

Stuffed Fables™





SHOTS AND THE DARK

69

69-1

The bookkeeper reads the following:

The next day promised to be trouble. The little girl had learned at dinner that she would be visiting the doctor in the morning. The little girl hated the doctor! Well, she didn't really hate Dr. Patel. Dr. Patel was kind, funny, and pretty good at administering shots, but the thought of going to the doctor's office, and the fear of getting shots was enough to drive the little girl into fits. And that is of course exactly what happened at dinner.

That night Mommy tucked her into bed.

"It won't be so bad, you know," Mommy pointed out. "And you get to miss a few hours of school. Won't that be nice?" The little girl disagreed. She might not have a ton of friends at school, but school sounded better than shots. She fell asleep angry, her tears matting down Theadora's fur.

"Look at the time!" gasped Piggle when the stuffies finally awoke. They all looked up at the kitty cat clock, and sure enough, it was an hour later than normal.

"Something's off," said Mr. Stitch. "That worries me."

"We should gear up," said Theadora as she stretched. Wriggling out of the little girl's arms had been difficult and her fur was still crusty from tears. The stuffies quickly set to equipping themselves. Recent events had taught them the value of being prepared.

"I wonder what we'll face next?" asked Flops.

"A good question," Theadora agreed. "We've been able to thwart Crepitus thus far, but he seems desperate now. Who can say when or how he will strike next?"

"Oh dear," said Lumpy. "There's your answer!" And Lumpy pointed to the closet where a purple light began to flicker from under the door.

"Good!" snapped Lionel. "I was just beginning to get bored." The closet door swung open and the stuffies gasped at the towering shape that emerged.

"Knuckle?" Theadora asked confusedly. They had defeated Knuckle before, but after saving him from quicksand, none of them had expected to face the large stuffy in combat again.

"I thought he was running away," said Piggle.

"I was going to run," the large brute agreed. "But then I thought about it, which was hard. I'm really only good at one thing, and it's not running. So I came back. Because I'm not good at running."

"You mentioned that," Flops pointed out.

"I'm really only good at one thing," Knuckle said.

"You mentioned that too," sighed Flops.

Knuckle held up both his large fists and said, "I'm good at hitting things."

"Wrap up that thought and bring it home!" Flops cheered, and Knuckle thumped on his chest.

"I'm going to hit Crepitus so hard he yells, 'Hey! Stop hitting me so hard. Because it really hurts, because you're good at hitting things!'"

"Heart of a poet," said Flops, wiping a fake tear from her eye.

Gather the discovery cards for this story and without looking at them, place them in a face down stack near the play area.

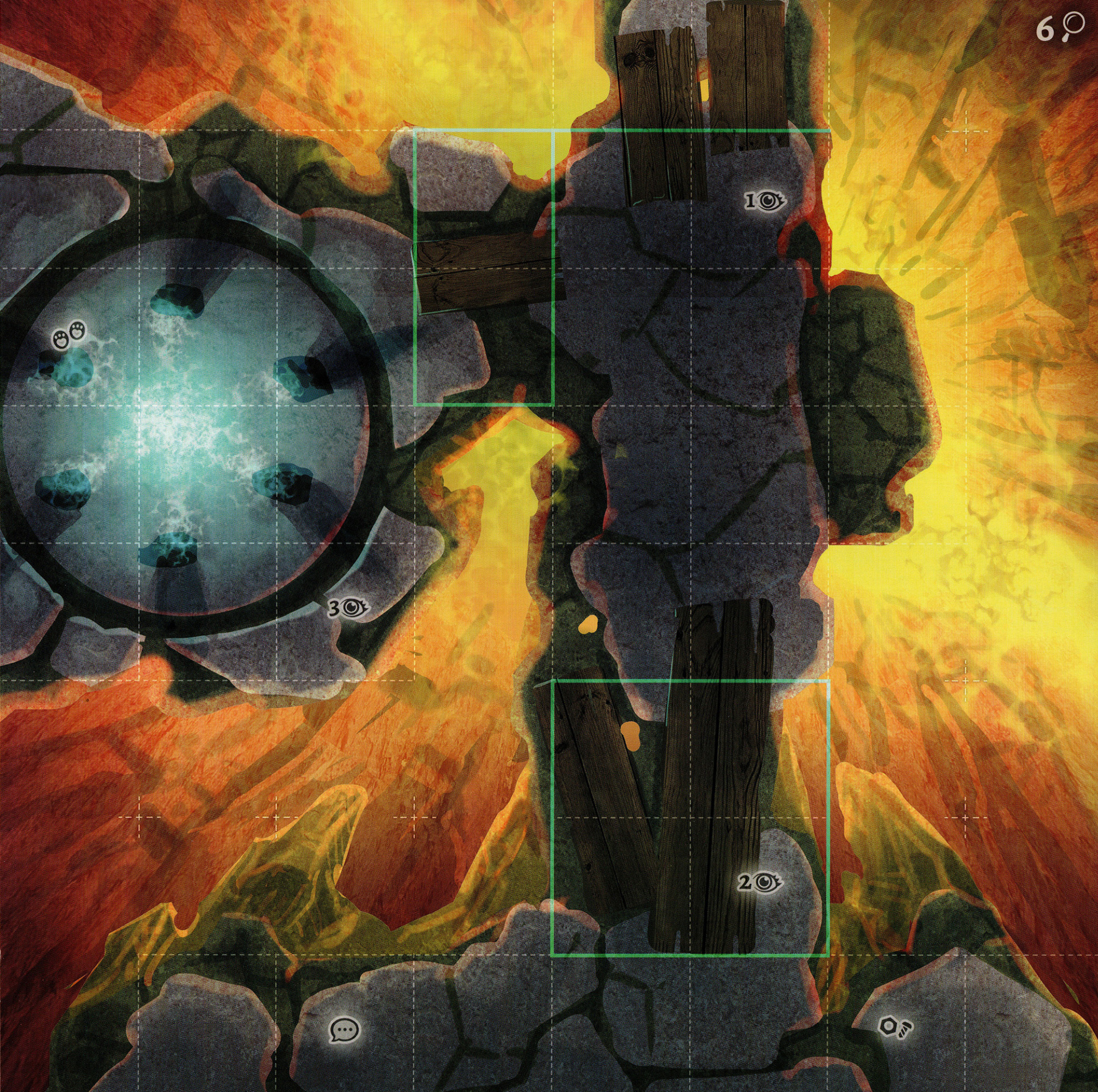
Go to page 71, section 71-1.

STITCH'S FABLE: SCARED

There once was a little boy who was scared to sleep, for every night a little ghost would appear in his room. One night he worked up the nerve to welcome the ghost, and was surprised when the ghost seemed relieved by this. And so he realized that the little ghost was just as scared of seeing him. Their fears eased, the two quickly became good friends.

"How sad that we wasted time being afraid of each other," said the little ghost one night, "for it is more time we could have spent as friends."





THE GUARDIANS OF THE FALL

71-1

The bookkeeper reads the following:

And so Knuckle told the stuffies that their most recent exploits in the Fall had set in motion a powerful chain of events. A group of the Lost calling themselves the Outsiders, had risen up against Crepitus and trapped him within the factory-fortress. The victory was hollow as Crepitus almost never left his home as it was, but symbolically it was of great significance. The citizens of the Fall were done with Crepitus' bullying, and they had decided to take a stand!

"The Outsiders can't get through the gates, because the gates are tough," Knuckle said. "But Knuckle is tough too. If you stuffies come with me, we can get past the gates and get inside."

"How on earth is that possible?" Stitch questioned.

"Old toys helped me," said Knuckle. "They'll take us back into the castle, then we open gates from inside." The stuffies looked at each other questioningly. None of them truly doubted Knuckle's intent.

"So... how do we return with you?" Lumpy squeaked. Knuckle grinned and held out an empty bag. They all groaned, but one by one climbed inside. It wasn't pleasant and there was much complaining about feet stepping on faces, but after a moment of weightlessness, the stuffies were dumped out of the sack onto a warm stone floor.

They were lying on a magic circle, deep within the ruined dungeons of the factory-fortress.

SETUP

Retrieve the Knuckle Hero instruction card and character cards from the discovery stack and place them side by side to form an extra character card within reach of all players. Add 6 stuffing to Knuckle's card. Also retrieve the Knuckle's Chopper item card and equip it to Knuckle. Knuckle cannot equip any item other than his chopper.

Place Knuckle on the space marked with . Each player places her stuffy figure adjacent to Knuckle.

Place tokens on the indicated spaces.

Generate a random encounter. (Knuckle counts as a stuffy in play for this purpose.)

GEAR UP

Starting with the bookkeeper and going in player order, each player can look through the item deck and choose 1 weapon card that has the Household keyword, and equip that item to their stuffy. Then shuffle the item deck.

SPECIAL RULES

Knuckle Joins Your Party: Follow the rules listed on the Knuckle Hero Instruction Card. Place an extra white and black die in the bag if there are fewer than 4 players.

The stuffies lose if Knuckle collapses before the gates are opened. If Knuckle collapses after the gates are opened, he is defeated and is removed from play.

71-2

"Your little girl is in grave danger," warned Marietta. "Skreela wants her as a playmate. Crepitus will make this happen as he hates you now, though truly he would have done it anyway, for he is terrified of the minion that calls him father. We are not certain, but we suspect Skreela is an elemental force carved out of the Fall itself, and twisted by the Dollmaker's science. Whatever the case, Skreela is far more than Crepitus ever bargained for. Her wishes drive many of his decisions. If you want to stop him, you will need to let the Outsiders in so they can distract his guards. You can get to the gates by passing through the smelters, though that place is dangerous. Or you could go through the assembly area via the aqueducts."

At the end of any player's turn, if there are no minions in play, you can leave this area and go to The Smelters by going to page 73, section 73-1, or, you can go to The Assembly by going to page 75, section 75-1.

71-3

"The Fall is a nexus," answered Marietta, "and the circles connect it to other worlds. But activating them has become almost impossible now. Summoning you consumed our collective energy."

71-4

"We are the Guardians," Marietta whispered. "We were like you once, and the Fall chose us to act as its stewards. Now thanks to your actions we have come out of hiding, and wield our power to aid you in striking down Crepitus. This will be a land of joy once again." And Marietta smiled.

71-5

You revived the brave Lost, sitting them up and leaning them against the wall. They were pretty beat up, but they were forever grateful.

All stuffies gain 1 heart.



Defeat the minions. Ask Marietta about the mission by exploring . Stuffies may want to visit multiple times so they can ask Marietta multiple questions.



Surge: Reveal a sleep card.



You spotted Marietta standing among a circle of wizened old dolls. Each was as ancient as Marietta, and made of old woods, fabrics, and in some cases, even fur or feathers. The old corn husk doll gave you a knowing smile, but stayed with her comrades, as if they were locked in some fearsome spell.

If you want to ask Marietta about the mission, go to section 71-2.

If you want to ask about the mystic circle, go to section 71-3.

If you want to ask about guardians go to section 71-4.

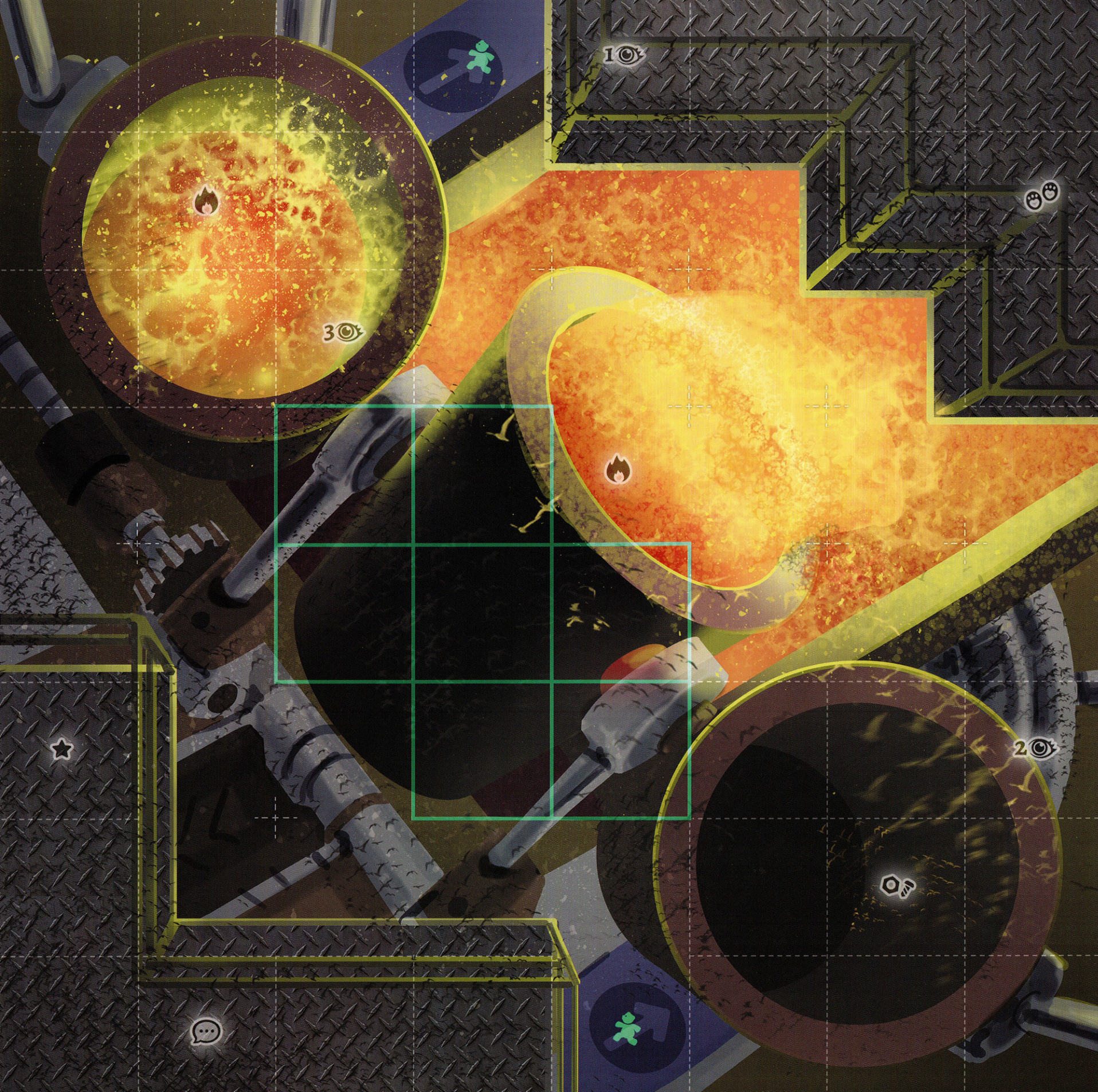


Several Lost lay moaning on the ground. They had held the doors while the guardians used their magic to bring you here.

You can help them by giving 1 stuffing. If you give a stuffing token, go to section 71-5.



A magic circle was carved into the stone floor, looking almost identical to the one at the Crossroads. The stone felt warm to the touch, and thin tendrils of vapor rose up from the carvings and curled upward into the air.



THE FIRES OF INDUSTRY

73-1

Return all dice, except those stored on cards, to the dice bag. Reshuffle the minion deck. The bookkeeper passes the bookmark to the player on her left and the new bookkeeper reads the following:

They ran through the dark hallways and underground tunnels that made up the filthy underbelly of the factory-fortress. No minions seemed to be present, so the friends saw no need to be stealthy. But they encountered numerous Lost workers, many of whom cheered the stuffies on or begged them for help. They assisted those they could, and shared news of the outside world to those that wanted it. More than one of the Lost took heart at the notion of a revolution and began searching for a way to arm themselves.

"Do you see what is happening my friends?" Mr. Stitch asked them as they passed through yet another hallway. "Our deeds have changed the Fall forever. Even if we do not survive this, these people will not accept Crepitus' cruel yoke much longer."

"Wait, what do you mean not survive?" Lumpy gasped.

"Onward!" Stitch cried.

"What is a smelter, anyway?" asked Flops. "I'm imagining a big nose."

"It's something to do with fire," Theadora answered. "It melts things down so they can be made into other things."

Soon the air grew hot and they could hear the sounds of industry echoing all around. And they came upon a cavernous room filled with giant metal pots that moved on iron contraptions.

"Up there!" shouted Piggie, pointing to an iron catwalk that led to a large doorway. But the way was treacherous and Crepitus's minions kept a careful watch.

Reveal a sleep card.

SETUP

Place Knuckle on the space marked with ☹️. Each player places her stuffy figure adjacent to Knuckle.

Place 😊 tokens on the indicated spaces.

Generate a random encounter. (Knuckle counts as a stuffy in play.)

Put the Leap Spaces and Fire environment cards into play.

SPECIAL RULES

Exit: The stuffies must reach the exit. When a stuffy ends a move on the ★, remove that stuffy and place it on its card. It is no longer in play. The stuffies can exit this tile even if Knuckle or minions are in play. Once all stuffies exit, go to page 77, section 77-1.

73-2

The smelting pots jerked into place when they reached specific points in their travel, and then slowly tipped over to pour molten metal into molds. The pour was slow and deliberate, so that a nimble stuffy could scramble across the side of a tipped pot, but they would have to be bold and quick.

Place a courageous status card on this stuffy. ⚔️

73-3

You recognized the types of mechanical parts you saw.

"Snatchers!" you called to the others. "Crepitus has enough parts to make hundreds of them!"

Gain 1 heart. 2👁️ is no longer available. ⚔️



See the special rule Exit in section 73-1.



Surge: Reveal a sleep card.



Tiny embers floated upon the air, and you stared ahead at the massive smelting pot filled with fire. Your eyes scanned the area, desperate to find a way across, when you noticed the conveyor belts carrying metallic toy parts. The parts were carried to a large pile, and there mechanical claws tossed them into a burning forge of enormous size. Troughs of melted parts ran from the forge and into smelting pots. You noticed it took a while for each pot to be filled, and wondered if those pauses were enough time to leap to a pot, then over to the exit? It would be a treacherous leap, but what other choice did you have? ⚔️



You teetered on the edge of a massive, empty smelting pot, and looked down to see the molds that were being filled with metal. The whole operation seemed crude, but there was something familiar about the shape of the mold...

Make a yellow/perception skill test, difficulty 4.

PASS: Go to section 73-3

FAIL: No effect.



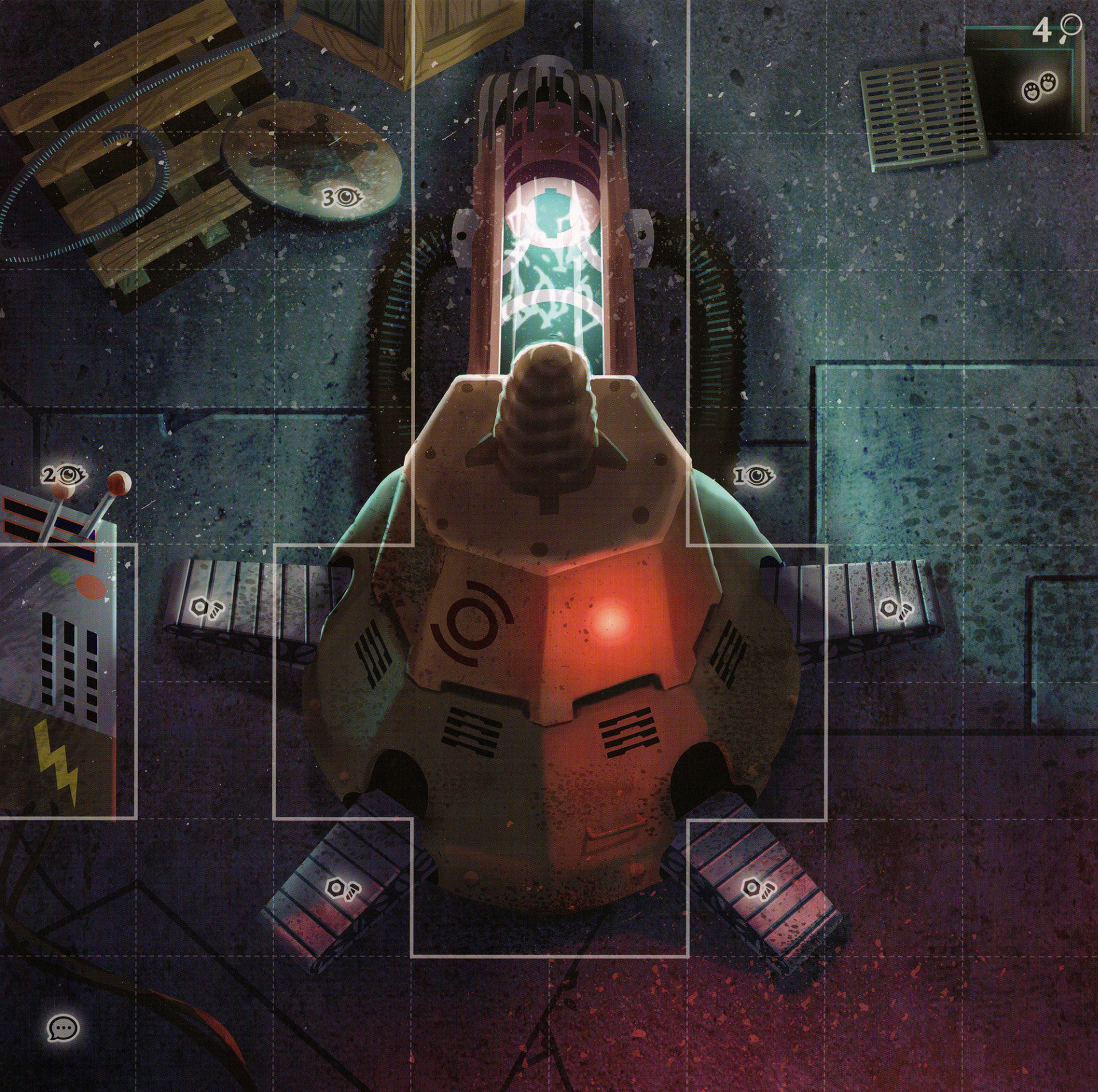
You were delicately balancing yourself on the edge of a smelting pot filled with bubbling, fiery liquid. Even up on the edge, the heat was overwhelming, and looking down you gasped when you saw your fur begin to singe. You needed to move!

Go to section 73-2.



The little girl tossed in her sleep, and her pillow slid to the floor with a light thump! In the factory, the smelting pots jumped and swayed by an unseen force.

Place a trapped status card on any stuffy on a space that has at least 1 green line border.



THE ASSEMBLY

75

75-1

Return all dice, except those stored on cards, to the dice bag. Reshuffle the minion deck. The bookkeeper passes the bookmark to the player on her left and the new bookkeeper reads the following:

They sloshed through brackish, knee-high water that smelled burnt.

"This is gross," Lumpy groaned.

"When do we find this aqua duck?" growled Lionel. "My claws are ready for him."

"Aqueduct," corrected Mr. Stitch. "And you're in it. These channels run wastewater out, probably into the Tearfall." Lionel seemed crestfallen.

"So when Marietta said we would need to cut through..." the lion looked around.

"Ew!" moaned Flops. "She just meant we'd need to pass through these ducts. We're not carving up poultry."

"Stupid aqueducts," Lionel grumbled, and kicked the water angrily.

The mechanical sounds of industry grew nearer, and soon the stuffies found themselves below a large metal grate. There was a grinding noise, and fiery sparks rained down, hissing when they touched water. Knuckle shoved his way to the front of the line and, using his significant muscles, lifted the grate up and tossed it to the side.

The Assembly was a hive of activity. Many Lost toiled at the welding stations they were chained to, protective black masks covering their faces, their exteriors burnt from the countless singing sparks that showered over them. Theadora gasped at what they saw.

"Toys... manufacturing toys," she whispered and clapped a paw over her mouth.

"Blasphemy!" Piggie hissed.

Reveal a sleep card.

SETUP

Place Knuckle on the space marked with . Each player places her stuffy as close to Knuckle as possible.

Place tokens on the indicated spaces.

Put the Walls/Barriers environment card into play.

Generate a random encounter of up to 4 minions. Place the minion cards in a column near the threat track, and place their figures on the conveyor belt minion entry spaces.

SPECIAL RULES

Defeated Minions: Each time a minion is defeated, draw a new minion card, add it to the bottom of the minion column and place its matching figure on a minion entry space of your choice. Do this each time a minion is defeated until the story instructs otherwise. If the minion deck runs out of cards, reshuffle the discard pile and form a new minion deck.

75-2

"I've been here longer than I can remember," said the stuffed hippo. "My name is, well, I don't rightly remember my name."

"What are you doing?" you asked her.

"My duty," she replied. "I pull this lever and then those minions over there spring to life."

You really wanted her to stop pulling the lever, but convincing her requires a yellow/perception group task, difficulty 20.

PASS: You finally convinced the hippo to abandon her duty! No more minion figures can be brought into play on this map. Once all minions currently in play are defeated, you can leave this page when you're ready by going to page 77, section 77-1.

SPECIAL RULES

Encouraging the Hippo: You can help the hippo to remember her name, by using any color attribute die to encourage her. If you do, go to section 75-4.

75-3

The Lost removed his mask and gave you a weak teddy bear smile.

"Thank you friend," he murmured. Knuckle used his strength to break the chains from all the Lost.

Gain 1 heart! Discard 1 black threat die from the threat track, then move all dice from the discard pool back to the bag.

75-4

"I think I was named after a flower," said the hippo.

"Daisy?" you asked. "Perhaps Rose? Daffodil?"

"Cauliflower!" cried the hippo. "That's it! Oh thank you!"

Place the die used to encourage the hippo on the group task track and change its facing to a 6. It counts toward your total.



Pass the group task found at 2 .



Surge: Reveal a sleep card.



The elaborate contraption was crudely constructed, and covered with a multitude of tubes, cables, buttons, and levers. Inactive minions were fed to the machine via conveyor belts, apparently to receive a jolt of dark energy that brought them to life.



A worn hippopotamus stood at an elaborate console and, almost rhythmically, worked a lever that caused the great machine to flash and crackle, and made the needles in various gauges there jump up and down.

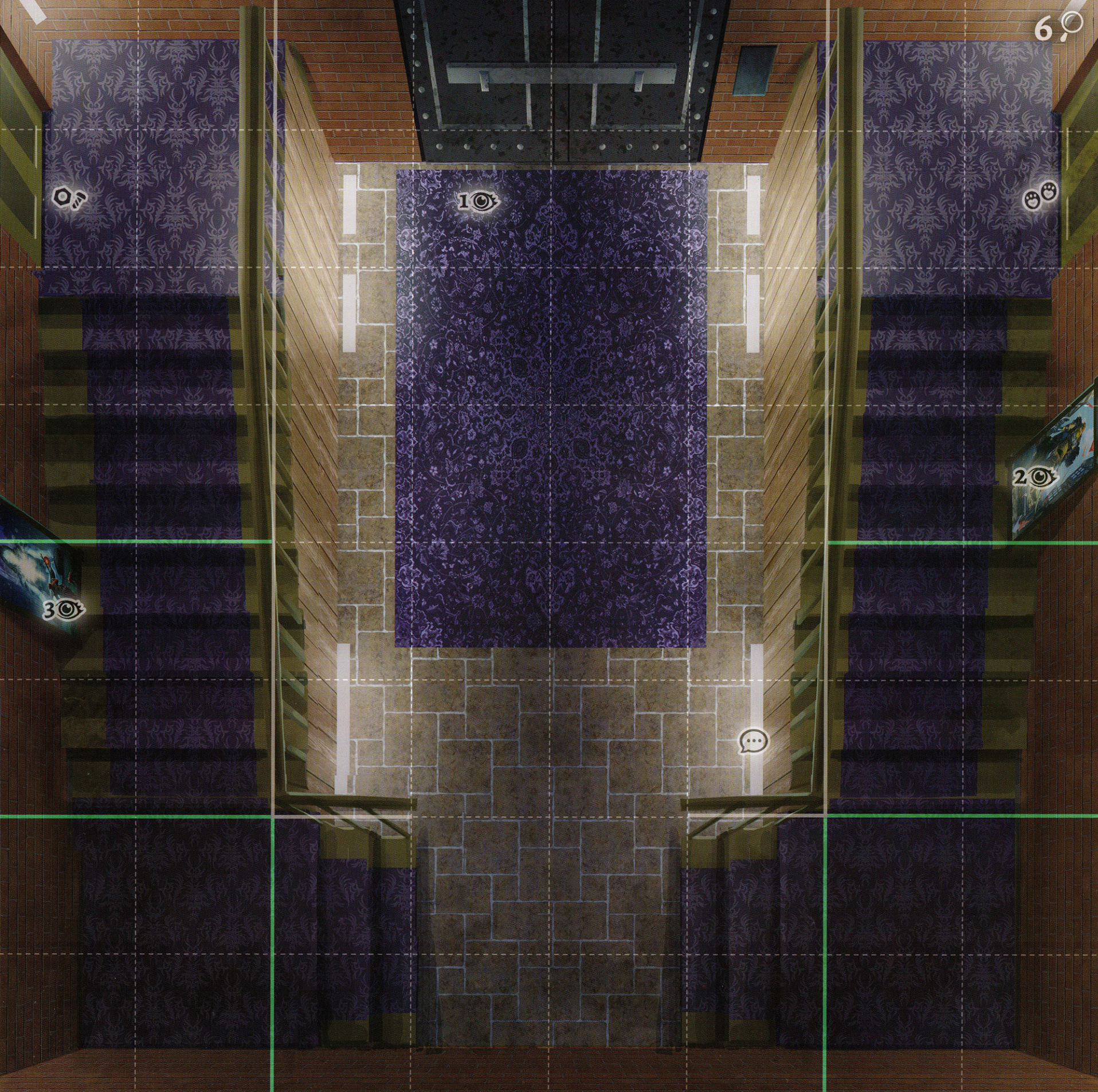
Go to section 75-2.



Two ragged Lost with welding torches put in the final effort on the inactive minions on the conveyor belts.

"We don't really care about doing a good job. We even play a prank on Crepus by making all his snatchers have crossed wires." The other Lost just nodded his head with a sly smile. They were chained to their workstation, as was a third stuffy who lay collapsed upon the ground.

Place a scorched status card nearby. You can remove the status from the collapsed Lost just as you would from a stuffy. If you successfully remove the scorched status, go to section 75-3.



THE MOB AT THE GATE

77-1

Return all dice, except those stored on cards, to the dice bag. The bookkeeper passes the bookmark to the player on her left and the new bookkeeper reads the following:

"They're gaining on us!" bellowed Lionel. Mr. Stitch turned from his position high atop Knuckle's shoulders to look behind them, and sure enough, the way back surged with angry minions who raced after them. It seemed that with every side hall they passed, more minions joined the hunt. They saw dark hearts and mongrels, crawlies and snatchers – Crepitus had hurled every last minion he had at them!

They arrived at a cracked and sagging arched doorway before a long hallway, and Knuckle came to a halt. The others dashed by before Knuckle picked up a heavy pedestal of marble and smashed it into the arch. He ran through as it all came crashing down. It would not be enough to halt their enemies, but it would slow them down.

The end of the hall opened onto a balcony, and to either side were stairs leading down to a spacious entry chamber and the massive reinforced gates.

"We have to lift the crossbar!" bellowed Theadora.

Reveal a sleep card.

SETUP

Place Knuckle on the space marked with ☹️. Each player places her stuffy figure adjacent to Knuckle.

Place 😊 tokens on the indicated spaces.

Put the Walls/Barriers environment card into play

Make a minion deck of Snatcher MK1 and 8 random minion cards. Shuffle it and set it nearby.

77-2

"They keep coming!" Piggie yelled.

"Good!" roared Lionel, and he began to laugh maniacally.

"Love that guy!" said Flops with admiration.

Generate a random encounter from the prepared minion deck. (Knuckle counts as a stuffy in play.)

SPECIAL RULES

Defeating Minions: At the end of your turn, if you defeated a minion, after removing its card from the minion column, replace it with a new minion card drawn from the prepared deck, and place the new figure on the board on or adjacent to a space marked with ☹️. If there are no more cards in the prepared minion deck, ignore this special rule. ⚔️

Banister: The solid white lines in this map represent a banister railing. Follow all the rules for walls with this exception: Ranged attacks can be performed across these white lines.

77-3

Knuckle threw himself against the gate, which shook as the mob of Outsiders on the other side beat against the double doors in protest. The other stuffies scrambled up Knuckle and attempted to lift the massive, heavy crossbar.

"It's no good," gasped Mr. Stitch. "It's human-sized and too heavy for us!"

"Hold on puny stuffies!" barked Knuckle, and with a great cry and tremendous effort, he lifted his arms and raised them up higher. They all gasped and groaned as they strained with all their might, and slowly, the bar began to wiggle slightly. Knuckle gave another angry shout, and there was a tearing sound as his stitches began to burst. But with this final push the bar lifted out of the iron claws that held it, and the stuffies threw it to the floor with a loud clatter!

They went toppling over as the gate swung open hard, and the Outsiders began to pour in.

"It's the heroes!" called one of the Outsiders.

"We are with you!" called another.

All stuffies gain 1 heart! Starting with the current player, each player can immediately look through the Lost deck and take a Resist Crepitus card (if there are any available). Place the card with your stuffy as if you had acquired it through giving an item.

If there are no minions in play, you can leave this location at the end of any player's turn, by going to page 79, section 79-1.



Pass the group task found at 1👁️.



First Surge: Go to section 77-2

Additional Surges: Reveal a sleep card.



The gate was an enormous set of heavy double doors, made of wood and reinforced with a large bar that sat in metal claws. The gate shook from the toys outside that were trying to get in.

"That bar is way too heavy," warned Flops.

"Not with me here it isn't!" Knuckle grunted.

Opening the door requires a red/strength group task, difficulty 25. Only stuffies on or adjacent can contribute to this task.

PASS: Go to section 77-3.



The portrait on the wall was of Crepitus, looking much as you had seen earlier. His expression was one of pride and defiance, and standing next to him was Skreela! Even in a painting her appearance chilled your stuffing, as her piercing gaze seemed to look deep inside of you.

Make a blue resistance skill test, difficulty 4.

PASS: Place a courageous status card on this stuffy.

FAIL: Place a Skreela's Mark status card on this stuffy. ⚔️



The painting that hung on the wall was old and discolored, but it depicted two young men standing arm in arm. One of them had a bright smile and a shock of silvery hair. The other was thinner with black hair and a mischievous smile. You recognized the second one – Crepitus!

Place an angry status card on this stuffy. ⚔️



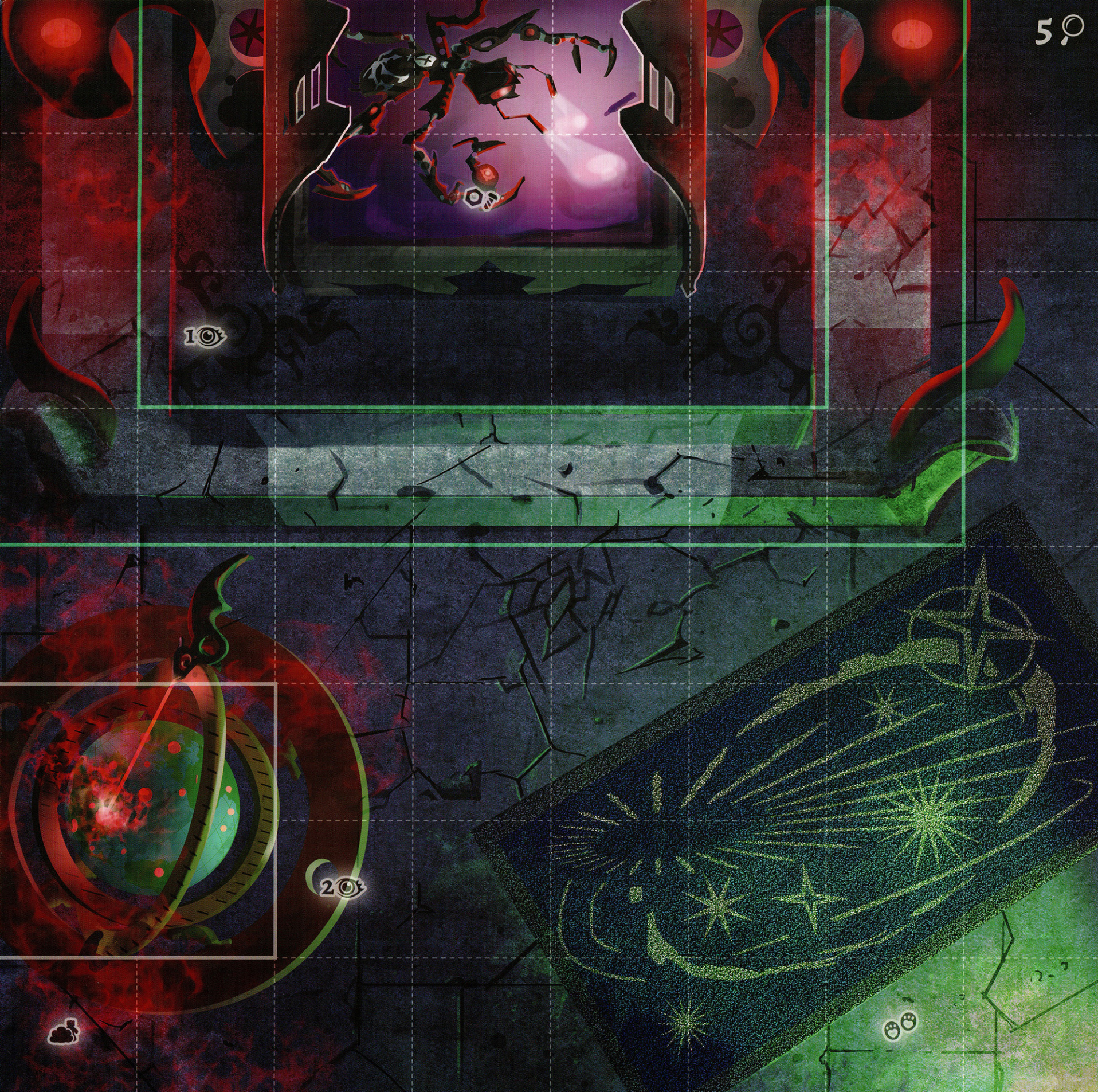
The little girl tossed her head twice before rolling over onto her stomach. The fortress floor buckled, and the stuffies were caught off balance!

Place a worried status card on each stuffy.

6🔍

A vertical strip of a dark blue, textured material, possibly a book cover or endpaper, featuring a repeating pattern of small, light-colored circular perforations. The texture is slightly grainy, and the perforations are evenly spaced along the length of the strip.

All stuffies gain 1 heart.



CREPITUS

81-1

Return all dice, except those stored on cards, to the dice bag. The bookkeeper passes the bookmark to the player on her left and the new bookkeeper reads the following:

Crepitus bolted upright in bed, cucumber slices sliding off his eyes and onto the bedding. Was that an explosion? He immediately began disconnecting the many wires that connected to his head and wound upward to the large, humming machine attached to the bedroom ceiling. If that was an explosion, what had caused it? Was there an accident in the foundry? Those idiot toys had better not have made a mistake! But he had no sooner slipped on his pointy hat and slippers when there was a commotion outside his door, and bam! the door kicked open. There was Knuckle with a broken crawly in his hands. Knuckle tossed the crawly into a nearby wall.

"Ooooooh," said the robotic minion. "It... hurts... so bad."

"Knuckle, my loyal servant," said Crepitus as if it were all perfectly natural. "What can I do for you? Mineral water? Mud mask?"

"You lied!" barked Knuckle. "You said I was the one!"

"Oh ho, come now Knuckle, come now. You know this isn't my fault. I can't control her anymore." And Crepitus turned away to fiddle with a pitcher of water on his nightstand. "Besides," he continued. "Why would you think that a child, even one as hideous as Skreela would choose an ugly, overstuffed, discard like yourself?"

Knuckle howled at his master's cruelty, and Crepitus turned, a grin stretched wide across his face. "Oh, you don't care for the insults?" Crepitus asked in mock shock. "Well I don't like disloyalty!" And with that his hands ignited with emerald flames!

Reveal a sleep card.

SETUP

If Knuckle has not been defeated, place him on the space marked with . Each player places her stuffy figure adjacent to the space marked with .

Retrieve the Crepitus boss card from the discovery stack.

Generate a boss encounter of Crepitus. (Knuckle counts as a stuffy in play for determining how many dark stuffing tokens to place on Crepitus)

SPECIAL RULES

Defeat Crepitus: When Crepitus has been defeated, go to section 81-3.

Collapsed Stuff: Any time Knuckle, or any other stuffy becomes collapsed, go to section 81-2.

81-2

You screamed as your friend hit the floor. Crepitus bent over and snatched them off the ground, and holding them to his nose, took in a deep breath.

"Ah," the dark lord sighed. "So much residual love. You stink of it." And he opened his mouth and inhaled, and he seemed to grow even stronger!

Add 1 dark stuffing to Crepitus.

81-3

Crepitus staggered back, and collapsed upon the stone floor. He feebly held a hand up before him as if in self-defense.

"Please!" he cried. "No more! This isn't what I wanted. I'll explain everything."

"You're right about that," snarled Lionel. But suddenly golden motes of light began to play around the stuffies, and each of them began to glow.

"Oh no!" Mr. Stitch cried. "Our little girl, she's.... waking up!" And they were back in her bedroom, Crepitus' chambers now an impossible distance away. The little girl gave a yawn and a stretch, and the stuffies scrambled back into their positions on the bed.

Theadora made a mad gesture to the others, and pointed down at her gear – they had forgotten to disarm! But the little girl opened her eyes, and with that, the stuffies collapsed.

Morning had come.

If the Waking card has been revealed, go to page 101 section 101-2. Otherwise go to section 101-1.



Defeat Crepitus. When he is defeated, go to section 81-3.



Surge: Reveal a sleep card.



You stared up at the large machine that hummed above the bed.

"It's a strange device," you call to the others, "but I think it's some kind of dream machine." You wondered why would anyone want such a thing, and make a note to discuss it when you return home.

Remove a black die from the threat track, and discard it. Then move all dice from the discard pool back to the bag. 



The globe was a beautiful and ornate piece of art, and you noticed it had a mechanical arm that held a spyglass over it. You quickly scaled one of the legs that supported the globe, and creeping along the frame, peered into the glass. You gasped as some strange form of magic transformed the globe, and clouds and night birds flew past your vision as the spyglass zoomed downward, and then you were looking not at the globe, but at a neighborhood that sat in the still of early morning, and you recognized the house you were staring at. There was Mommy's car in the driveway. The door to the shed in the backyard hung open where Daddy had forgotten to close it the evening prior.

You gasped and dropped down to the floor, horrified by this grotesque invasion of privacy.

Place an angry status card on this stuffy. 



The little girl whimpered and her eyelids fluttered.

Choose 2 crawly cards, add them to the minion column, and add their figures to the map on or adjacent to the . Do not add a crawly if there are already the same number or more minions than stuffies in play.

101-1

The bookkeeper reads the following:

The stuffies had no time to celebrate triumphing over Crepitus. His parting words hung over them. He had almost seemed relieved to have been defeated. But the little girl was awake, and so there was no time for congratulations or serious discussion. The girl had been confused at first, when she woke up and found her stuffies dressed up with toy weapons.

"She's not supposed to play with my toys," she whispered to no one.

But breakfast came and went, and it was off to the doctor's office. The little girl didn't really take her stuffies outside those days, but such was her fear of the doctor, that Theadora went along with her. Dr. Patel was a friendly woman, and the girl would probably have enjoyed the visit if the possibility of a shot wasn't looming over the whole affair. There was a shot, and of course it barely hurt at all, and once it was over the little girl felt a great burden lifted from her heart. She felt so relieved in fact, that when it was time to leave, she forgot about Theadora, and ran ahead to the waiting room.

Mommy picked the teddy bear up, and as she walked out with Dr. Patel, Theadora overheard their hushed conversation.

"Her grades are great," whispered Mommy. "But I'm worried that she doesn't have any friends. Well, except for Sheila," she said, using her fingers to make air quotes.

"Sheila?" asked the doctor.

"Her imaginary friend. She hasn't really mentioned her lately, but then last week I heard her muttering about Sheila not playing nice."

"Oh goodness!" said Dr. Patel, placing a hand on Mommy's arm. "There's nothing wrong with a child her age still having an imaginary friend. She's just exercising her imagination. I'd be far more worried if she wasn't playing so creatively. As for having real friends, well, she just needs some time."

"I hope so," whispered Mommy.

101-2

The bookkeeper reads the following:

The stuffies had no time to celebrate triumphing over Crepitus. His parting words hung over them. He had almost seemed relieved to have been defeated. But the little girl was awake, and so there was no time for congratulations or serious discussion. The girl had been confused at first, when she woke up and found her stuffies dressed up with toy weapons.

"She's not supposed to play with my toys," she whispered angrily to no one.

But breakfast came and went, and it was off to the doctor's office. The little girl didn't really take her stuffies outside those days, but such was her fear of the doctor, that Theadora went along with her. Dr. Patel was a friendly woman, but the little girl was tired and cranky, and did little more than stare sullenly at the floor. There was a shot, and of course it barely hurt at all, but the little girl sobbed uncontrollably.

"Someone didn't sleep very well last night," said Mommy with an embarrassed grin.

When it was time to leave, the little girl marched off angrily to the waiting room, and accidentally left Theadora behind.

Mommy picked the teddy bear up, and as she walked out with Dr. Patel, Theadora overheard their hushed conversation.

"Her grades are great," whispered Mommy.

"But I'm worried that she doesn't have any friends. Well, except for Sheila," she said, using her fingers to make air quotes.

"Sheila?" asked the doctor.

"Her imaginary friend. She hasn't really mentioned her lately, but then last week I heard her muttering about Sheila not playing nice."

"Oh goodness!" said Dr. Patel, placing a hand on Mommy's arm. "There's nothing wrong with a child her age still having an imaginary friend. She's just exercising her imagination. I'd be far more worried if she wasn't playing so creatively. As for having real friends, well, she just needs some time."

"I hope so," whispered Mommy.

TALKING POINTS

Fear warns us of danger, but it can also hold us back. Let your fear guide you, but never control you.

Have you ever missed out on something fun because you were afraid to try?

Talking about our fears can help us overcome them. What's one thing that you're afraid of?



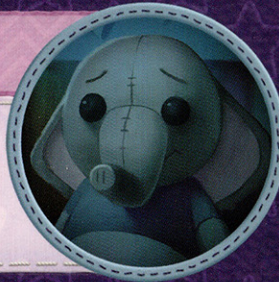


THEADORA

Theadora (or Thea) is special because she does so much to ease her little girl's fears at night. The girl has selected Thea to be the one she snuggles when she slumbers, which is a terrific honor that Thea does not take for granted.

LUMPY

Lumpy listens to the little girl when she is blue. He is an excellent listener and the girl often whispers secrets into his elephant ears. Some might find that stressful, but Lumpy believes that when you speak about your fears, they have less power over you.



FLOPS

When the little girl is feeling silly and playful, she turns to Flops. The bunny's ears are so long and flouncy that a toss of them can send the girl into fits of giggles. Flops is also quick to laugh, and seeks to find humor in every situation.



LIONEL

The little girl has no idea how she acquired Lionel, but she loves him for his bravery and fierce determination. He is everything she wishes she was in the face of fear. When others get scared, Lionel relishes the chance to show his grit.



STITCH

Stitch is an heirloomer, a handmade sock doll passed down a couple generations. In the little girl's eyes, Stitch is a lot like her grandpa – kind, wise, and able to grouch while giving you a wink at the same time.



PIGGLE

Piggle is an energetic piggy full of enthusiasm. In the little girl's mind, Piggle is youthful and optimistic, eager to belong to something special. Trapped in the Fall, Piggle grew frustrated with the Lost. When the little girl's stuffies came along, Piggle knew they were her chance to make a difference.



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