House of Usher: Descent into Madness

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* Both humans and the house should read this!

Materials:
- Game boards
- Scenario cards
- Dice
- Character cards
- Game pieces (to move across the board)

Setup:
- 2 - 4 people to play
- Humans have one collective game piece
- House (game master(s)) has the scenario cards and dice
- Each human picks which character they want to be (Roderick Usher, Madeline Usher, or the Traveler (Narrator in the story))

Characters:
- Roderick Usher
  - 6 Intelligence (INT)
  - 4 Arcane (ARC)
  - 3 Dexterity (DEX)
- Madeline Usher
  - 3 Intelligence (INT)
  - 6 Arcane (ARC)
  - 4 Dexterity (DEX)
- The Traveler
  - 3 Intelligence (INT)
  - 4 Arcane (ARC)
  - 6 Dexterity (DEX)

Objective: The humans must collect items throughout each board to get the chance to escape. After the items are found it is up to the players' decisions to see which path they must take to escape the House of Usher.

Rules

- **NOTE:** Each player has 10 points of sanity (SAN) and if you reach 0, you lose and are stuck in the house forever.

- Humans pick a space on the board to start.
- Wait for the house (game master) to give you a scenario for you to choose. Once the scenario has been read aloud, players get to choose which option they want to go with.
- Each option requires a specific number of stats, so choose carefully.
- After you choose an option, the house will tell you if it was a success or a failure.
- The goal is to collect the items necessary to move to the next room.
- Once the players are able to trigger the scenario to move on from the normal board, they will then move on to the blood moon board, which is necessary to have a chance to escape:
  - **Normal board**
    - There are 2 necessary items which are the key from the study and the acid from the brewery. Once you get those items you can move to the cellar and after that you move onto the blood moon board.
  - **Blood moon board**
    - There are 3 necessary items to collect which are the enchanted dagger hilt, the enchanted dagger blade and the spellbook. Once you collect those items, you have a chance to escape by going through the front door.
- COMBAT MECHANICS!
  - Combat scenarios involve 1 enemy. Their health will scale using a flat multiplier depending on the number of alive human players. Each character has their own abilities. At the start of combat, all of the humans go, then the monster goes.
  - Human turn:
    - Attacking: Each human uses a different stat to attack: Traveller uses DEX, Roderick uses INT, and Madeline uses ARC. To attack, they roll a d20. They add their main stat to this number and do that much damage to the enemy. The House is responsible for keeping track of the enemy's health.
    - Dodging: When a human or monster is attacked, they must roll a d6. If they roll at most a 2, They take a quarter of the damage from the attack, rounded up.
    - Human abilities: Each character has a special ability they can during a fight, which lasts for the entire fight:
      - Traveler: The enemy must roll a 1 to dodge, instead of at most a 2. Can be used once per fight.
      - Roderick: Choose 1 person to affect: next instance of damage is nullified. Can be used twice per fight.
      - Madeline: Choose 1 person to affect: heal for 20 hp. Can be used three times per fight.
    - Health: each character has 100 health. If they reach 0 Health, they die and can no longer play.
  - Monster turn: After the humans go, the monster goes
    - Attacking: At the beginning of the monster's turn, the house chooses a human to attack. They deal damage based on the enemy type. This attack can be dodged.

- ■ Special attack: once per battle, the house can choose to use a special attack, which differs based on the monster.

Winning Conditions
- ● If you are a human: If you escape the house at the end of the game, you win.
- ● If you don't end up escaping: The house wins at the end of the game.

<u>Design Statement</u>

1. Our game, "House of Usher: Descent into Madness," was inspired by the game Dungeons and Dragons. he use of stats like Dexterity, Intelligence, and Arcane, along with dice rolls to determine outcomes of encounters and combat, closely mirrors traditional RPG mechanics. The sanity mechanic introduces a psychological element, where characters risk losing their minds if they encounter too much horror, adding a unique layer of tension. Instead of traditional combat-focused gameplay, our game emphasizes item collection and escape, with a narrative-driven progression across two game boards (the normal board and the blood moon board). The shift away from pure combat to exploration is the twist that makes our game different from D&D.

2. The design of "House of Usher: Descent into Madness" was substantially modified by our own experiences as playtesters. First, we established the fundamental mechanics by incorporating a narrative-driven, psychological twist while still referencing classic RPG components. We soon realized that there were a number of things we might have done better when we played our own game, such as improving the fighting mechanics and streamlining the item gathering procedure. In order to improve gameplay and clarify objectives, we implemented special character skills and modified the game's progression based on input from our play sessions. We were able to directly experience the dynamics of the game through this self-testing, which made sure that the finished product successfully balanced atmosphere, storyline, and strategy.

3. Something that was challenging was having a solid idea on the combat system. Some people wanted it to be more intricate, while others felt it should be simplified for the purpose of the people playing. If the system is too hard to understand, players will be less inclined to use it. We eventually came to a compromise on how the combat mechanics should work.

4. We overcame this challenge by looking at and experimenting with the combat systems from other TTRPG games, like Dungeons & Dragons. We tested them and saw what we liked and what could be cut for the sake of simplicity. We liked the idea of the saving throw to add depth and tension to a fight, but simplified it by making it a dodge that relied on a d6 instead of a d20 and a stat. We also didn't want players to get confused by a bloat of stats, so we only included the core 3 (DEX, INT, and ARC), health, and sanity.

This provided a nice nuance to the gameplay without having players spend hours poring over the rulebook.