



THE LAST OF USTM

ESCAPE THE DARK

RULE BOOK

ABOUT THE GAME



OVERVIEW

The Last of Us: Escape the Dark™ is an atmospheric board game of survival and adventure set in the world of the critically acclaimed Naughty Dog™ video game franchise.

Powered by the latest evolution of the award-winning **Escape the Dark™** system, it allows up to five players to experience **The Last of Us™** in a whole new way, creating a unique story of survival each game.

STORY

You are a Survivor of the Cordyceps Outbreak – a mutant fungal infection that has brought civilization to its knees. Within the Quarantine Zone (QZ) you live a harsh life, suffering under the brutal, martial law and strict curfews of the totalitarian Federal Disaster Response Agency (FEDRA).

Lately, as news of the deteriorating outside world has slowly seeped through the compound walls, things have gotten worse – a lot worse. The QZ is on the brink of destabilization, and every day brings with it some new form of chaos. There's only one thing you know for sure – if you stay here, you're done.

The plan is simple. You're getting out. You and a few others you can trust, taking your chances with whatever lies beyond the walls. You've heard rumors about a place where good people are holding their own, where lives can be lived. Jackson – that's the name that keeps coming up. It's time to move...

SURVIVAL STRATEGY

The challenge of this game lies in balancing the need to survive today against the need to plan and prepare for tomorrow. Every day brings difficult decisions.

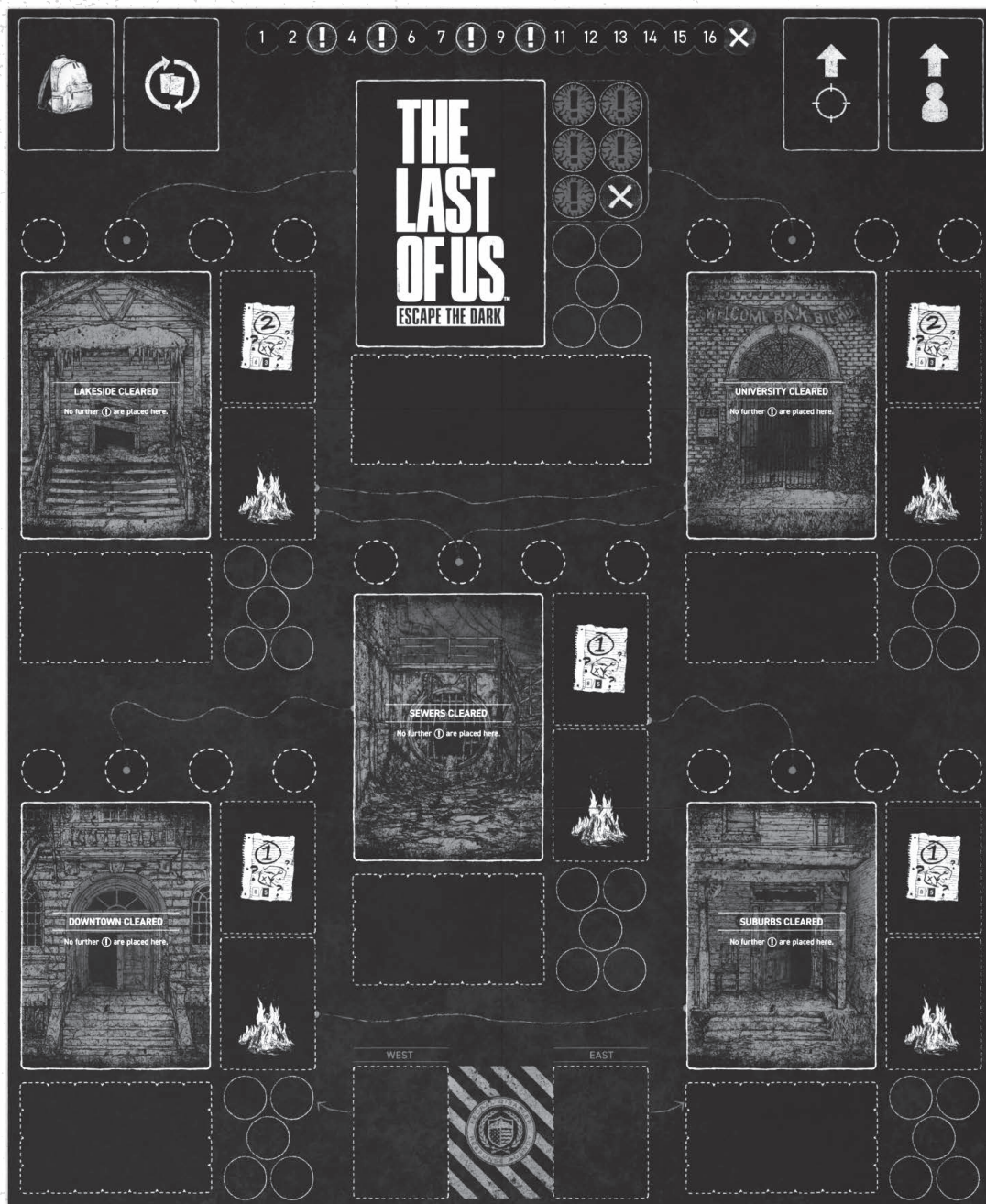
Should you spend another day exploring your current location, gathering supplies and learning about the road ahead, or should you stop wasting time and move on?

It's safer to stick together, but less productive. If you split up, you'll get more done by exploring multiple locations each day, but risking isolation and extreme danger in the process. What's the plan?

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COMPONENTS



1 x Game Board



12 x Ammo Dice



5 x HIT Dice



42 x Chapter Dice



52 x Cubes



28 x Threat Tokens



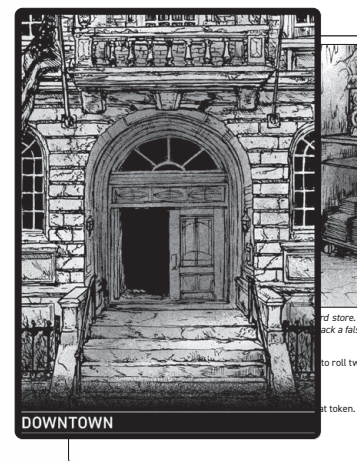
6 x Boss Tokens



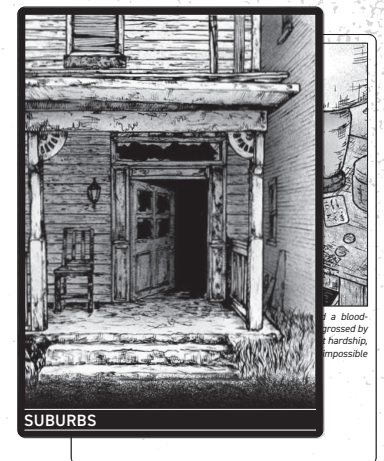
1 x Survivor
Calendar Marker



1 x Infected
Calendar Marker



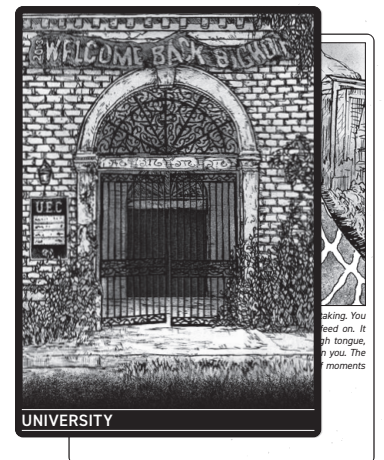
7 x Downtown Chapter Cards



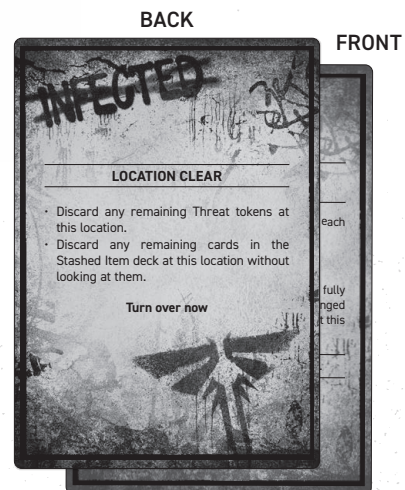
7 x Suburbs Chapter Cards



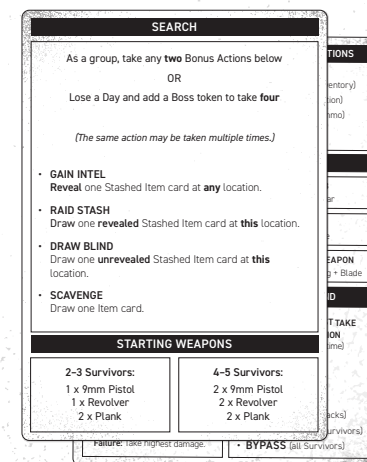
7 x Lakeside Chapter Cards



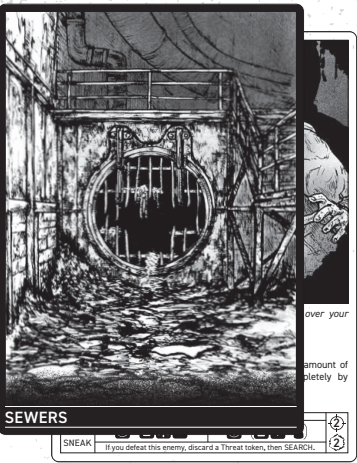
7 x University Chapter Cards



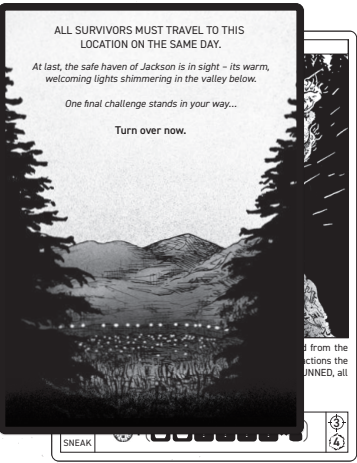
5 x Location Clear
Cards



2 x Rules Reference
Cards



7 x Sewers Chapter Cards



3 x Boss Chapter Cards



5 x Special Ability Cards



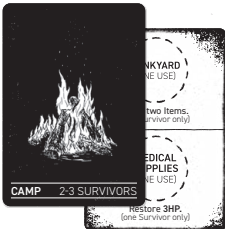
34 x Item Cards



13 x Stashed Item 1 Cards



13 x Crafted Item Cards



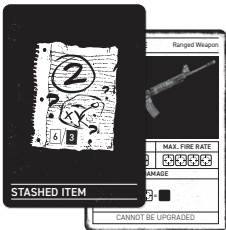
6 x Camp Cards (2-3 Players)



3 x QZ Cards (2-3 Players)



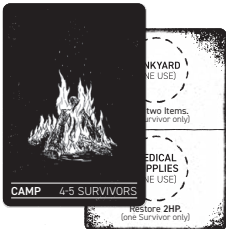
6 x Starting Weapon Cards



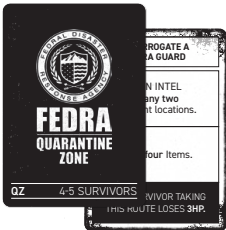
9x Stashed Item 2 Cards



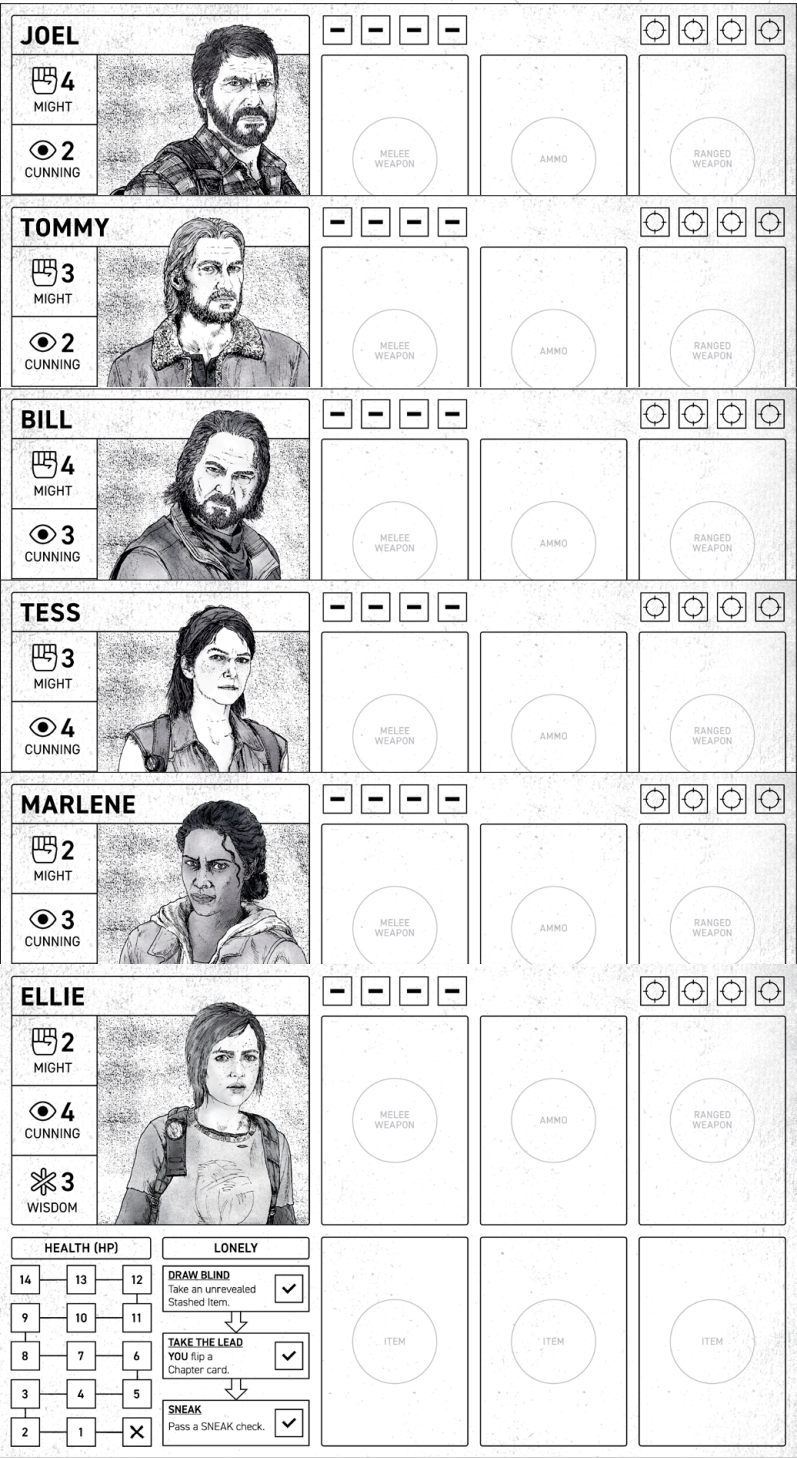
11 x Upgraded Weapon Cards



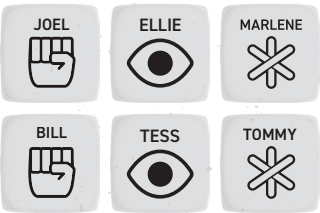
6 x Camp Cards (4-5 Players)



3 x QZ Cards (4-5 Players)



6 x Survivor Boards



6 x Survivor Dice



6 x Survivor Tokens

SETUP

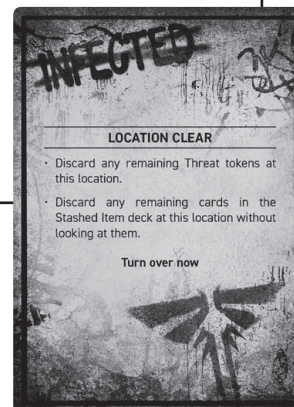
PREPARE THE BOARD

1 Unfold the **game board** in the middle of your playing area.

2 Shuffle the **Item** deck and place it on the Item area.

3 Shuffle the **Boss** cards and place one face down on the Boss area. Put the two remaining cards back in the box without looking at them.

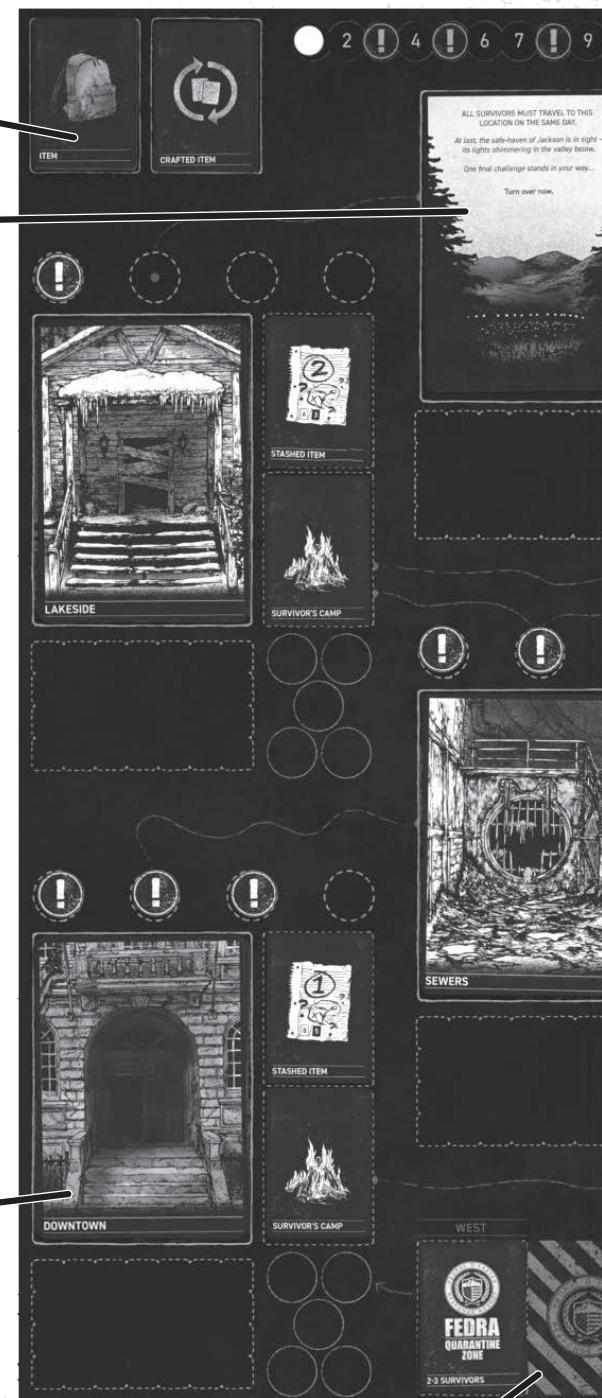
4 Shuffle the **Location Clear** cards and place one face down onto each of the five locations:
Downtown
Suburbs
Sewers
University
Lakeside



5 Shuffle the **Downtown** Chapter cards and place a deck of four face down on top of the Location Clear card at the Downtown location. Put the three remaining Downtown cards back in the box without looking at them.
Then, repeat this step for the other four locations: Suburbs, Sewers, University, and Lakeside.

6 Shuffle the set of **QZ** cards that corresponds to the number of Survivors in the game, then place one card face down on the East and West areas of the Quarantine Zone. Put the remaining card back in the box without looking at it, along with the unused set of QZ cards.

14 Place all dice, remaining Threat tokens and cubes beside the board, sorted by type in the trays provided.



Place the **Survivor** calendar marker on space 1 of the calendar track, and the **Infected** calendar marker on the space marked **X**.

13

Place the **Crafted Item** deck, **Upgraded Weapon** deck, and **Special Ability** deck on their corresponding areas — these should not be shuffled.

12

Place **Threat** tokens on each location's Threat track as follows:
Downtown 3 - Suburbs 3 - Sewers 2 - Lakeside 1 - University 1

11

Shuffle the **Boss** tokens face down and place them in a stack beside the board.

10

Shuffle the **Stashed Items 2** cards and place a deck of four cards face down on the Stashed Item 2 areas at both the University and Lakeside locations. Put the remaining card back in the box without looking at it.

9

Shuffle the **Stashed Items 1** cards and place decks of four cards face down on the Stashed Item 1 areas at the Downtown, Suburbs, and Sewers locations. Put the remaining card back in the box without looking at it.

8

Shuffle the set of **Camp** cards that corresponds to the number of Survivors in the game, then place one card face down on the Camp area at each of the five locations. Put the remaining card back in the box without looking at it, along with the unused set of Camp cards.

7

THREAT TRACKS

Each location has a four-space Threat track above it. The number of Threat tokens at a location is known as its Threat Level. This represents how dangerous the location is and will be taken into account during Combat and some Chapter card challenges at that location.

Whenever Threat tokens are placed on a Threat track, place them  side up from left to right.

Each space on a Threat track can only ever have one Threat token on it.

If a Threat track is full, no more Threat tokens can be placed on it until some are removed (Chapter cards will instruct you when to remove tokens).

Whenever Threat tokens are removed, remove them from right to left.

PREPARE SURVIVORS

1. Each player must choose one Survivor to control, taking the corresponding Survivor board and Survivor die. If you are playing solo, choose any two Survivors – you will control both.
2. On each Survivor board, place one cube in space 14 of the Health Points (HP) track, and one cube in each of the three spaces of the Character Flaw track.
3. Place the chosen characters' Survivor tokens on the game board, white side up, in the central area of the Quarantine Zone.
4. Based on the number of Survivors in the game, reveal the following Starting Weapon cards:

2-3 SURVIVORS:

1 x 9mm Pistol, 1 x Revolver, 2 x Plank
(put the two remaining cards back in the box)

4-5 SURVIVORS:

Reveal all Starting Weapons.

Players are then free to choose who will carry each of the revealed Weapons, placing them in the corresponding slots of their Survivor's inventory.

When taking a **Ranged Weapon**, place it in the Survivor's Ranged Weapon slot and place cubes in their Ammo track equal to its **Capacity** value.

When taking a **Melee Weapon**, place it in the Survivor's Melee Weapon slot and place cubes in their Durability track equal to its **Durability** value.

JOEL

4

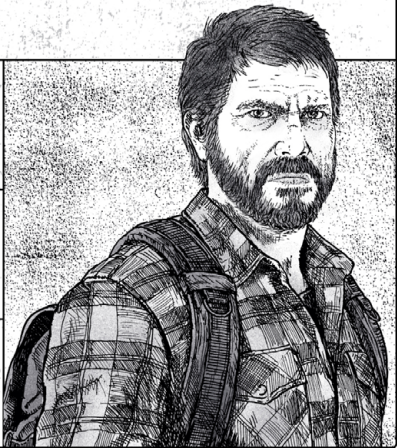
MIGHT

2

CUNNING

3

WISDOM



HEALTH (HP)

13

12

9

10

11

8

7

6

3

4

5

2

1

X

DISILLUSIONED

TAKE THE LEAD

YOU flip a Chapter card.

DRAW BLIND

Take an unrevealed Stashed Item.

FIGHT ALONE

EXPLORE alone and defeat an enemy.

SURVIVOR DICE

Each Survivor comes with a unique, six-sided die. The number of icons on each die corresponds to their stats in three traits:

 **MIGHT** - Representing power, aggression, and toughness. Most utilized in Melee Combat.

 **CUNNING** - Representing mental agility and physical reflexes. Most utilized during SNEAK rounds.

 **WISDOM** - Representing knowledge, insight, and intelligence. Most utilized during the LISTEN rounds and non-Combat tasks.

In this game, when you want a Survivor to attempt something, you will be instructed to roll a specific trait on their Survivor die in a given number of attempts.

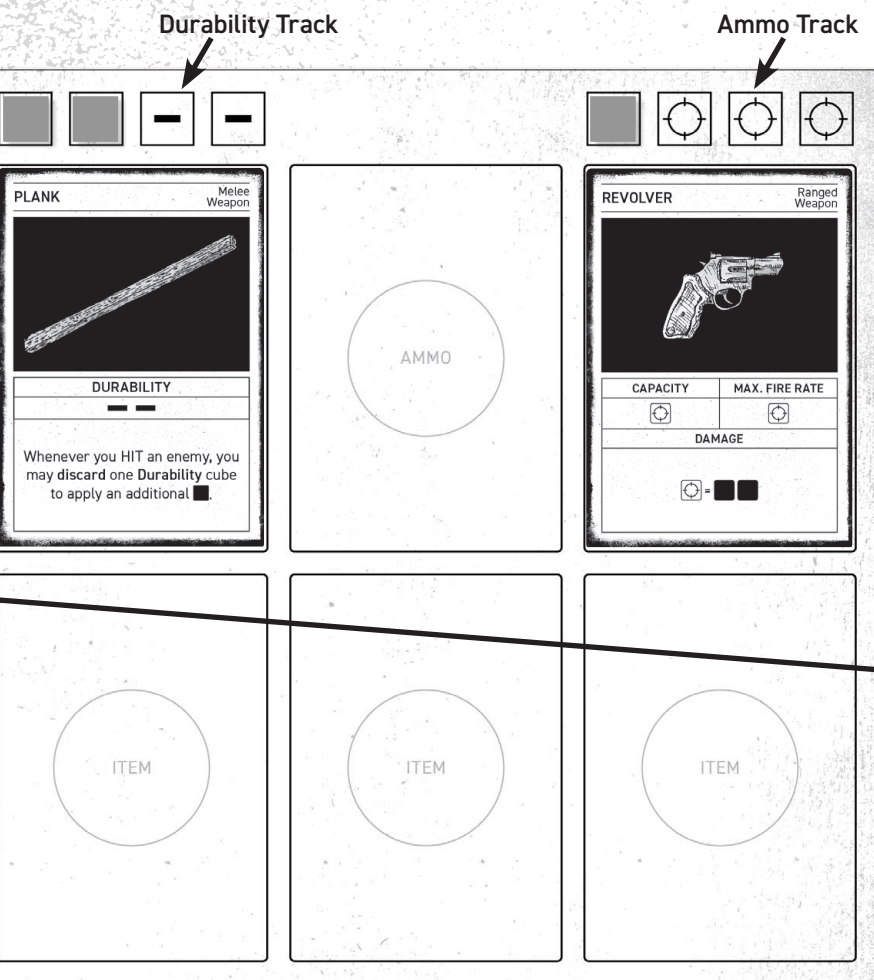
 **DOUBLE** - A **DOUBLE** features two different traits. When a **DOUBLE** is rolled, both traits apply, and it counts as a success even if only one of them was required.

 **CRIT** - Rolling a **CRIT** represents the Survivor doing something perfectly and succeeding regardless of which trait was required.

When you roll a CRIT during a round of Combat: You **HIT** the enemy and also **BLOCK** their attack (page 22).

When you roll a CRIT during a non-Combat challenge: You and any other Survivors involved in the Chapter instantly succeed at whatever you were attempting. End the challenge without further effect and read the **Success** result on the Chapter card.

8



CHARACTER FLAWS

Each Survivor has a Character Flaw they can try to overcome during the game by carrying out the three actions listed below it **in the order shown**. Doing so will unlock a powerful Special Ability.

When a Survivor completes the topmost uncompleted action on their list, **immediately** remove the cube beside it. The next action down is then available for completion, and so on.

When the last cube is removed, the Survivor has overcome their flaw! **Immediately** browse the Special Abilities deck, choose one, and place it on their Survivor board covering their Character Flaw track. That Special Ability is then in play, available to be triggered whenever applicable **for the rest of the game**.

While only the topmost uncompleted action on the list is ever eligible for completion, this doesn't stop the Survivor from taking other actions further down the list first, but doing so will not remove a cube.

ITEMS & INVENTORY

Each Survivor has an inventory area on their Survivor board with six card slots which may only contain cards of the specified type.

The Melee Weapon and Ranged Weapon slots can each only contain **one card at a time**. Whenever a Survivor takes a new Ranged Weapon card, place cubes in the Ammo track above it to match its Capacity value. Whenever a Survivor takes a new Melee Weapon card, place cubes in the Durability track above it to match its Durability value.

In the Ammo slot, you may stack **as many Ammo cards as you like**.

The Item slots may only contain cards with the **Item** keyword. As with Ammo, Item cards with the same name can be stacked in a single slot. For example, if a Survivor has three Bottle cards, you can stack them all in one Item slot.

If you ever get a card and do not have space for it in your Survivor's inventory, you may either:

- Make space for it by using or discarding a card you already have.
- Give it to another Survivor **in the same location**.
- Use it straight away (if applicable).
- Discard it straight away.

Discarded cards are placed in a discard pile beside the board. They are considered left behind and remain out of play for the rest of the game. Players may examine the contents of the discard pile at any time.

If any deck ever runs out, it does not get replenished — you've found everything that location has to offer.

PLAYING THE GAME

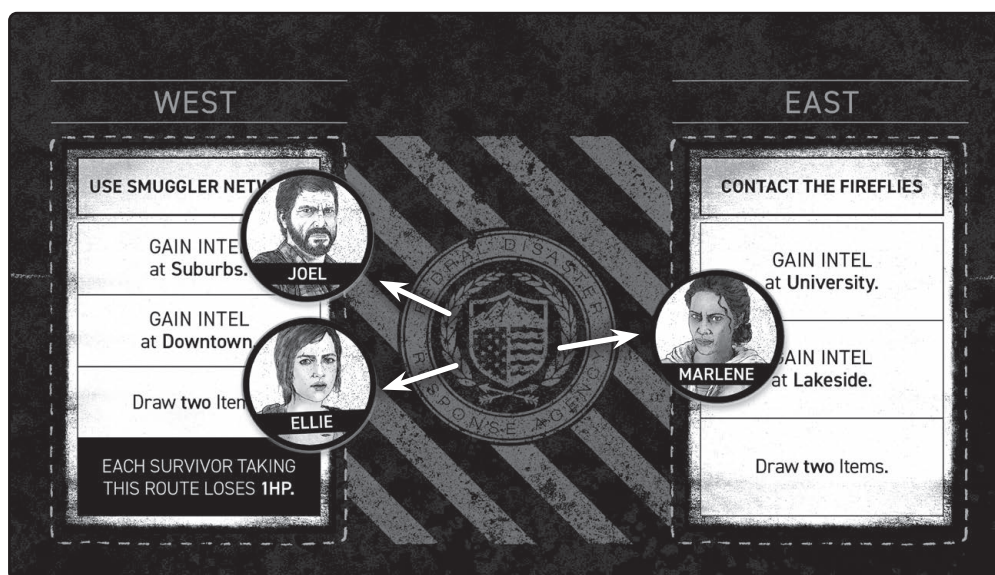
Each game begins with a prelude phase called The Quarantine Zone, after which it is played over a series of up to sixteen Days, tracked by the markers on the calendar.

The object of the game is to reach Jackson and defeat the Boss. If you do this before time runs out, and with all Survivors in your group still alive, you win the game together.

If time runs out (the calendar markers collide) or if any Survivor dies along the way (their HP is reduced to zero), you all lose and the game ends immediately.

PRELUDE - THE QUARANTINE ZONE

1. Flip over both QZ cards (in the East and West areas).
2. Choose the direction each Survivor will exit the QZ, placing their Survivor token on the corresponding QZ card.



3. After all Survivor tokens have been placed, resolve each QZ card that has at least one Survivor token on it, in whatever order you choose. Survivors there gain all listed rewards **as a group**, then suffer any listed penalties **individually**.

All QZ cards offer the opportunity to GAIN INTEL. This means:

Reveal (but do not take) the top card of the Stashed Item deck at the specified location. If it is an Event card, read the On Reveal effect and then discard it – the Intel has helped you avoid danger. If it is an Item or Weapon card, leave it face up on top of the Stashed Item deck – you've learned about something useful that has been stashed at that location.

4. Exit the QZ by moving all Survivor tokens on its East side to the Survivor spaces (below the Camp card) at the Suburbs location, and those on its West side to the Survivor spaces at the Downtown location.
5. Reveal the Camp card at each location at which Survivors are present.
6. Discard both QZ cards - the Survivors have left that place behind! You're now ready to begin Day 1.

DAYS

Each Day comprises two phases that must be completed in order:

1. **Travel Phase** – during which Survivors can move between locations.
2. **Action Phase** – during which Survivors can take one Daily Action each. In addition to this, they may take any number of applicable Preparation Actions, and potentially some Bonus Actions for successful exploration.

TRAVEL PHASE

On Day 1, skip this phase.

On all other Days, travel is **optional**, and the direction of travel is up to you. In any order you choose, each Survivor may travel a distance of **one location**, moving from their current location to another location connected by a route – the lines on the board between locations.

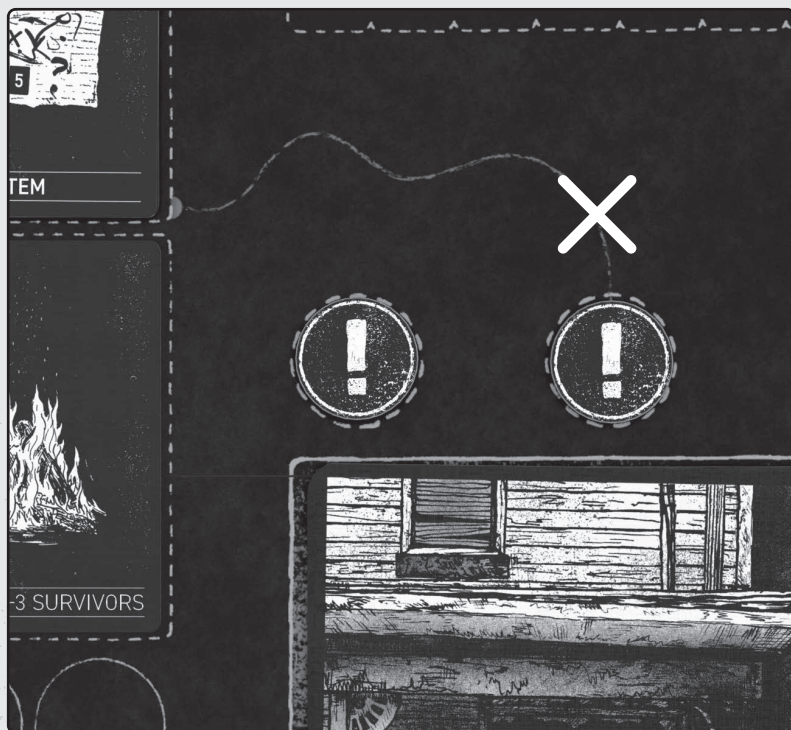
If a Survivor travels, move their token to one of the Survivor spaces at the destination.

If a Survivor travels to a location with an unrevealed Camp card, reveal it immediately.

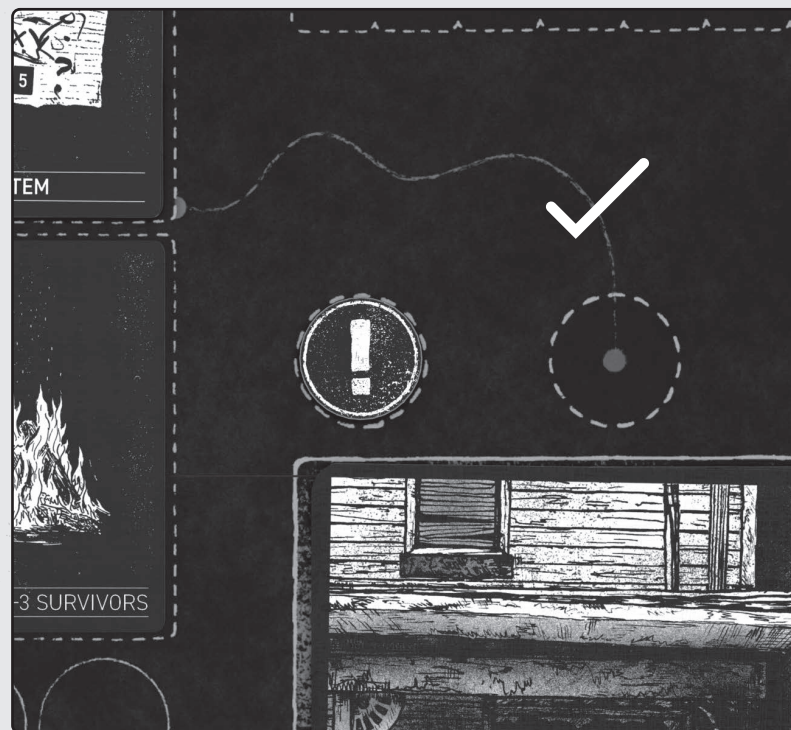
After all Survivors who you wish to travel have done so, begin the Action Phase.

BLOCKED ROUTES

Some routes are connected to a particular space on a location's Threat track. If there is a Threat token on that space, the route is blocked and **cannot be used** to travel until the Threat token is removed (Chapter cards will tell you when to remove them).



ROUTE BLOCKED



ROUTE OPEN

ACTION PHASE

DAILY ACTIONS

Every Action Phase, in any order the players choose, each Survivor may take **one** Daily Action at their location. To help keep track of this, after a Survivor takes a Daily Action (or if you decide they will not be taking one that Day) flip their token to its **black** side.

There are two Daily Actions to choose from: **CAMP** and **EXPLORE**.

- **CAMP**

Choose an action on the Camp card at the location, declare which Survivor(s) there will take it, and apply the effect. Then place a Threat token,  side up, covering that action - to show it cannot be used again this game.

- **EXPLORE**

1. Choose how many Survivors at the location will EXPLORE. The EXPLORE action may only be taken **once per Day** at each location — either by a solo Survivor, or by a group made up of any number of Survivors there. Once the group has been chosen, it cannot be changed.
2. Nominate one Survivor in the exploring group to **Take the Lead**. Some Chapters are dangerous to lead into, but you won't know until you flip the card! Whenever the word **YOU** is written in bold capital letters, the effect applies **only** to that Survivor.
3. The player controlling the nominated Survivor flips over the top Chapter card at the location then reads its italic story text aloud to set the scene.
4. Follow the instructions on the card to complete the Chapter. When the text of a Chapter card refers to 'all Survivors present', this means **only** those taking the EXPLORE action together. Other Survivors at the same location (taking the CAMP action or taking no action) are excluded from the events of the Chapter.
5. Discard the Chapter card (create a discard pile somewhere near the board).

CLEARING A LOCATION

You are not required to complete all Chapter cards at a location before moving on to the next, but if you do, you'll be rewarded with some group **Bonus Actions**. Bonus Actions may be taken **in addition to** each Survivor's individual Daily Action.

When the final Chapter card at a location is discarded, follow the instructions on its Location Clear card to learn what the available Bonus Actions for that location are. Bonus Actions are **one-use** and are taken **as a group**. If you wish to take any Bonus Actions, you must do so immediately when the location is cleared — **they cannot be saved for later**.

The Bonus Actions for clearing a location include:

- **REST**

Restore **HP** to **each** Survivor at the location as indicated.

- **SCAVENGE**

Draw cards from the Item deck as indicated and distribute them among any Survivors at the location.

- **USE WORKBENCH**

Either **UPGRADE** or fully **RELOAD** **one** Ranged Weapon in the inventory of **one** Survivor at the location.

To **UPGRADE** a Ranged Weapon, discard it, then browse the Upgraded Weapon deck and take the upgraded card with the same name. Upgrading a Weapon **also** fully **RELOADS** it.

To fully **RELOAD** a Ranged Weapon, put cubes in the Ammo track to match its Capacity value (no Ammo cards are required).

SEARCH

Upon completion, some Chapter cards will offer you the chance to **SEARCH** the location you just explored.

This gives players, as a group, the chance to immediately take a total of **TWO** Bonus Actions, or **FOUR** if you choose to Lose a Day and add a Boss token (see below). You may take the same Bonus Action multiple times if you wish, but you must resolve each action in full before taking the next.

Bonus Actions when searching a location include:

- **GAIN INTEL**

Reveal the topmost unrevealed card of the Stashed Item deck at **any location**.

If it is an Event card, apply the **On Reveal** effect.

If it is an Item or Weapon card, leave it face up on top of the Stashed Item deck at the location.

- **RAID STASH**

Take any one **face up** card from the Stashed Item deck **at the location just explored** and put it into the inventory of **any Survivor** at that location.

- **DRAW BLIND**

Nominate **any Survivor** at the location (even if they were not part of the EXPLORE action that Day), then draw the topmost **unrevealed** card from the Stashed Item deck there.

If it is an Event card, apply the **When Drawn** effect. Some Events feature **YOU** effects, which apply **only** to the nominated Survivor.

If it is an Item or Weapon card, you may either:

Put it into the inventory of **any Survivor** at the location.

OR

Leave it face up on top of the Stashed Item deck at the location.

- **SCAVENGE**

Draw **one** card from the Item deck and put it into the inventory of **any Survivor** at the location.

LOSING A DAY

Whenever you Lose a Day, move the **Infected** calendar marker along the calendar track **one space to the left**. This represents the Infected gaining ground, shortening the time you have left!

ADDING BOSS TOKENS



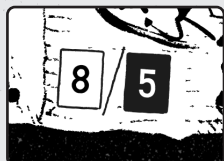
Whenever you add a Boss token, place one at random face down in one of the five spaces marked with this icon beside the Boss card. Boss tokens are revealed when you fight the Boss (page 17).

WHEN TO DRAW BLIND?

The DRAW BLIND Bonus Action is the fastest way to acquire Weapons, but it is also the riskiest!

The back of each Stashed Item card indicates how many cards in that set are safe (Weapons or Items) and how many are potentially dangerous (Events).

Events are always safe if you discover them using the GAIN INTEL Bonus Action (you apply the On Reveal effect), and always dangerous if you discover them when you DRAW BLIND (you apply the When Drawn effect).



Stashed Item Set 1 has 13 cards in total, 8 of which are Weapons/Items, 5 of which are Events.



Stashed Item Set 2 has 9 cards in total, 6 of which are Weapons/Items, 3 of which are Events.

By keeping track of the number of Events discovered during play, you will have some idea of how many remain, meaning you can judge how much risk you are taking each time you DRAW BLIND.

But remember, during setup, one card from each Stashed Item set is removed from play - the information you have is never perfect. Choose carefully when to DRAW BLIND!

PREPARATION ACTIONS

Before or after a Survivor's one Daily Action, you may **also** take as many Preparation Actions as you wish.

However, Preparation Actions **cannot be taken during the events of a Chapter card** - they may only be taken before the Chapter card is flipped or after it is discarded. Preparation Actions may also be taken during the Travel Phase.

- **TRADE**

Move cards from one Survivor's inventory to another **at the same location**. Traded Weapons remain in the same Ammo/Durability state they were in before being traded.

- **CRAFT**

Discard two CRAFTING MATERIAL cards in the correct combination to CRAFT an Item (see CRAFTING MENU on the Rules Reference card). Then, browse the Crafted Item deck and take the corresponding card.

- **UPGRADE MELEE WEAPON**

To UPGRADE a Melee Weapon, it must have at least one Durability remaining.

Discard one Binding card, one Blade card, and the Melee Weapon card you are upgrading, then browse the Upgraded Weapon deck and take the upgraded card with the same name.

Upgrading a Melee Weapon also fully restores its Durability – put cubes in the Durability track to match its new Durability value.

- **RELOAD**

Discard one or more Ammo cards from a Survivor's inventory. For each card discarded, **add one cube** to their Ammo track. You cannot load a Weapon beyond its Capacity value.

- **USE ITEM**

Discard an Item card to apply its effect. For example: Discard a Snack Bar card to restore **1HP** to your Survivor.

THE END OF THE DAY

When every Survivor's token has been flipped to its black side (indicating they have each taken one Daily Action, or that you've decided they won't be taking one) and no-one wants to take any further Preparation Actions, the Day is over.

To begin a new Day:

- 1. Move the Survivor calendar marker along the calendar track **one space to the right**.
- 2. Flip the tokens of **all Survivors** to their white side.
- 3. Begin the new Day with the Travel Phase.

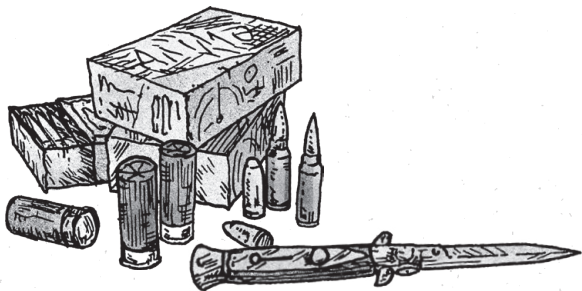


OUTBREAK DAYS

Certain Days on the calendar track are marked with a  indicating an Outbreak - the Infected are growing in number!

When the Survivor calendar marker is moved onto an Outbreak space:

Immediately add one Threat token to the Threat track at **each location**, unless its Threat track is already full or the location has been cleared (in which case skip that location).

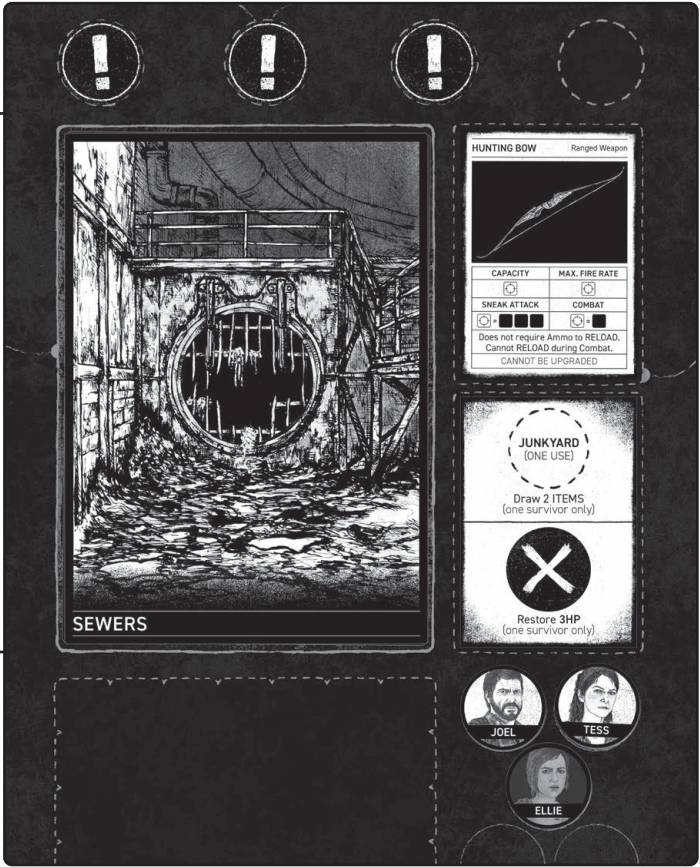


EXAMPLE DAY



It's the start of a new Day. In the Travel Phase, Joel, Ellie, and Tess all travel to the Sewers, where an earlier use of GAIN INTEL revealed the Hunting Bow has been stashed – they want that Weapon! On arrival, the Camp card is revealed - they've discovered a Junkyard and some Medical Supplies are also available at this location. The Travel Phase ends, and the Action Phase begins.

Ellie is low on HP. CAMP is chosen as her Daily Action and she uses the Medical Supplies on the Camp card. Ellie gains 3HP, an **X** token is placed on that action space to show it has been used, and Ellie's Survivor token is flipped to its black side to show that her Daily Action has been taken.



Joel and Tess *could* now EXPLORE together, but another plan is hatched instead. For Tess, CAMP is chosen as her Daily Action too, to make use of the Junkyard. Two cards are drawn from the Item deck as instructed, Rag and Alcohol, and they are placed into Tess' inventory. Then an **X** token is placed on the Junkyard space and Tess' Survivor token is flipped to its black side to show that her Daily Action has been taken.

Even though her Daily Action has been taken, Tess now takes two Preparation Actions. First, CRAFT, to make a Health Kit by discarding the Rag and Alcohol cards. Then, TRADE, moving the Health Kit she just crafted from her inventory to Joel's.





4

Joel begins his Day by taking a Preparation Action to restore 4HP by discarding the Health Kit Tess just gave him. EXPLORE is then chosen as his Daily Action, and the top Chapter card is flipped. Joel encounters Raiders and must fight them alone! Ellie and Tess are not present in this Chapter (because they did not take the EXPLORE action) so they cannot help.

5

Combat takes place (page 17) and Joel defeats the Raiders to complete the Chapter card.

As instructed on the Chapter card, one Threat token is discarded from the Threat track at the location, and the group may now SEARCH (page 12). They choose a total of two group Bonus Actions from the SEARCH list.

The first Bonus Action chosen is RAID STASH, allowing them to take the Hunting Bow card. Great for SNEAK attacks, it is put into Ellie's inventory.

The second Bonus Action chosen is DRAW BLIND, and Tess is nominated to do it. An unrevealed card from the Stashed Item deck is drawn – she's set off tripwires and loses 2HP! The Event card is discarded.

Joel's token is flipped to its black side and the Chapter card is discarded.



6

All Survivors have now completed their one Daily Action, earned some Bonus Actions, taken some Preparation Actions, and flipped their tokens to their black sides. The Day is over.

Items have been gained, enemies defeated, and the group is one step closer to opening the route out of the Sewers.

A new Day is ready to begin!

COMBAT

When a Chapter card instructs you to **Begin Combat**, this applies to **all Survivors** in the group taking the EXPLORE action at that location – not just the Survivor nominated to Take the Lead.

The enemy is represented by a row, or several rows, of Chapter dice. The more Chapter dice, the harder the fight will be!

Combat is fought in a series of rounds in which each Survivor will take one Combat Action, attempting to HIT the enemy and remove some Chapter dice. The goal is to remove all Chapter dice in as few rounds as possible. When all Chapter dice have been removed, the enemy is defeated and Combat ends.

COMBAT SETUP

Chapter cards that involve Combat have a row of icons at the bottom representing the enemy's stats.

To set up Combat, place a row of Chapter dice in the marked space on the board below the Chapter card, matching the enemy's stats.

If there is only **one Survivor** in the Combat, place dice as shown in the SOLO section.

SOLO	GROUP
 +   	 + (  × )

If there is **more than one Survivor** in the Combat, place dice as shown in the GROUP section.

A  means **roll** Chapter dice equal to the current **Threat Level** of the location (the number of Threat tokens on it's Threat track) and place them in the row however they land.

Each ,  or  means place one Chapter die in the row with **that trait** face up.

Each  means **roll** a Chapter die and place it in the row **however it lands**.

If any icons are in brackets with × , treat the enemy's stats as having as many of those icons as there are Survivors in the Combat (see Group Combat Setup example opposite).

BOSS COMBAT SETUP



When setting up Boss Combat, when this icon appears in the enemy's stats, reveal all Boss tokens that have been placed during the game and apply them to Combat setup as follows:



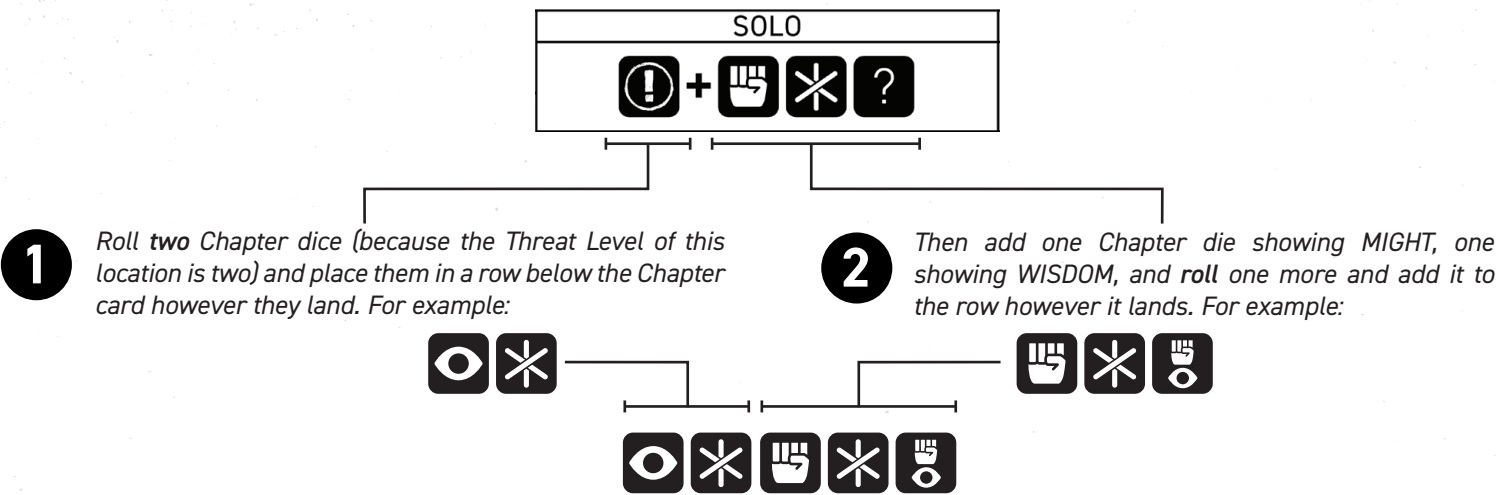
Roll this many **additional** Chapter dice and add them to the row however they land (these are not multiplied by the number of Survivors in the Combat).



This Combat has no LISTEN round, or no SNEAK round (regardless of what the Boss card says).

Solo Combat Setup Example

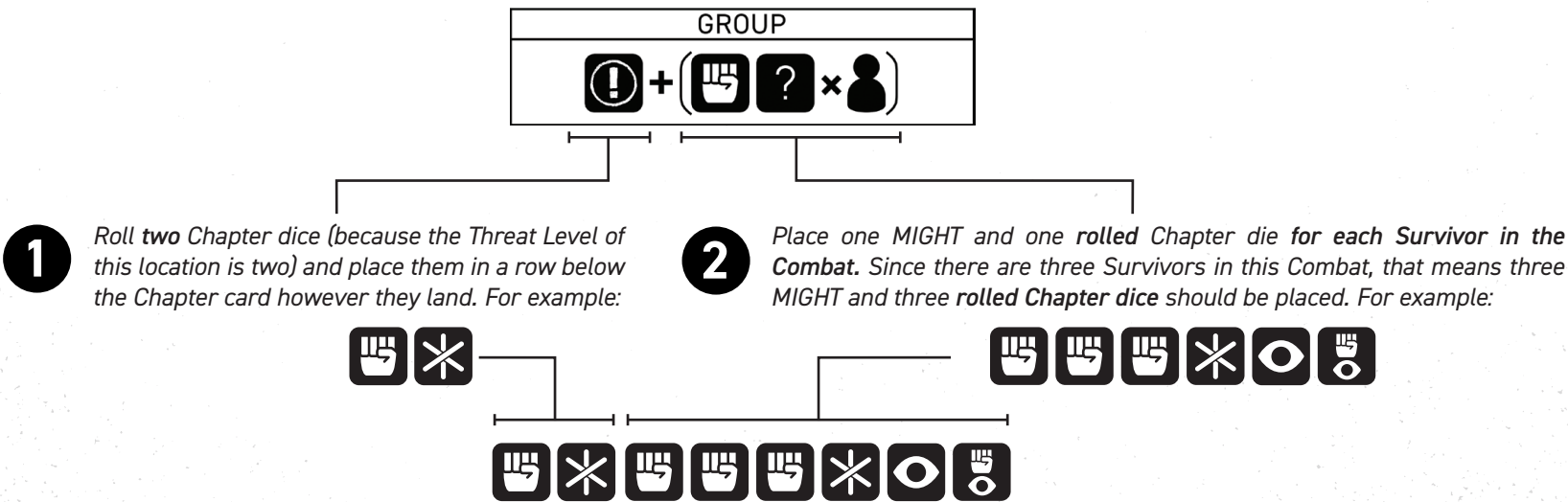
When a solo Survivor encounters an enemy at a location with a Threat Level of two, Combat would be set up using the SOLO section as follows:



Putting them all together, a row of five dice would be placed in total.

Group Combat Setup Example

If a group of three Survivors were to encounter that same enemy, at that same location, Combat would be set up using the GROUP section instead:



Putting them all together, a row of eight dice would be placed in total.

PRE-COMBAT

Some Chapter cards offer Survivors the opportunity for a LISTEN round and a SNEAK round before the first round of Combat begins.

LISTEN

SNEAK

If available, these pre-Combat options will be highlighted on the card in the lower left.

LISTEN

SNEAK

If an option is greyed out and crossed through, it is **not available**.

When available, LISTEN and SNEAK rounds are always **optional** – you can skip one, or both if you prefer, and go straight to Combat.

There can only ever be one of each type of pre-Combat round, and they must happen (or be skipped) in this order:

1. LISTEN round (optional)
2. SNEAK round (optional)
3. Combat rounds (required)

LISTEN ROUND

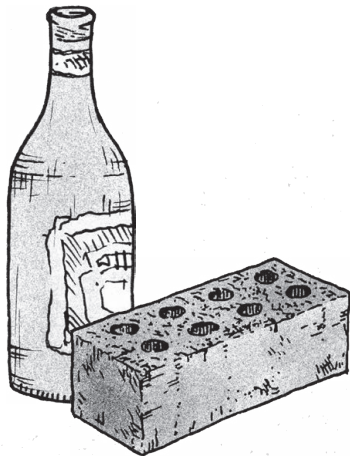
This represents the Survivors taking a moment to quietly study the enemy positions, hoping to change the configuration of the Chapter dice before Combat starts.

Any number of Survivors can attempt to LISTEN, but must do so **one at a time**, and each may only attempt it **once** per LISTEN round.

For a Survivor to LISTEN, a LISTEN check must be passed. Choose which Survivor will make the first LISTEN check and roll their Survivor die. To pass the LISTEN check, you must roll **WISDOM (✱)** or a **CRIT**.

- **If you roll WISDOM:** They pass! You may change up to **three** Chapter dice to show traits of your choice.
- **If you roll a CRIT:** They pass with perfection! You may change up to **five** Chapter dice to show traits of your choice.
- **If you roll anything else:** They fail! **Roll one additional Chapter die** and add it to the row.

After the first LISTEN check, regardless of the result, choose whether to make another LISTEN check for a different Survivor, or to end the LISTEN round.



SNEAK ROUND

This represents the Survivors using stealth to try and become HIDDEN and then make a SNEAK attack on the enemy, potentially removing some Chapter dice before Combat starts.

Any number of Survivors can attempt to become HIDDEN, but must do so **one at a time**.

For a Survivor to become HIDDEN, a SNEAK check must be passed. Choose which Survivor will make the first SNEAK check and roll their Survivor die. To pass the SNEAK check, you must roll **CUNNING** (👁️) or a **CRIT**. Or, instead of rolling, you may discard a Throwable Item to distract the enemy and automatically pass!

If you roll CUNNING: They pass! That Survivor has successfully HIDDEN and will be eligible to make a SNEAK attack (see below).

If you roll a CRIT: They pass with perfection! The Survivor has HIDDEN, and their upcoming SNEAK attack will remove **an additional Chapter die** if it **HITS**.

If you roll anything else: They fail! That Survivor has been detected and given away your position. **All Survivors** that attempted a SNEAK check in this SNEAK round (including those who succeeded and are HIDDEN) immediately take damage equal to the enemy's highest attack value. The SNEAK round ends, **no SNEAK attack can take place**, and Combat begins.

If the first Survivor **passes** their SNEAK check, players must then choose to either:

- Make another SNEAK check for a **different Survivor** to try and become HIDDEN as well.

OR

- Make the SNEAK attack with only the Survivor(s) who are **already** HIDDEN.

MAKING A SNEAK ATTACK

When players decide to make a SNEAK attack, in any order you choose, each HIDDEN Survivor makes either a Melee or Ranged SNEAK attack:

A **Melee** SNEAK attack does not require a Weapon, and it automatically **HITS** — **remove one Chapter die** of your choice (or **two dice** if the Survivor rolled a **CRIT** on their SNEAK check). Some Weapon and Item cards can deal **additional damage** on top of this, as detailed on the cards themselves. Use of these cards is optional and you may only trigger **one** card per Survivor.

A **Ranged** SNEAK attack requires a Ranged Weapon or a Throwable Item and **does not automatically HIT**. Instead, you must roll Ammo dice to see if the Survivor **HITS**, just like taking the SHOOT or THROW action in a normal round of Combat (see page 23). For each **HIT** rolled, apply damage as described on the Weapon or Item card being used (removing **one additional die** if the Survivor rolled a **CRIT** on their SNEAK check). If all the Ammo dice **MISS**, that Survivor's SNEAK attack has no effect.

The enemy never Attacks Back in the SNEAK round - they are caught by surprise!

COMBAT ROUNDS

OVERVIEW

After any available LISTEN or SNEAK rounds have been completed (or skipped), Combat begins.

Combat is fought in a series of **rounds**. Each round each Survivor must carry out **one Combat Action**:

MELEE (attack action)

SHOOT (attack action)

THROW (attack action)

RELOAD

WITHDRAW

BYPASS

Each Combat Action is explained in detail later in this section.

Survivors can all take the same action, all take different actions, or **any combination**.

IMPORTANT: The dice for **all Survivors' actions** are rolled at the **same time**, but you may then resolve the results of each action **one at a time** in whatever order you choose.

Each round, after resolving the Combat Actions of **all** Survivors, if the enemy is still alive, check to see if they **Attack Back** (page 23).

After all Survivors have taken their **one** chosen Combat Action, **and after checking to see if the enemy will Attack Back**, the round ends. Begin a new round with players declaring one Combat Action for each Survivor, and rounds then repeat in this way until Combat ends.

Combat only ends when one of the following occurs:

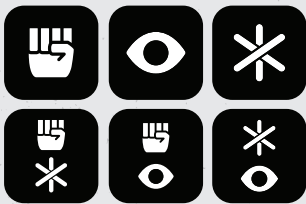
- The enemy is defeated (all Chapter dice have been removed by Survivor attacks, which completes the Chapter).
- One of the Survivors is killed (their **HP** is reduced to zero, which ends the game).
- The Survivors choose to **WITHDRAW** or **BYPASS** (page 24).

When the enemy is defeated, discard a Threat token from the Threat track at the location, then **SEARCH** the location (page 12).

COMBAT SPECIALS

Some enemies have a Combat Special, an ability or effect which is explained on their Chapter card. These often break the standard rules in a devious way, making for fearsome opponents. Keep Combat Specials in mind while fighting – they are easy to forget in the heat of Combat!

CHAPTER DICE



Each Chapter die features three sides with **SINGLE** traits on them, and three with **DOUBLE** traits on them. **DOUBLES** represent the enemy being difficult to **HIT**, but can be removed in the following ways:

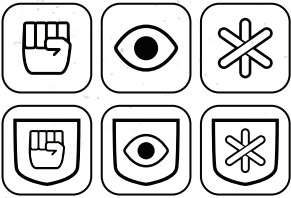
- A Survivor taking the **MELEE** action and rolling a matching **DOUBLE** or a **CRIT** on their Survivor die.
- Two Survivors taking the **MELEE** action in the same round of Combat, rolling the two required traits between them, and applying the combined result.
- A Survivor applying damage from a Ranged Weapon, Melee Weapon, Throwable Item, or **SNEAK** attack that allows them to remove a Chapter die of their choice (■).

MELEE (ATTACK ACTION)

To take this action, a Survivor does not need a Weapon – they can fight with their bare hands!

Roll the Survivor's die. If the result matches any of the enemy's Chapter dice, that Survivor has **HIT**! Remove Chapter dice as follows:

If you roll a SINGLE



Remove one Chapter die showing the same trait.

OR

Combine with another Survivor's die to remove one **DOUBLE** Chapter die.

You roll:



You remove:



You roll:



Ally rolls:



+

You remove:



If you roll a DOUBLE



Remove one Chapter die showing a matching **DOUBLE**.

OR

Remove up to two Chapter dice showing matching **SINGLES**.

You roll:



You remove:



OR



If you roll a CRIT



Remove any one Chapter die of your choice, regardless of what trait(s) it is showing.

BLOCK



Any result that includes a shield icon also counts as a **BLOCK**, regardless of whether the Survivor's attack **HIT** or not that round. Each Survivor who **BLOCKED** takes no damage when the enemy Attacks Back (page 23).

MISS

If what you roll does not match any Chapter dice, that Survivor has **MISSED**, removing no dice this round (but they may still have **BLOCKED**).

MELEE WEAPONS

Melee Weapons can add bonus damage when you **HIT**. To apply a Melee Weapon's bonus damage, **remove one cube** from its Durability track and apply the damage as detailed on the Weapon card.

Applying bonus damage is always optional, but each Weapon can only be used to apply bonus damage **once** per MELEE action.

When the last cube in the Durability track is removed from a Melee Weapon, discard the card.

SHOOT (ATTACK ACTION)

To take this action, the Survivor must have a Ranged Weapon in their inventory, and at least one cube in their Ammo track.

- 1. Check the Max. Fire Rate of the Weapon, discard **up to** that many cubes from the Ammo track, and take **that same number of** Ammo dice into hand from the supply.
- 2. Roll the Ammo dice and apply the results as follows:

For each  rolled, you **HIT!** Apply the damage effect described on the Weapon card.

For example

DAMAGE	
	=  

means that *for each HIT* rolled, you may remove any two Chapter dice of your choice.

If you rolled any **blanks**, they have no effect – the shots **MISSED!**

- 3. After applying the results of all the Ammo dice you rolled, place them all back in the supply – that Ammo has been spent!

THROW (ATTACK ACTION)

To take this action, the Survivor must have a Throwable Item in their inventory.

- 1. Choose the Item you wish to THROW, take one Ammo die into hand from the supply, and roll it.

If you roll a , you **HIT!** Apply the result described on the Item card.

If you roll a **blank**, you **MISS** with no effect.

- 2. Regardless of the result, discard the thrown Item card, and place the Ammo die back in the supply.

THE ENEMY ATTACKS BACK!

After the attacks of **all Survivors** have been resolved, if the enemy is still alive (any number of Chapter dice remain beneath the Chapter card) they Attack Back!

Survivors who took an attack action are at risk of suffering an enemy attack **of the same type** (Ranged or Melee):

Ranged Damage

 If an enemy has a Ranged attack value, roll a **HIT** die beside **each Survivor** who took the **SHOOT** or **THROW** action.

If a  is rolled, that Survivor has been **HIT** and loses **HP** equal to the enemy's Ranged attack value.

If a blank is rolled, the enemy **MISSED** that Survivor – they take no damage.

Melee Damage

 All enemies have a Melee attack value. Each Survivor who took the **MELEE** action and didn't roll a **BLOCK** is **HIT** and loses **HP** equal to the enemy's Melee attack value.

RELOAD

To take this action during Combat, at least one other Survivor must be taking an attack action in the same round to keep the enemy occupied. Reloading during Combat **counts as a Survivor's one Combat Action** for the round.

Discard one or more Ammo cards from the Survivor's Ammo slot. For each card discarded, add **one** cube to their Ammo track (you cannot load a Weapon beyond its Capacity value).

WITHDRAW

To take this action, all Survivors involved in the Combat must agree to do so together in the same round.

- Combat ends immediately with no further damage dealt.
- Remove all remaining enemy Chapter dice and put them back in the supply.
- Flip the withdrawing Survivor's tokens to their black sides.
- Unlike when defeating an enemy, when you WITHDRAW you leave the Chapter card where it is, face up at its location – this enemy will remain there, preventing further exploration until the Survivors deal with it on a subsequent Day.

If you WITHDRAW, you **do not** get to discard a Threat token or SEARCH the location.

You **cannot** WITHDRAW from the Boss.

RE-ENTERING COMBAT AFTER WITHDRAWAL

After you WITHDRAW from Combat, you are free to travel to a different location the next Day if you wish, provided the route is not blocked. Alternatively, you may re-enter Combat, either with the same Survivors or with different Survivors who have traveled to help. Choose EXPLORE as the Daily Action for those Survivors, ignore any YOU effects in the Chapter card, and immediately **Begin Combat** – setting up the Chapter dice from scratch according to the enemy's stats. LISTEN and SNEAK rounds are available once again (if permitted by the card) and any enemy Combat Specials continue to apply.

BYPASS

To take this action, all Survivors involved in the Combat must agree to do so together.

- Combat ends immediately. Discard the Chapter card and put all remaining enemy Chapter dice back in the supply.
- Discard **one** Threat token from the location.
- All Survivors taking the BYPASS action lose **2HP**.
- Flip the bypassing Survivor's tokens to their black sides.
- Lose a Day.
- Add a Boss token.

If you BYPASS, you **do not** get to SEARCH the location.

You **cannot** BYPASS the Boss.

COMBAT EXAMPLE



A new Day begins with Joel and Ellie at the Sewers. They are not able to Travel onward because the route is blocked by a Threat token, so they choose to skip the Travel Phase and go straight to the Action Phase.

EXPLORE is chosen for both Survivors as their Daily Action, and Joel is nominated to Take the Lead. The top Chapter card is flipped – the duo is cornered by Raiders! The card instructs the group to **Begin Combat...**

SETUP

GROUP	
	$+$ $\left(\text{Fist icon} \times \text{Question mark icon} \times \text{Person icon} \right)$

Since there is more than one Survivor present, the GROUP stats are used to set up Combat.

The current Threat Level of the location is three, so three Chapter dice are rolled. Next, since there are two Survivors present, two Chapter dice showing MIGHT are placed and two more are rolled.

In total, the enemy has seven dice!

2

PRE-COMBAT - LISTEN ROUND

The Chapter card shows that LISTEN and SNEAK are both available this Combat. The players don't like the look of all those **DOUBLES** on the Chapter dice, so they choose to begin with a LISTEN round (hoping to change some of them).

LISTEN
SNEAK

Joel is chosen to attempt the first LISTEN check, and his Survivor die is rolled. It's **WISDOM** – he passes the LISTEN check! Three Chapter dice may now be changed to whatever the players like. They choose to turn the three **DOUBLES** into **SINGLES**, which will be easier for the Survivors to deal with later.

Ellie could now also attempt to LISTEN, but the players are happy with the Chapter dice and choose not to take the risk of adding more – which would happen if she failed her LISTEN check.

The LISTEN round ends.





PRE-COMBAT – SNEAK ROUND

The players could pass up the opportunity to SNEAK and move straight to Combat now, but they want to try and do some damage before Combat via a SNEAK attack, so they begin a SNEAK round.

Ellie is chosen to make the first SNEAK check and her Survivor die is rolled. It's **CUNNING** – she passes the SNEAK check and becomes HIDDEN! Joel could also make a check to try and become HIDDEN, increasing the damage of the upcoming SNEAK attack if he succeeds, but the players decide against it - **CUNNING** is Joel's weakest stat and if he were to fail the SNEAK check the entire SNEAK attack would fail and both Survivors would take damage.

So, Ellie goes it alone, leaping from the shadows to make a Melee SNEAK attack!

Normally, a Melee SNEAK attack removes one Chapter die of your choice. However, Ellie is carrying her trusty Switchblade which removes an additional Chapter die, meaning the players can remove two Chapter dice of their choice in total.

A **WISDOM** and a **MIGHT** are removed.

Pre-Combat is over. Seven dice have been reduced to five, and all the nasty **DOUBLES** are gone. It's a good start, but now the first round of Combat begins!

COMBAT – ROUND 1

In the first round, the **SHOOT** action is chosen for Ellie. The Max. Fire Rate of her Hunting Rifle is one, so one cube from her Ammo track is discarded and one Ammo die is taken into hand. **MELEE** is chosen for Joel, so his Survivor die is taken into hand.

The dice for both actions all rolled **at the same time** - both attacks **HIT**!

The damage section of Ellie's Hunting Rifle card shows that for each **HIT** rolled, she may remove two Chapter dice of her choice. A **WISDOM** and a **MIGHT** are chosen and removed.

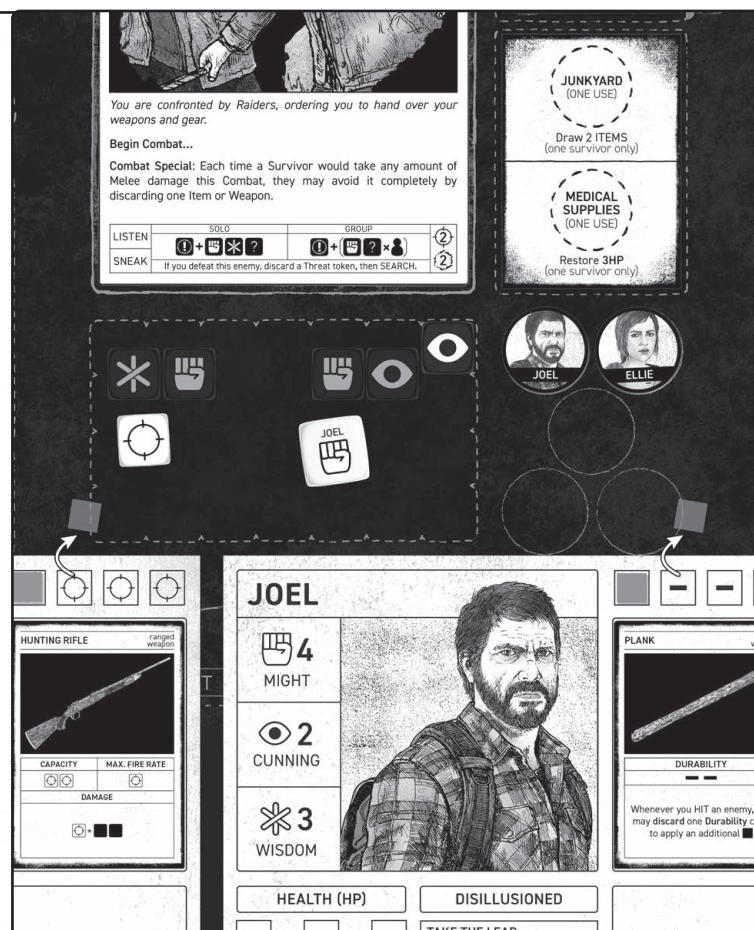
The **MIGHT** rolled on Joel's die matches the Chapter die showing **MIGHT**, so that Chapter die is removed. On top of that, the players choose to discard one cube from Joel's Durability track to activate the additional damage of his Melee Weapon (a Plank), removing one additional die of their choice, a **CUNNING**.

Four of the remaining five dice have been removed in the first round, nice! However, because there is still one die remaining, the enemy is not defeated yet and they Attack Back!



Because Ellie took the **SHOOT** action, and because this enemy has a Ranged attack value, they return fire. A **HIT** die is rolled, and the enemy **HITS**! Ellie loses **2HP** (the Ranged attack value of the enemy).

Because Joel took the **MELEE** action and did not **BLOCK**, he is **HIT** automatically and loses **2HP** (the Melee attack value of the enemy).



5

COMBAT - ROUND 2

A new round begins. The enemy has just one die remaining!

MELEE is chosen for both Joel and Ellie and their dice are rolled simultaneously. Neither of them rolls a match, so they both **MISS**.

Still not defeated, the enemy once again Attacks Back. Since both Survivors chose to make a MELEE attack, the enemy responds to each with a MELEE attack in return! Joel rolled a **BLOCK** so he takes no damage this round. Ellie did not roll a **BLOCK** and normally that would mean she loses **2HP** (the enemy MELEE attack value).

However, this enemy has a **Combat Special**: *Each time a Survivor would take any amount of Melee damage this Combat, they may avoid it completely by discarding one Item/Weapon/Ammo card.*

So, an Item card (Sugar) is discarded from Ellie's inventory and she avoids damage this round.

You are confronted by Raiders, ordering you to hand over your weapons and gear.

Begin Combat...

Combat Special: Each time a Survivor would take any amount of Melee damage this Combat, they may avoid it completely by discarding one Item or Weapon.

	SOLO	GROUP	
LISTEN	1+ 2+ 3+ 4+ 5+ 6+	1+ 2+ 3+ 4+ 5+ 6+	2
SNEAK	1+ 2+ 3+ 4+ 5+ 6+	1+ 2+ 3+ 4+ 5+ 6+	2

If you defeat this enemy, discard a Threat token, then SEARCH.

STASHED ITEM

JUNKYARD (ONE USE)
Draw 2 ITEMS (one survivor only)

MEDICAL SUPPLIES (ONE USE)
Restore 3HP (one survivor only)

Inventory: sugar, ELLIE, JOEL

Crafting MATERIAL: sugar + explosive = SMOKE BOMB

6

COMBAT - ROUND 3

A new round begins. Once again, the MELEE action is chosen for both Survivors.

Joel **MISSES** but thankfully Ellie **HITS**, removing the final die and defeating the enemy!

The Chapter is complete.

As instructed at the bottom of the Chapter card, a Threat token is discarded from the Threat track at this location and the group may now proceed to SEARCH. Then, they will discard the Chapter card, flip their Survivor tokens to their black sides, and end the Day.

You are confronted by Raiders, ordering you to hand over your weapons and gear.

Begin Combat...

Combat Special: Each time a Survivor would take any amount of Melee damage this Combat, they may avoid it completely by discarding one Item or Weapon.

	SOLO	GROUP	
LISTEN	1+ 2+ 3+ 4+ 5+ 6+	1+ 2+ 3+ 4+ 5+ 6+	2
SNEAK	1+ 2+ 3+ 4+ 5+ 6+	1+ 2+ 3+ 4+ 5+ 6+	2

If you defeat this enemy, discard a Threat token, then SEARCH.

STASHED ITEM

JUNKYARD (ONE USE)
Draw 2 ITEMS (one survivor only)

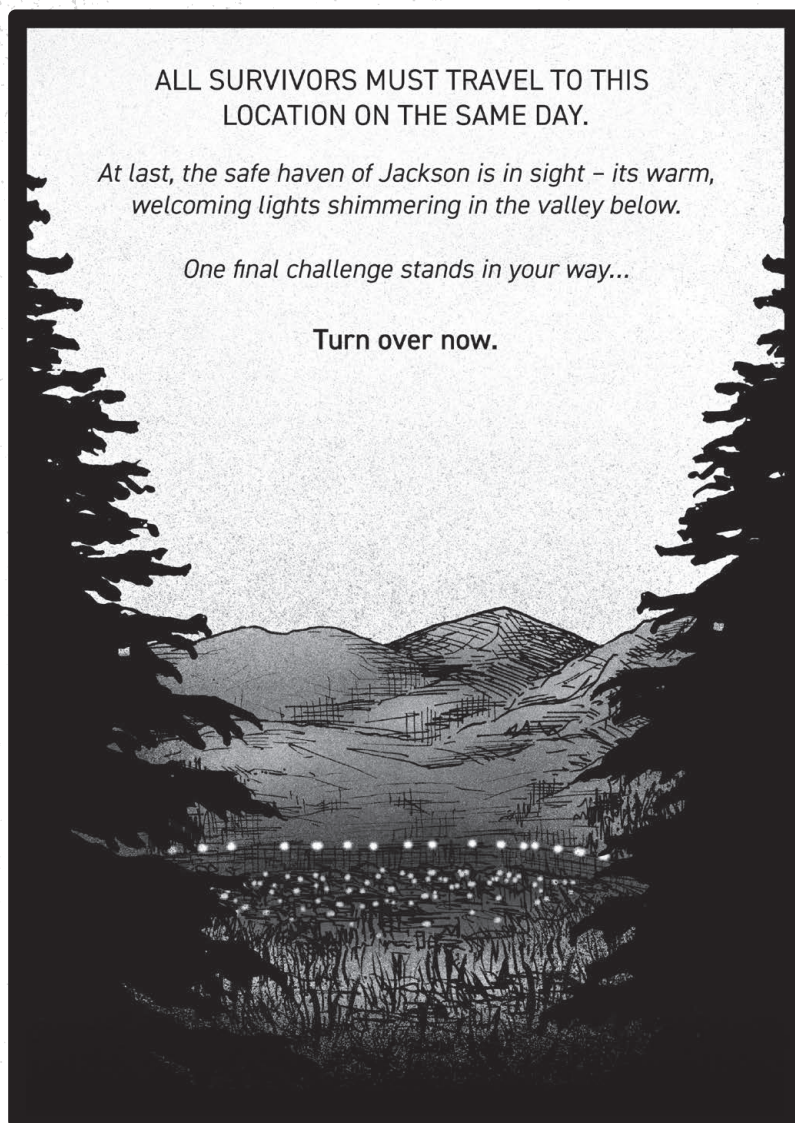
MEDICAL SUPPLIES (ONE USE)
Restore 3HP (one survivor only)

Inventory: ELLIE, JOEL

Crafting MATERIAL: sugar + explosive = SMOKE BOMB

ENDING THE GAME

Continue completing Days until you either win or lose the game.



ALL SURVIVORS MUST TRAVEL TO THIS
LOCATION ON THE SAME DAY.

*At last, the safe haven of Jackson is in sight – its warm,
welcoming lights shimmering in the valley below.*

One final challenge stands in your way...

Turn over now.

You **WIN** if:

You defeat the Boss at Jackson with **all Survivors** still alive.

You **LOSE** if:

- Any Survivor's **HP** is reduced to zero – they didn't make it!
OR
- The Survivor calendar marker and the Infected calendar marker are on the **same space** of the calendar track – you've run out of time!
OR
- A **sixth** Boss token is placed beside the Boss card (onto the space marked with an **ⓧ**) – Jackson has been overrun!

CREDITS

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ESCAPE THE DARK CASTLE

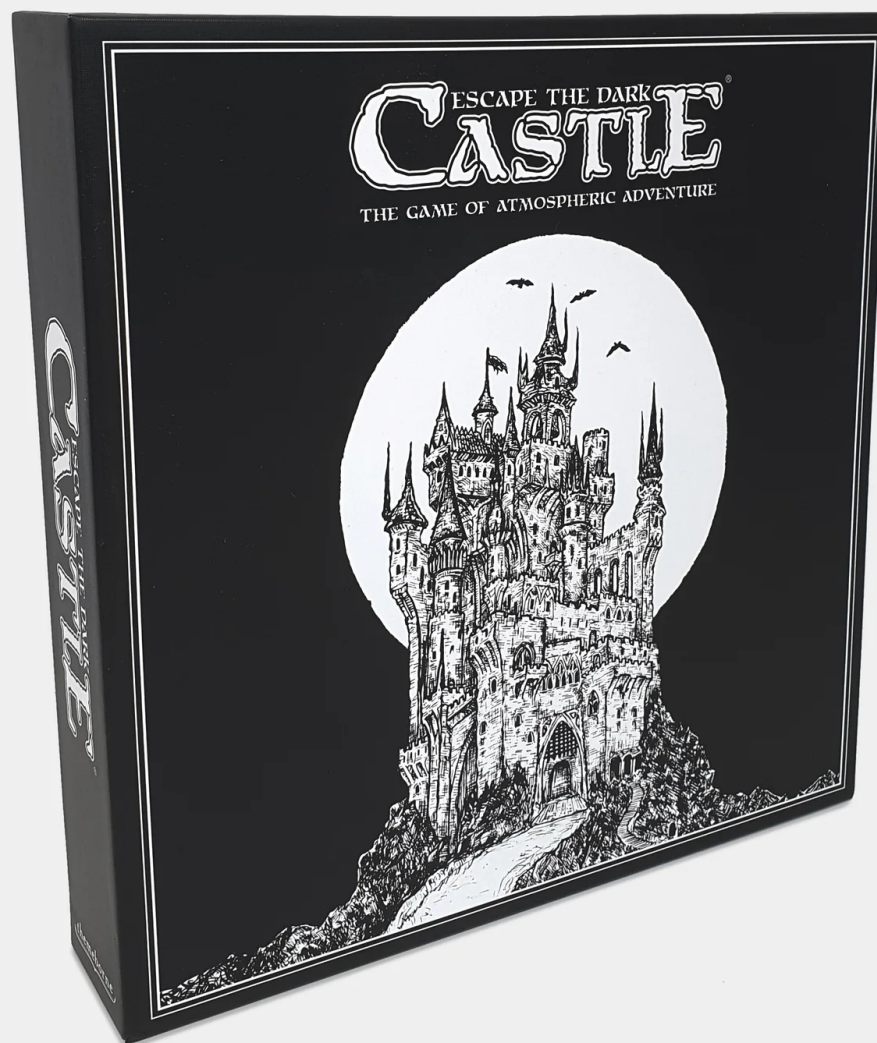
THE GAME OF ATMOSPHERIC ADVENTURE

Escape the Dark Castle is a simple, fantasy adventure game with a focus on atmosphere and player cooperation – perfect for newcomers to tabletop gaming. It takes 2 minutes to set up, lasts around 30 minutes, and no two games are ever the same.

Players take the roles of prisoners and must work together using custom dice and item cards to overcome the castle's many horrors, traps and challenges – each of which is represented by a large, beautifully illustrated chapter card.

As these immersive chapter cards are revealed one by one, the game takes on the form of a shared storytelling experience, with the players making decisions about what to do each chapter as they embark on a desperate quest to escape.

The goal of the game is to complete every chapter in the castle deck, and then defeat the final boss. To win, you must keep everyone alive – if any prisoner is killed the game ends immediately.



Escape the Dark Castle



Adventure Pack 1: Cult of the Death Knight



Adventure Pack 2: Scourge of the Undead Queen



Adventure Pack 3: Blight of the Plague Lord

ESCAPE THE DARK SECTOR

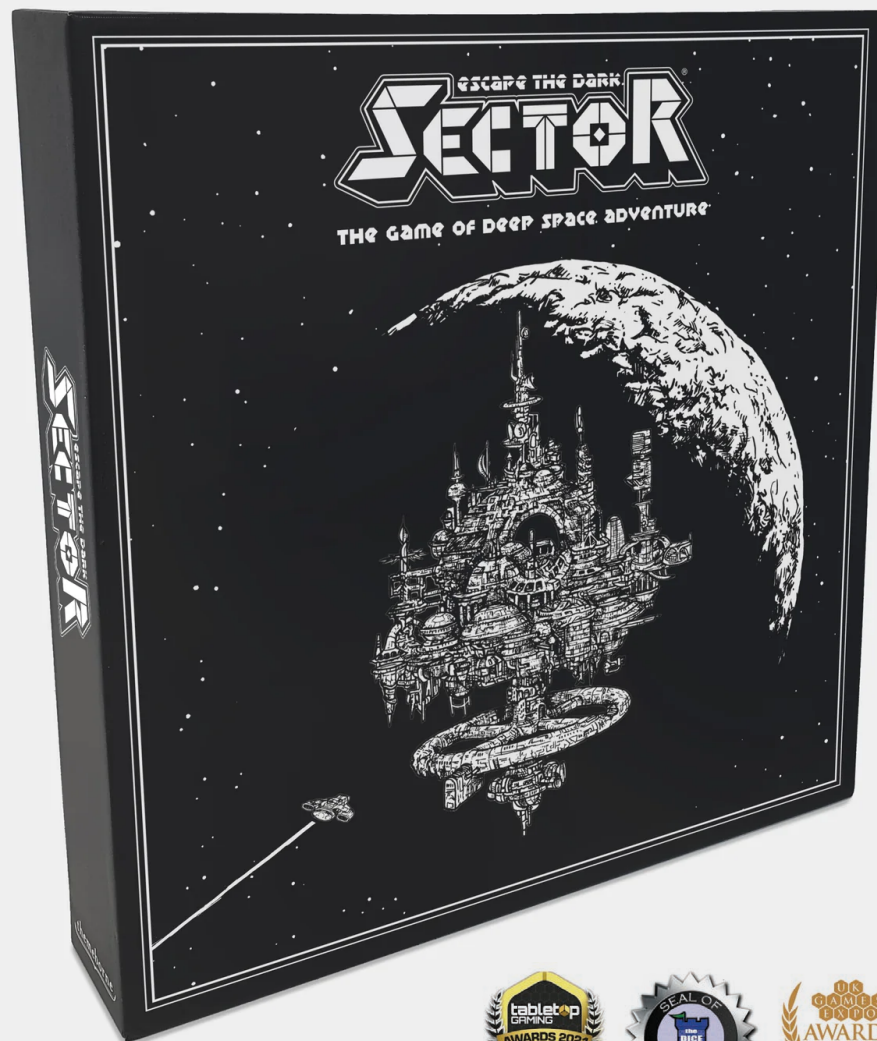
THE GAME OF DEEP SPACE ADVENTURE

Escape the Dark Sector is a simple, sci-fi adventure game with a focus on atmosphere and player cooperation. It takes around 5 minutes to set up, lasts around 45 minutes, and no two games are ever the same.

Playing as the beleaguered crew of an impounded starship, players find themselves confined to the detention block of a vast space station. Using a variety of advanced gear and weaponry, they will embark on a desperate mission together - to find their ship and blast their way home.

Along the way, the crew will have to overcome a variety of dangers, traps, and terrors. From cyborg guards and faulty replicators to killer alien organisms, each challenge is represented by a large, beautifully illustrated chapter card.

As these immersive chapter cards are revealed one by one, players must make decisions about what to do, before using a combination of tactical dice combat and the timely play of item cards to complete them. Can you escape the dark?



Escape the Dark Sector



Mission Pack 1: Twisted Tech



Mission Pack 2: Mutant Syndrome



Mission Pack 3: Quantum Rift



CREDITS

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