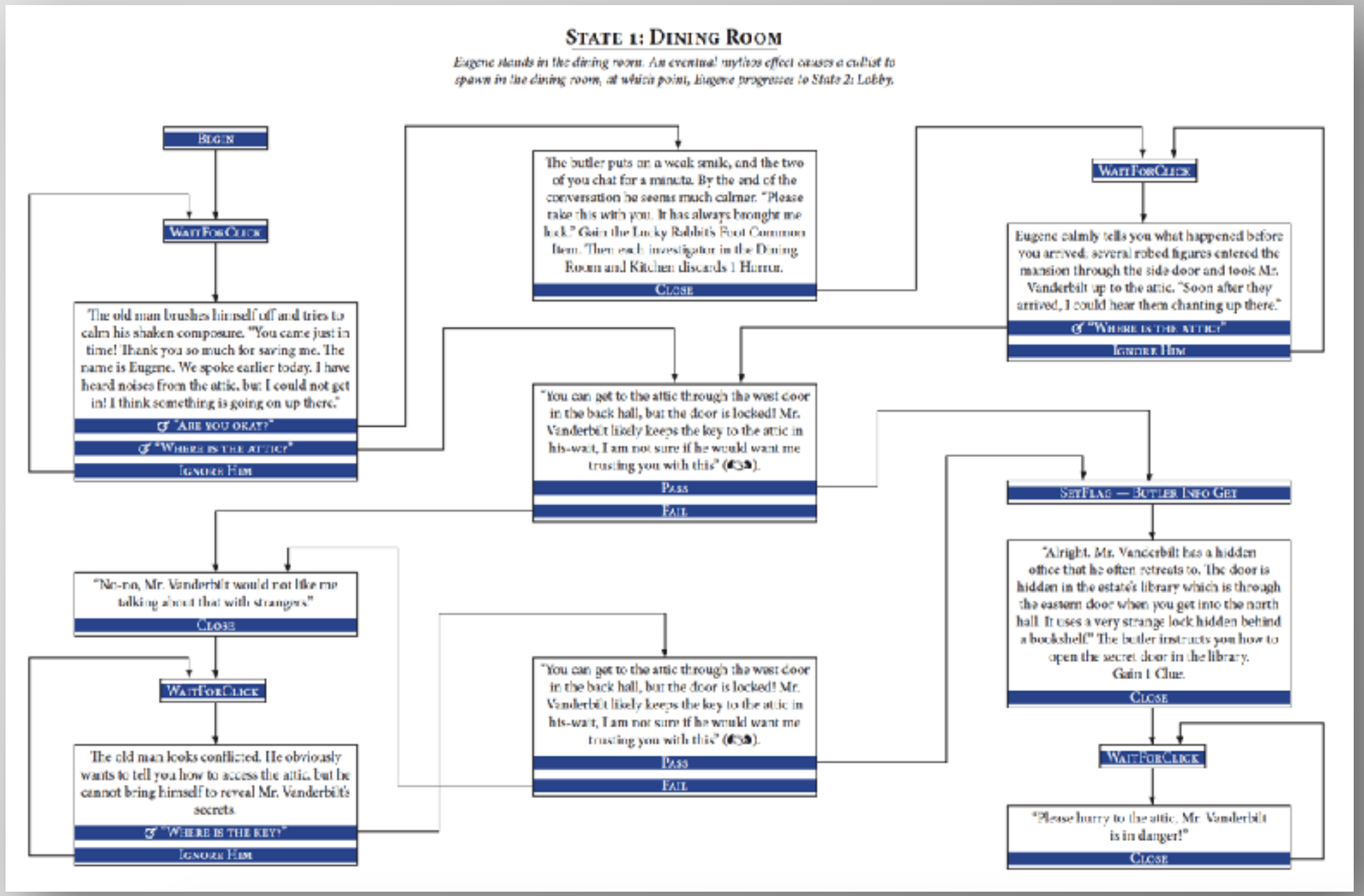
- 1st Edition
- Simulated App
- Prototype
- Identifying Strengths

# 1st Edition

- "One-vs-many" multiplayer
  - (Wanted co-op)
- Too much setup
- Not enough discovery

# Simulating An App

- Mapped logic
- Separated from physical space



# Greybox

- TT designers able to program
- ...just don't look too close

```
////////////////////////////////////////////////////
// Item Reserve List
ReserveItem     .38 Revolver
ReserveItem     Arcane Manuscript
ReserveItem     .18 Derringer
ReserveItem     Shotgun
ReserveItem     Dynamite

////////////////////////////////////////////////////
// Item Blacklist

////////////////////////////////////////////////////
// Prologue
AddStoryEvent   Story   Prologue
AddEffect       Message You have never heard Grace that panicked before. She is usually so
calm and collected. As your car barrels down the dirt road, you wonder what could have
spooked her enough to call you out to her isolated estate in the country.
AddEffect       Message As you approach the turn for the property, the road is pitch black in
front of you. Suddenly, your headlights go out and something strikes the side of your car
with a sickening crunch. The vehicle veers off the road and crashes into the ditch.
AddEffect       Message Unable to get the car started again, you head out on foot and make
your way through the woods toward Grace's home. The darkness presses in around you, and you
keep thinking you sense something moving through the forest.
AddEffect       Message You emerge from the forest in front of the massive estate and rap on
the oak double doors. Grace answers almost immediately, a look of relief washing over her
face. "Thank god you are here. It's getting worse by the minute. We've got to get out of
here! Where is your car?"
AddEffect       Message As you break the news to her, Grace's expression changes to despair.
"No! What are we going to do now? My entire family is here and that ... creature is hunting
us! Please, help!"
AddEffect       Message Investigators begin the story with the Wither Spell and the .18
Derringer, %i, %i, and %i Common Items. Each investigator begins with 1 Clue.

////////////////////////////////////////////////////
// Story Events
AddStoryEvent   Story   Warning 1
AddEffect       WaitFor TotalThreat     >       6
AddEffect       GetFlag Finale
AddEffect       SetFlag Monster Warning

AddStoryEvent   Story   Attack 1
AddEffect       WaitFor TotalThreat     >       13
AddEffect       GetFlag Finale
AddEffect       SetFlag Monster Attack

AddStoryEvent   Story   Reveal Sound Nodes
AddEffect       WaitFor TotalThreat     >       13
AddEffect       GetFlag Finale
```

# Tabletop

- Flexible timing
- Tactical interface
- Social interaction

# Digital

- Real-time interaction
- Hidden information
- Back-end complexity

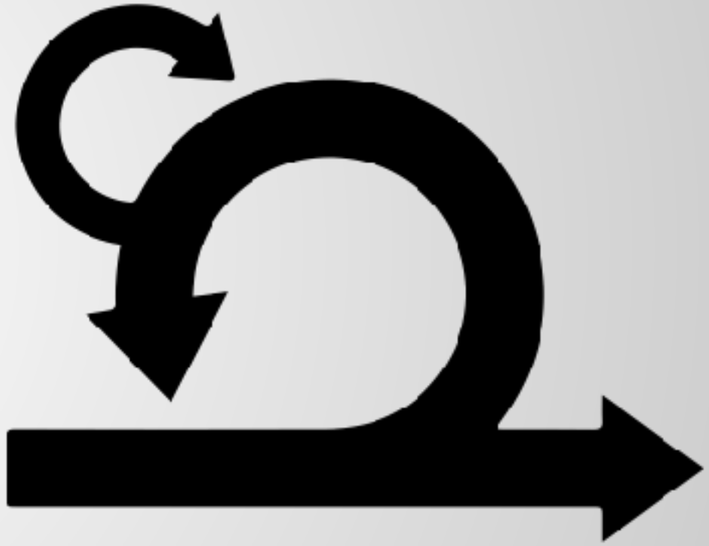
# Colliding Workflows

Waterfall vs Agile

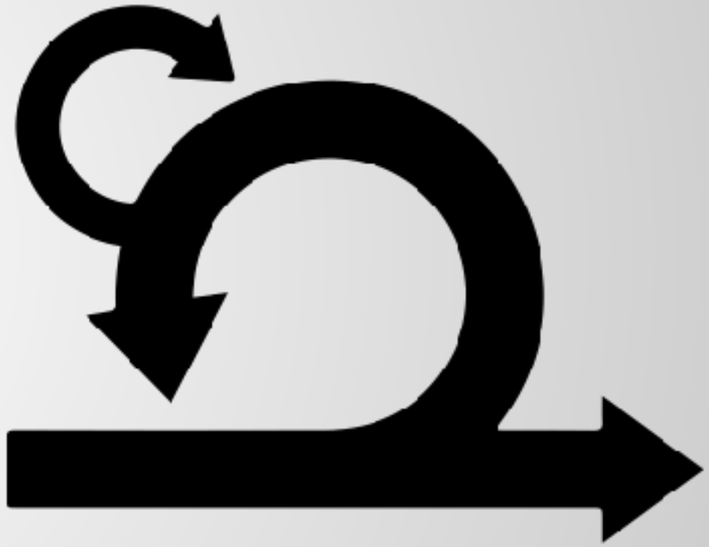
Changing too Fast

Scaling Teams

VS



VS



# Scaling Team Size

- No central documentation
- No communication channel
- No middle man

# ✓ Playmaker

Streamlining
Visual Scripting
Modularity

# Greybox

- Not very scalable
- Not easy to learn for non-programmers
- To be honest, kind of a mess

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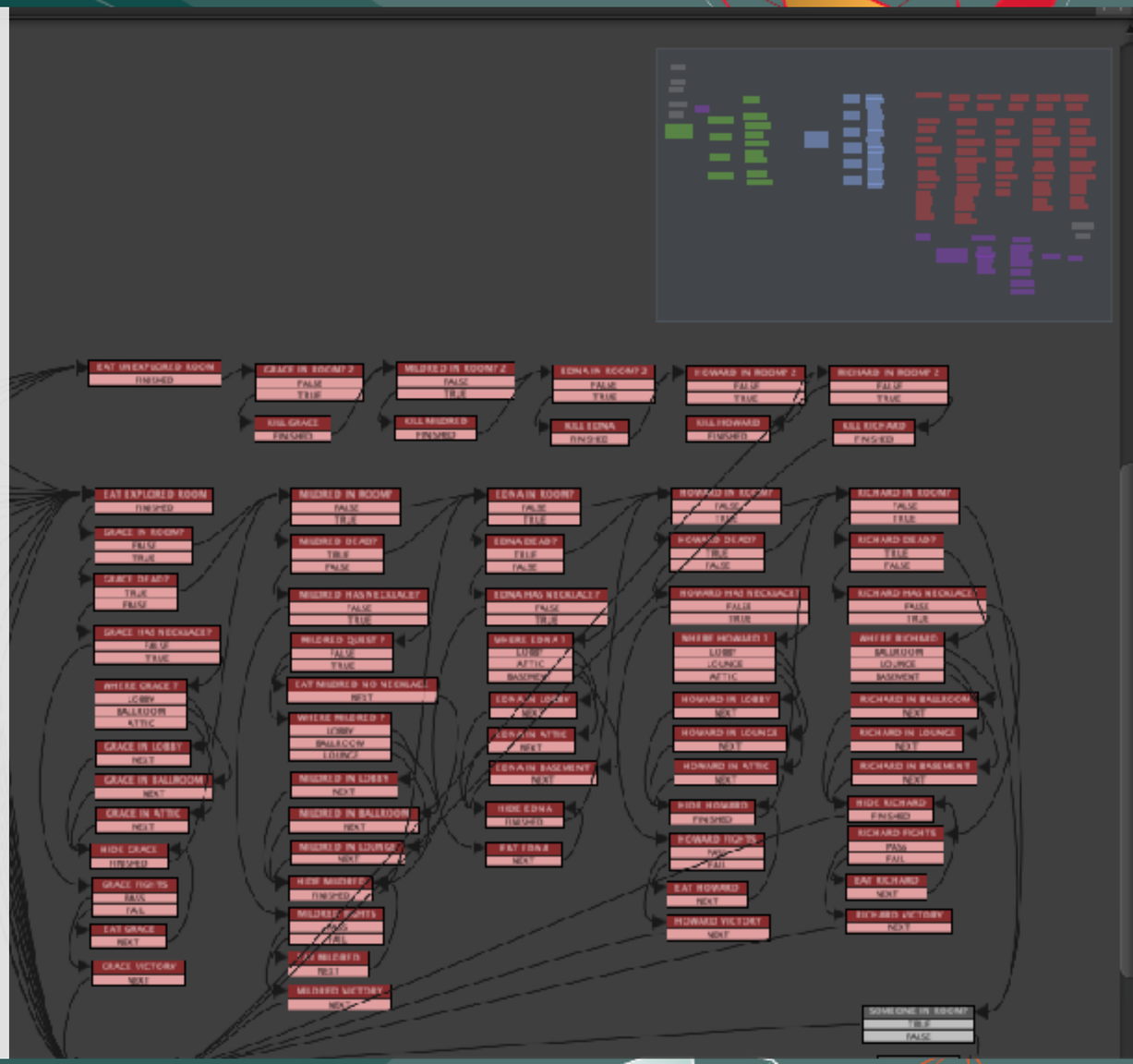
AddEffect       WaitFor TotalThreat     >       13
AddEffect       GetFlag Finale
AddEffect       SetFlag Monster Attack

AddStoryEvent   Story   Reveal Sound Nodes
AddEffect       WaitFor TotalThreat     >       13
AddEffect       GetFlag Finale
```

# Playmaker

- Visual scripting plugin for Unity
- Created a contained environment for TT designers



DESCENT
JOURNEYS IN THE DARK
ROAD TO LEGEND

STAR WARS
IMPERIAL ASSAULT
LEGENDS OF THE ALLIANCE
New Game
Load Game
Collection
Rules

# ✗ Exception-based Mechanics

Expansion Content

Digital Restrictions

Creating Hard Divisions

TOWNTOWN
EASYTOWN
MENGE HILL
SOUTHSIDE
Sentinel Hill

## Test

Skill icons can appear embedded in parentheses following a short narrative. This is a test declaration; it indicates that the investigator must test the specified skill. When an investigator resolves a test, he performs the following steps:

1. **Determine Dice Pool:** The investigator determines the number of dice he will roll. This number is his dice pool.
   - He starts with the printed value of the skill being tested.
   - He adds or subtracts all test modifiers. A test modifier is a number that follows the skill icon in the effect text preceded by a plus sign (+) or a minus sign (−).
   - He adds or subtracts all dice specified by other effects such as Items or Conditions.
2. **Roll Dice:** He rolls a number of dice equal to his dice pool.
   - If his dice pool is less than one, he rolls one die instead.
   - If his dice pool is greater than the number of dice available, he rolls as many dice as possible, records the results, and rolls the dice again until he has rolled dice equal to his dice pool.
3. **Reroll & Convert Dice:** He may use any effects that allow him to reroll dice or convert die results, including spending Clues to convert investigation results (🔍) to successes (✱).
4. **Determine Result:** The total number of ✱ rolled is his test result. The consequences of passing or failing the test are determined by the effect that declared the test.
   - A test declaration may include a number separated from the skill icon by a semicolon. This is the test difficulty. The test difficulty indicates the test result required to pass the test. If the test result is less than the test difficulty, the investigator fails the test.
   - A test declaration that includes the word "negates" following the skill icon indicates that the test prevents Damage or Horror. For each ✱ rolled, the investigator prevents one Damage or one Horror.

Effects that are dependent on a test are preceded by "if you pass" or "if you fail." Any effect in that sentence occurs only if the investigator passes or fails the test, respectively. Any effect after the period or part of a new paragraph is independent from previous effects.

**Related Topics:** App, Clue, Dice, Skills

*Golem Arcana*
*Hairbrained Schemes*

# Create hard divisions:

## Tabletop

- Game map
- Player health
- Items
- etc

## Digital

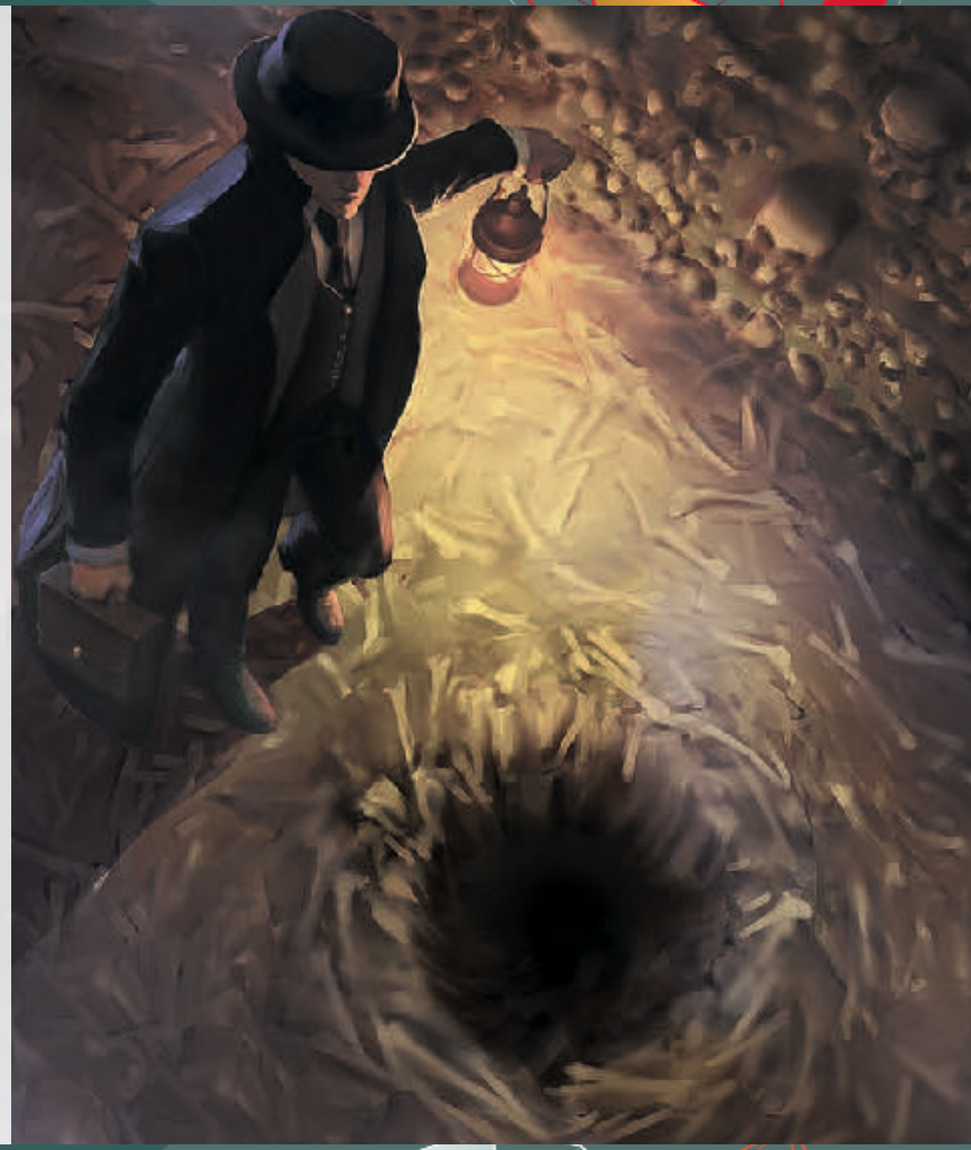
- Story nodes
- Mythos events
- Monster activations
- etc

# ✓ Concealing Complexity

Board Game Complexity

Player Interface

BGG Evidence



TOWNTOWN
EASYTOWN
MENGE HILL
SOUTHSIDE
Sentinel Hill

Move

Attack

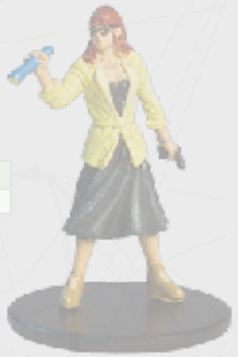
Interact

Move

Attack

Interact

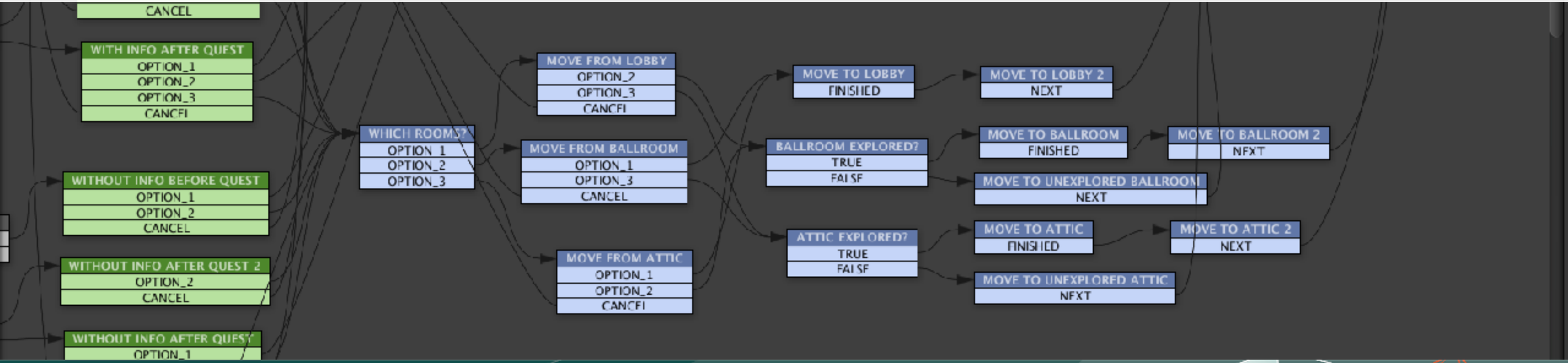
```
936 ATTACK_BLADED_VS_SPIRIT_06,"You whisper a prayer into your weapon and lash out (; 2). If you pass, the blade seems to cut the creature, although you suspect it was your words that did the most harm; the monster suffers 2 damage. If you fail, it
937 ATTACK_BLADED_VS_SPIRIT_07,"Holding the blade before you like a crucifix, you beg the apparition to depart (+1). The monster suffers damage equal to your test result.",Sostienes tu arma en alto frente a ti como si fuera un crucifijo y ruegas a la a
938 ATTACK_BLADED_VS_SPIRIT_08,"The apparition drifts over you, passing effortlessly through solid objects, and you know your weapon will do nothing, that it is hopeless, that you will die. You close your eyes and do your best to banish the fear tearing a
939 // FIREARM - VS - SPIRIT
940 ATTACK_FIREARM_VS_SPIRIT_01,"You open fire, but immediately you hear your shots impact somewhere behind the creature. You murmur a prayer for courage under your breath (; 2). If you pass, you stare down the creature and, as you mouth the wo
941 ATTACK_FIREARM_VS_SPIRIT_02,"Bullets will be useless, you presume, so you fire at anything but the spirit, hoping to hit one of its fetters or something else that will hurt it (; 2). If you pass, your gambit works; the monster suffers damage equal to yo
942 ATTACK_FIREARM_VS_SPIRIT_03,"You fire at the specter. It does not work. Instead, you focus your mind and scream at it, ""Get out!"" (+1). The monster suffers damage equal to your test result.",Disparas al espectro. No sirve de nada. Decides cambi
943 ATTACK_FIREARM_VS_SPIRIT_04,"You hold your gun before you and try to convince the apparition to remember what physical being feels like, to remember pain and loss. Then you pull the trigger (+1). The monster suffers damage equal to your te
944 ATTACK_FIREARM_VS_SPIRIT_05,"You fire several bullets to no effect then set your gun aside and attempt to bargain with the spirit (; 2). If you pass, you encourage the creature to leave the mortal plane; the monster suffers 2 damage. If you fail, the
945 ATTACK_FIREARM_VS_SPIRIT_06,"As the barrel of your gun passes across the creature, it shows no fear. As you direct your weapon at the environment, however, you feel the spirit's attention focus (; 2). If you pass, you identify an item the creature ha
946 ATTACK_FIREARM_VS_SPIRIT_07,"With shaking fingers, you pry a bullet from your gun and inscribe an eldritch symbol upon it (; 2). If you pass, you load the bullet in the weapon and fire; the monster suffers 3 damage. If you fail, you bungle the sy
947 ATTACK_FIREARM_VS_SPIRIT_08,"You lift your weapon in unsteady hands and, to your horror, find the barrel drifting closer and closer to your own head (; 2). If you pass, your weapon belches smoke and lead at the enemy and, although the weapon
948 // HEAVY WEAPON - VS - SPIRIT
949 ATTACK_HEAVY_VS_SPIRIT_01,"You swing your weapon at the ghostly figure, but no impact occurs. You curse in frustration, and your curse takes on a life of its own (; 2). If you pass, words spew from your lips that you cannot understand, but the spi
950 ATTACK_HEAVY_VS_SPIRIT_02,"You attack the spirit, but your efforts are utterly in vain. You fall back in a panic, and your mind races and goes blank (; 2). If you pass, you come to with a word on your lips and, as you form the syllables, the figure ha
951 ATTACK_HEAVY_VS_SPIRIT_03,"Your initial assault bears no success, and as you search for another avenue of attack, you hear the figure muttering under its breath (; 2). If you pass, you pick out a name from the jumbled speech and, when you repeat
952 ATTACK_HEAVY_VS_SPIRIT_04,"As the spirit lays a hand upon your weapon, it becomes bitingly cold. You beg the creature to leave (; 2). If you pass, the creature pulls back, weeping; the monster suffers 3 damage. If you fail, the specter seems unmo
```



Move

Attack

Interact



**Weight: 3.24 / 5**
'Complexity' Rating

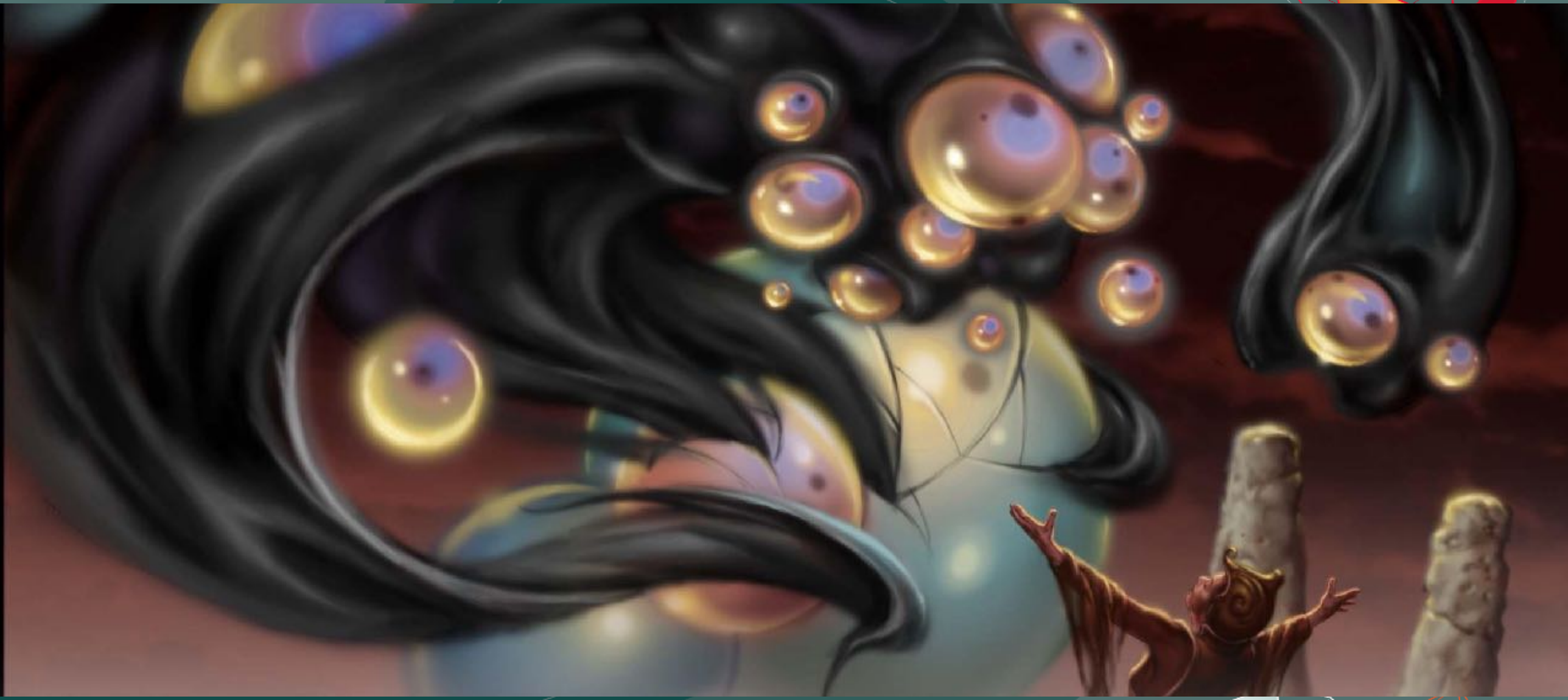
**Weight: 2.65 / 5**
'Complexity' Rating

# Actually Developing That Complexity

Eyes Got Too Big

1st Edition Compatibility

Hunting Bugs

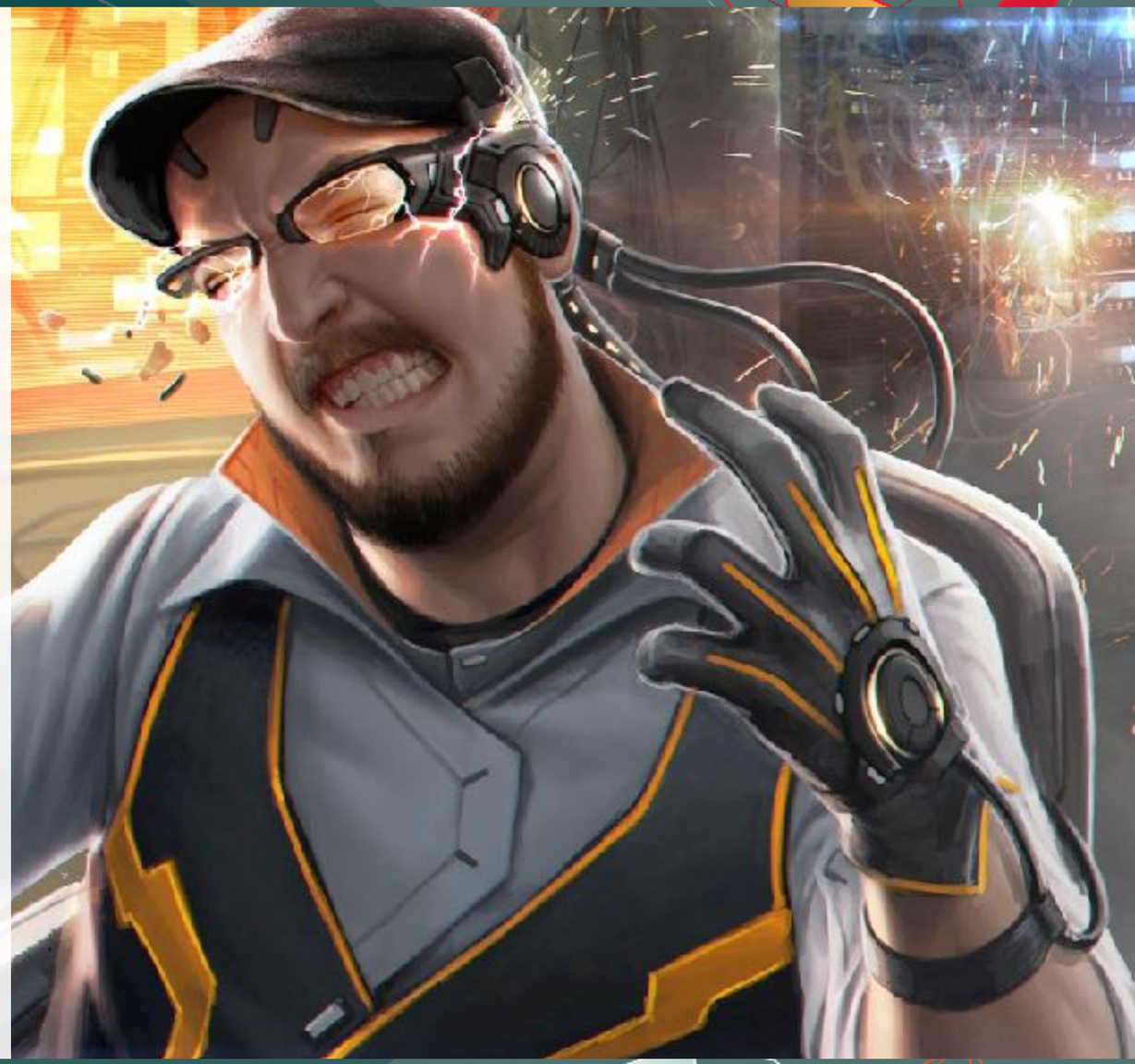


- 5 Branching Scenarios
  - 4 “Alt-maps” each
- 9 Monster types
  - 5 Attack types against each
- 6 Mythos Event types
  - 24+ Events per type
- 3 Puzzles
  - 3 Skins for each

- 5 Branching Scenarios
  - **7** "Alt-maps" each
- **26** Monster types
  - 5 Attack types against each
- **7** Mythos Event types
  - 24+ Events per type
- 3 Puzzles
  - 3 Skins for each

# BUGS!

- Tabletop designers with no software experience
- Relying on tabletop playtesters to catch software bugs



DESCENT:
JOURNEYS IN THE DARK
ROAD TO LEGEND
NEW CAMPAIGN
LOAD CAMPAIGN
STORE
COLLECTION
RULES
QUIT

# Lack of Transparency

Opacity in Mediums

Mansions UI

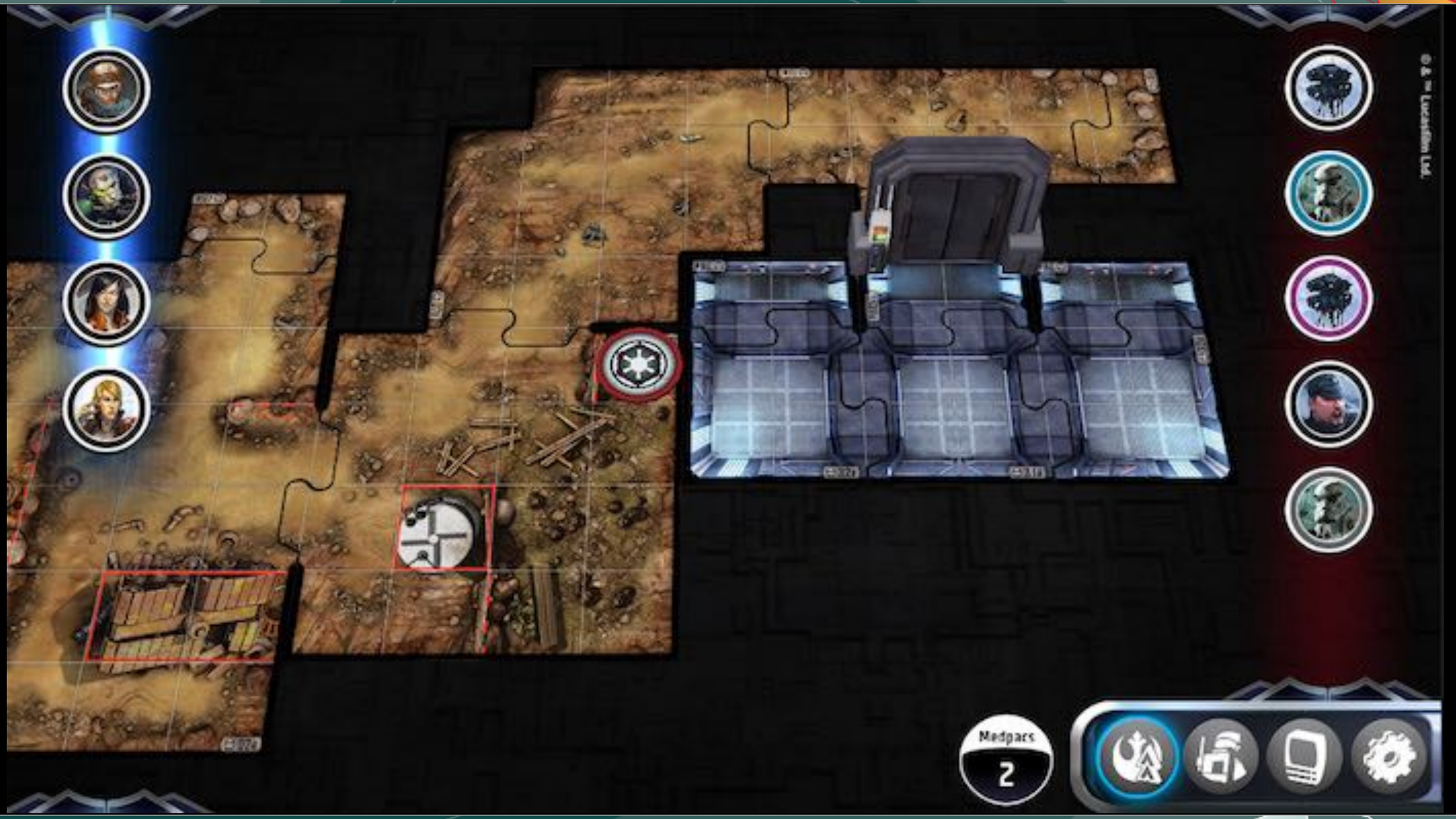
Improvements

Separating Mechanics

# Transparent until deliberately hidden

Opaque until deliberately revealed

Facts found throughout the scenario will be recorded in the Incriminating Evidence and any investigator may review the collected facts by interacting with it in the app. Players may also wish to take additional notes outside of the app during the game.
Continue


Medpacs
2

# Separate based on opacity:

## Tabletop

- Game map (revealed)
- Player information
- Dice rolls

## Digital

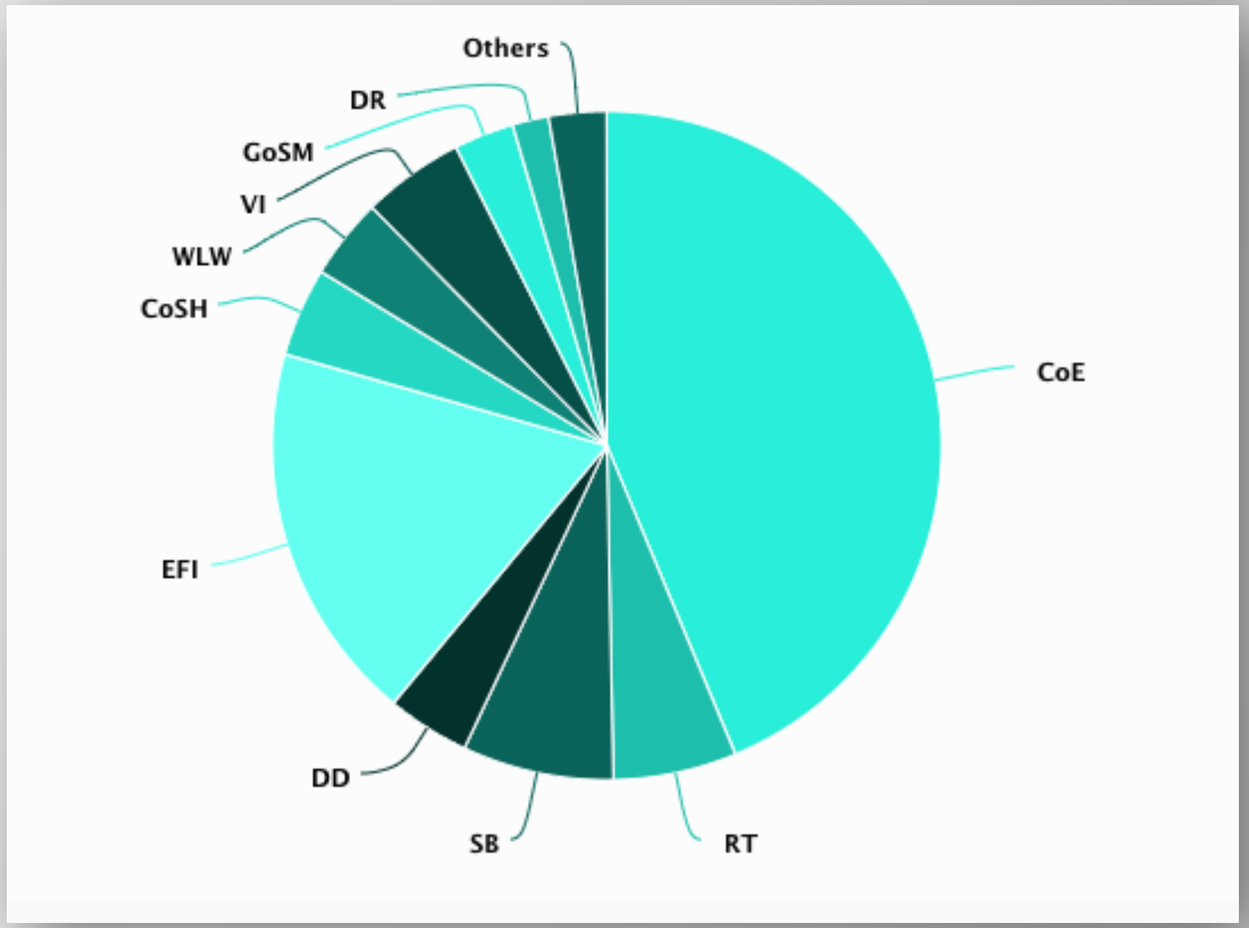
- Narrative branches
- Story events
- Monster actions

# ✓ Discovery (Using Opacity Well)

Replayability
Emergence
Patterns in Randomness

# Cycle of Eternity

- Most-played scenario
  ...by a lot



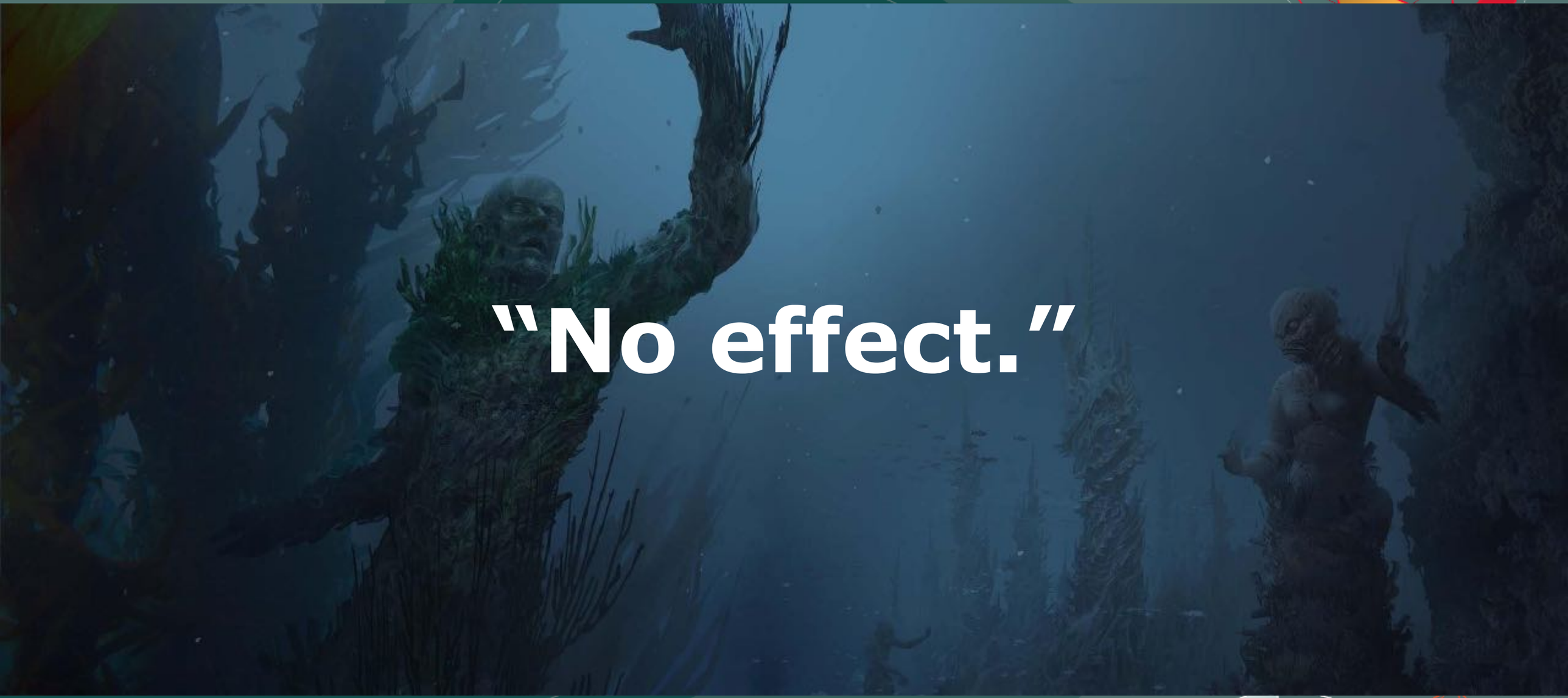
William Vanderbilt

Eugene

Main Plot

"Side plots"

Inspector
Actions
Globals
Killing Machine
Open
Id 218
Id Range [1 – 300]
Name Killing Machine
Type General (MythosEventTypeModel)
Required Round 0
Threat Cost 10
Required Total Threat 0
Required Products
Size 1
Element 0 MAD23 Beyond the Threshold (ProductModel)
Minimum Room Count 0
Required Rooms
Required Room Names
Required Hag Names
Required Monsters
Required Items
Size 9
Element 0 COMMON_ITEM_2x4 (ItemModel)
Element 1 COMMON_TEM_AXE (ItemModel)
Element 2 COMMON_ITEM_BLACKJACK (ItemModel)
Element 3 COMMON_TEM_CROWBAR (ItemMode)
Element 4 COMMON_ITEM_FIRE_EXTINGUISHER (ItemModel)
Element 5 COMMON_TEM_LEAD_PIPE (ItemModel)
Element 6 COMMON_ITEM_SHOVEL (ItemMode)
Element 7 COMMON_TEM_SLEDGEHAMMER (ItemModel)
Element 8 COMMON_ITEM_WRENCH (ItemMode)
Required Available Monster In Collection None (Monster Mode)
Required Available Monster Traits In Colle Nothing
Forbidden Available Monster Traits In Coll Nothing
Mythos Event Logic Killing Machine_MythosEffect_log c


“No effect.”

# “No *immediate* effect.”

*Alchemists*
*Czech Games*

# Public Reaction

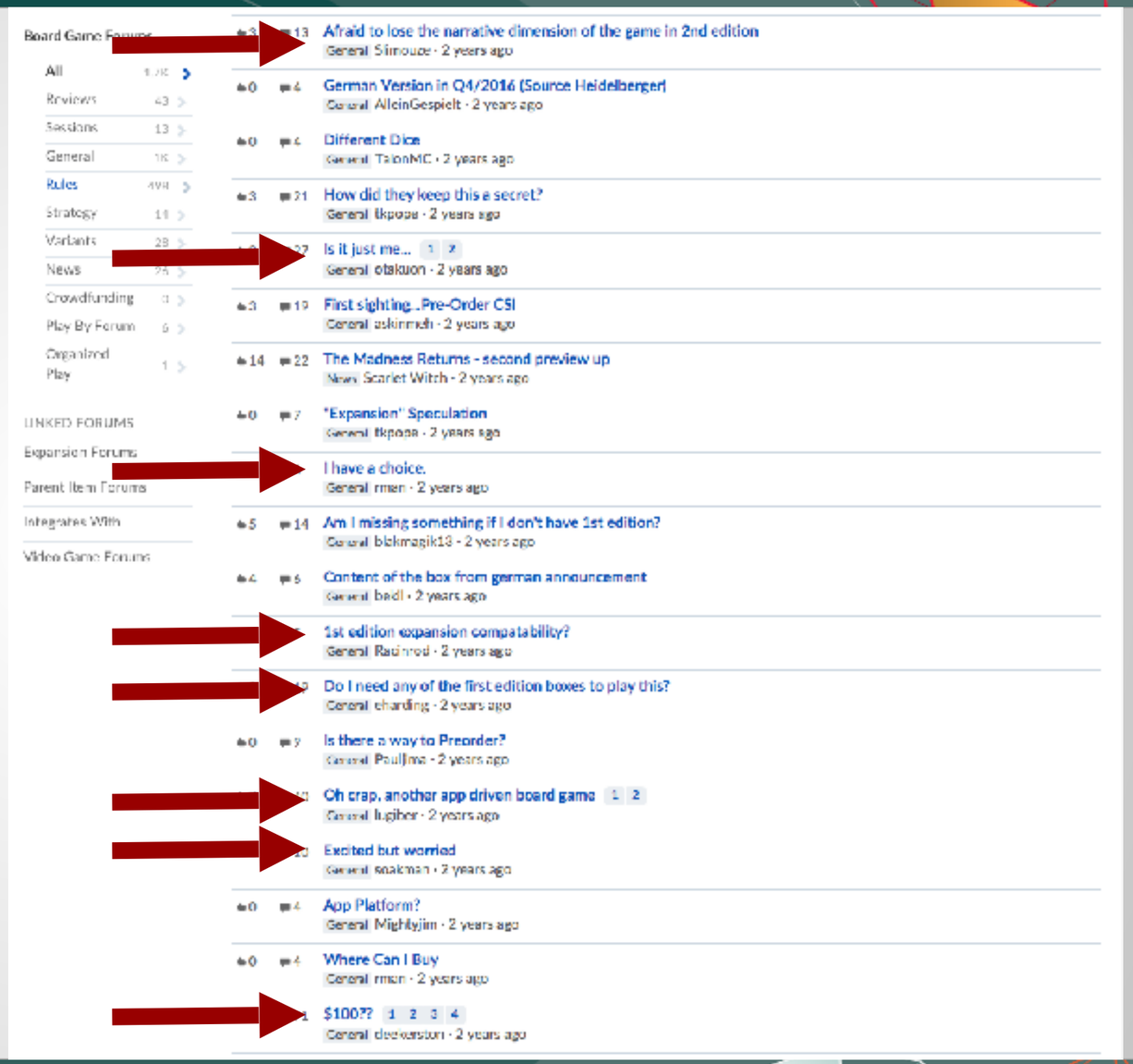
Skepticism

Buggy Launch

App Worth It?

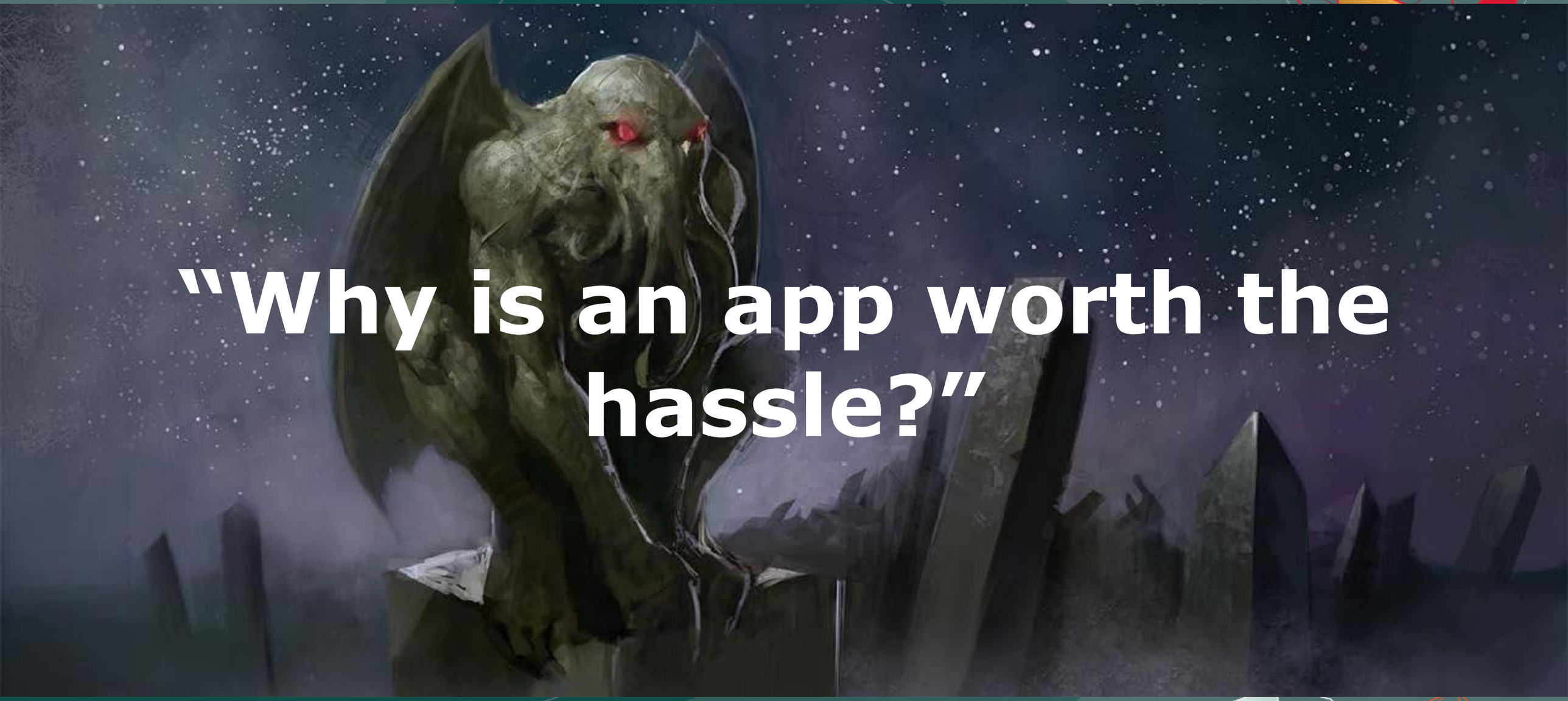
# Skepticism

- Concerns plagued announcement
  - Platform support
  - Obsolescence
  - Cost



App experiences

| | No issues | Minor issues - didn't affect game | Crash - game salvaged | Crash - game incomplete |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| iOS - scenario 1 | **63.6%** | 4.5% | 0.0% | 7.6% |
| iOS - scenario 2 | 5.9% | 5.9% | 3.9% | 33.3% |
| iOS - scenario 3 | 5.7% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| iOS - scenario 4 | 5.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Android - scenario 1 | 31.8% | 4.5% | 2.3% | 0.0% |
| Android - scenario 2 | 5.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 13.5% |
| Android - scenario 3 | 5.7% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Android - scenario 4 | 2.9% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Steam (PC) - scenario 1 | **46.7%** | 6.7% | 0.0% | 4.4% |
| Steam (PC) - scenario 2 | 7.5% | 2.5% | 5.0% | 15.0% |
| Steam (PC) - scenario 3 | 8.6% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Steam (PC) - scenario 4 | 8.6% | 2.9% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Steam (Mac) - scenario 1 | 17.6% | 2.9% | 0.0% | 2.9% |
| Steam (Mac) - scenario 2 | 0.0% | 2.9% | 0.0% | 5.9% |
| Steam (Mac) - scenario 3 | 5.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Steam (Mac) - scenario 4 | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 3.1% |



# “Why is an app worth the hassle?”

# ✓ Interfacing

App is “Blind”

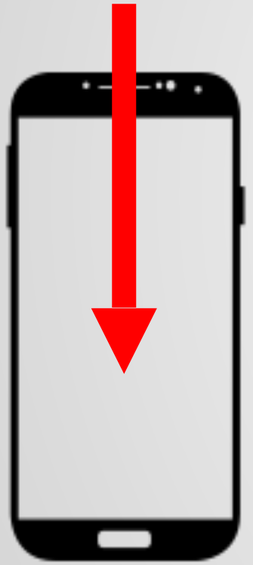
Interfacing is Expensive

Who is doing the work?

Interfacing with a device distracts from the group experience.

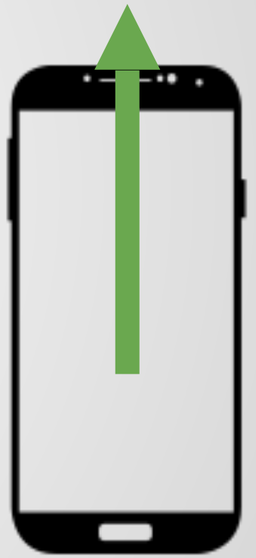
*World of Yo-Ho*
*iello*

Am I doing work for the app?



-or-

Is the app doing work for me?



3
END TURN
REVIVE
Round 1
Peril 0

Your eyes dart around the room, stopping at the only other door which leads to the back hall and bathroom of the hotel. Place an Explore token as indicated.
Continue

# From One Node:

- Where an investigator is
- When they were there
- How much they pass/fail
- Roughly how much damage has been handed out

# Takeaways

- Prototype early
- Be careful of scope
- Divide mechanics between mediums

**Tabletop**

- Flexible timing
- Tactical interface
- Social interaction

**Digital**

- Real-time interaction
- Hidden information
- Back-end complexity

- Make interfacing worth the hassle

# Questions?

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