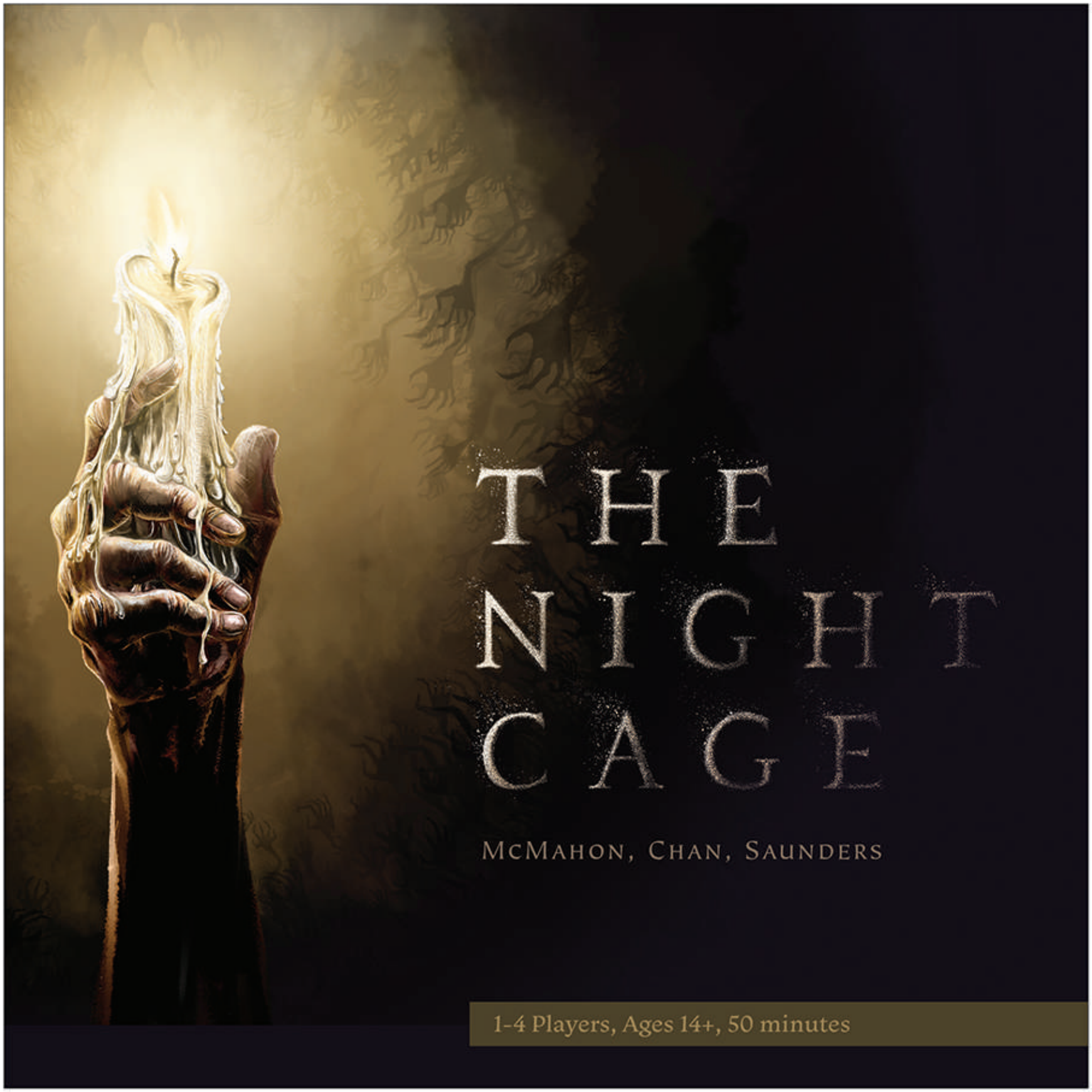

THE
NIGHT
CAGE
McMahon, Chan, Saunders
1-4 Players, Ages 14+, 50 minutes

You awake in the dark.

Your body cold.

Your mind blank.

You have nothing

but your fear,

your candle,

and a question...

How long will your light last?



OVERVIEW

You awake to discover that you and several others are imprisoned within a pitch-black labyrinth. The rough-hewn, stone passages provide barely enough room to crawl through and the walls claw at your skin as you pass. Equipped with nothing but dim candles, you must work together to explore the maze and escape. Distressingly, the weak candlelight only illuminates your immediate surroundings. Worse still, you're beginning to suspect something else is moving in the suffocating darkness - just beyond the flickers of your candle. And it despises the light.

The Night Cage is a cooperative, tile placement game that traps 1 to 4 lost souls within an otherworldly labyrinth of eternal darkness. Each prisoner has nothing but a candle to aid them in their escape. But its weak light can only illuminate the passages directly adjacent to them. As players move, new pathways are revealed while old ones disappear, consumed in the darkness forever. Every move will require thoughtful consideration and collective strategy to keep your candles burning long enough to find the way out.

OBJECT

To **WIN**, each Prisoner must first collect a Key. That accomplished, the group must find and make their way to a single Gate. Only when assembled there, together, can the Gate be unlocked by turning the keys in unison, escaping **The Night Cage**.

The Prisoners **LOSE** if:

- All 4 Gate Tiles have been lost.
- The Prisoners cannot each collect a Key.
- The Prisoners cannot all bring their Keys to a Gate before the darkness isolates them.

CONTENTS



Game board



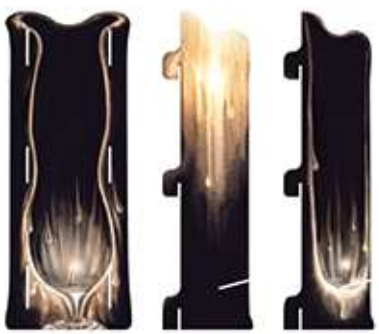
4 Player Status cards

80 Labyrinth Tiles

4 Start tiles | *7 Key tiles* | *4 Gate tiles* | *12 Wax Eater tiles*



10 Straight Passages | *30 "T" Passages* | *12 4-way Passages* | *Pits are printed on the reverse of every tile*



Tile Holder (4 pieces)





12 Nerve tokens



4 Prisoner tokens



7 Keys

SET UP







NUMBER OF PLAYERS:

Set Up will vary by player count. For all player counts, players choose a color and take the **Player Status card** and candle-shaped **Prisoner token** of that color. Each player also takes one **Nerve token** and a **Starting tile** per Prisoner.



1 Player Games:
Set up four Prisoners on the board. Arrange their Player Status cards in the order you will use for their turns. Use the 6x6 side of Game Board. Remove 2 Keys from the pool of tiles and place them in the box. Your tile count should contain **6 Keys** and **12 Wax Eaters**.

2 Player Games:
Each player controls two Prisoners, taking a full set of materials for each Prisoner.
Use the 6x6 side of Game Board. Remove 2 Keys from the pool of tiles and place them in the box. Your tile count should contain **6 Keys** and **12 Wax Eaters**.

3 Player Games:
Each player controls their own Prisoner. In addition, a 4th Prisoner is set up, which players will take turns controlling, starting with the owner of the game and thereafter proceeding clockwise around the table. Set up the 4th player with a full set of materials. Use the 6x6 side of Game Board. Remove 2 Keys from the pool of tiles and place them in the box. Your tile count should contain **6 Keys** and **12 Wax Eaters**.

4 Player Games:
Each player controls one Prisoner. Use the 6x6 side of Game Board. Remove 2 Keys from the pool of tiles and place them in the box. Your tile count should contain **6 Keys** and **12 Wax Eaters**.

Assemble the Tile Holder

a. Insert the candle sides into the slots on the candle back, so that the 'lit' side of each piece faces outwards, with the darker images forming the inside.
b. Then slot the floor of the candle into the slots on the sides as shown.









SET UP

- Place the Game board in the center of the table
- Place a number of Key tokens, equal to the number of Key tiles, into the reserve on the corner of the board.
- Place aside a number of Passageway tiles (randomly selected from straight, T and four-ways) equal to 2x the number of players. Stack them face down (with the Pit side facing up) and shuffle them.
- Place all the remaining tiles face down in a pile (with the Pit side facing up) and shuffle them thoroughly. Then, stack them at random into the Tile Holder, keeping them face down. When the all the tiles have been placed into the holder, add the stack of Passageways you set aside on top. Then place the Tile Holder near the board, in easy reach of all players.
The tiles in the holder are called the Draw Stack. They represent the remaining candlelight and any hope of escape. Conserve their use. When all the tiles have been drawn, you can no longer illuminate new passages (See Final Flickers).
- The owner, or host, of the game will be the first player and play will proceed clockwise throughout the game.

Set Up for 4 Players



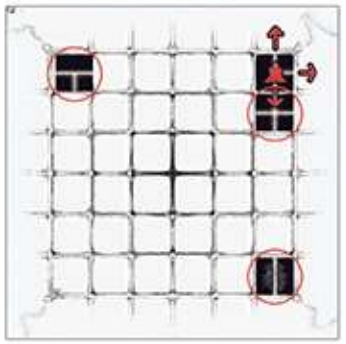
Filled Tile Holder

Extra Nerve tokens

A CAGE WITHOUT BARS

The edges of the board wrap around to their opposite side, in an infinite loop of impenetrable darkness. Prisoners can freely travel from edge to edge. When you arrive at an edge, illuminate any relevant tiles on the opposite side as well, as shown in the example below. You are never far from the other Prisoners, or the dangers they may discover. Likewise, monsters are not limited by the edge of the board and may attack along connected passages from one side to the other.

The board wraps around and repeats endlessly.



On the corner of the board, If RED moves to the Right or Up, their move wraps to the other side of the board.

Prisoner Starting Positions:

On each player's first turn, they will do the following:

1. Choose any unoccupied spot on the board (Fig. 1).
2. Place their Starting tile on that spot and orient it as desired (Fig. 2).
3. Place their Prisoner token on the Start tile (Fig. 3).
4. Then, one at a time, draw a tile from the Tile Holder and examine it. Choose a space that your Starting tile exits onto and place the tile so the passages connect, otherwise orienting it as you like. Do this for each open space that your Starting tile exits onto (Fig. 4).

Once all players, in turn, have completed these actions, the game may begin.

Fig 1. RED chooses a spot on the board.

Fig 2. RED places and orients their Start tile as desired.

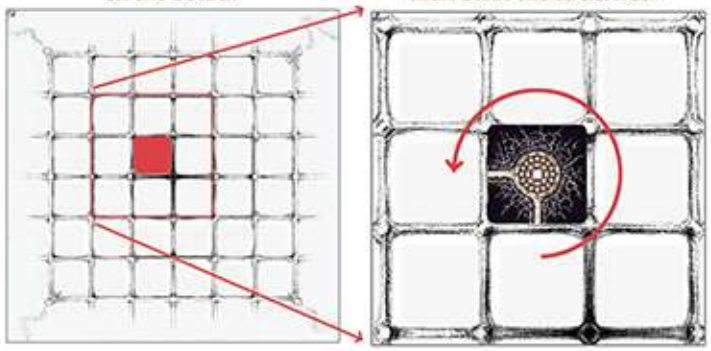


Fig 3. RED places their Prisoner token.

Fig 4. RED "Illuminates" the Passages. Drawing and placing tiles one at a time.

FAQ on Starting Positions:

Can I connect my Starting tile to another player's corridor(s)?

Yes, you can place your Start tile in any unoccupied space. Doing so, and staying closer to other players, can reduce the number of tiles drawn. On the other hand, staying close together increases the chance of Monsters striking more than one player. It is a delicate balance.

Can I place my Start tile next to a dead end?

You may. It forms an impassable wall. And, even if the light of the player in that passage moves away, the light of your candle against the dead end wall will keep the tile in place. This is true of any tile you place during the game.

Can I start completely dead-ended?

Yes, though it will likely be a disadvantage. You will be unable to move from this spot and will fall through a Pit on your first turn (see Pits).

LIGHT & DARKNESS

A player's candle can only **illuminate** connected **Passages** in a one-space radius around your current location (Fig. 1). Diagonal spaces are not illuminated. When you Move, the radius of your candlelight moves with you, revealing new Passages. Any tile passing too far outside of your candlelight is lost to Darkness and discarded forever (Fig. 5). This means, if you retraced your steps, the pathway would be changed *completely*, making the labyrinth an ever-changing and distinctly unnatural place.

Adjacent tiles not connected to you by a Passage should also be discarded. However, adjacent tiles that are blocking a Passage remain, since you can still see the wall they create (Fig. 2A).

Fig 1. BLUE's candle illuminates the board in a 1 space radius. No diagonals.

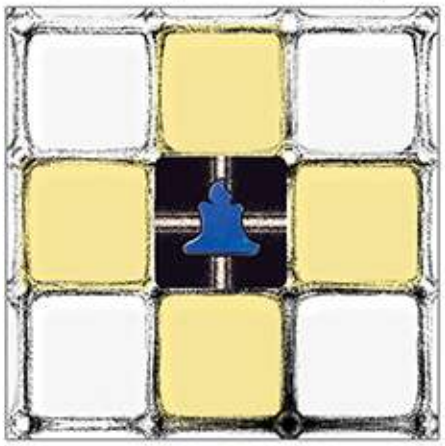


Fig 2. BLUE draws and places tiles in all empty illuminated spaces.

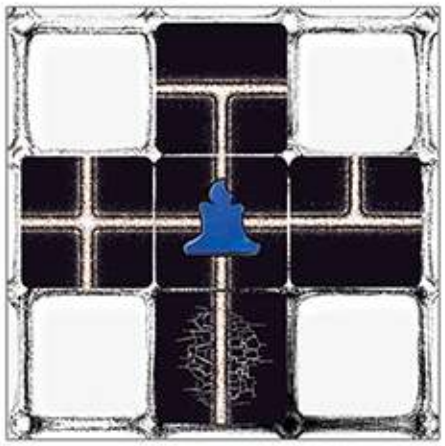


Fig 2A. Since this tile was placed by another player. BLUE only needs to draw and place three other tiles. If the other player moves away, BLUE ontinues illuminating the dead end wall, so the tile would remain.

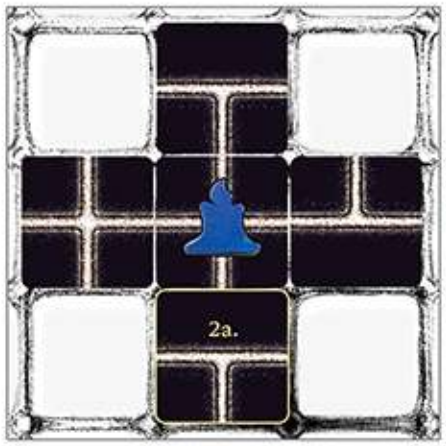


Fig 3. BLUE MOVES and Illuminates two new Passages.

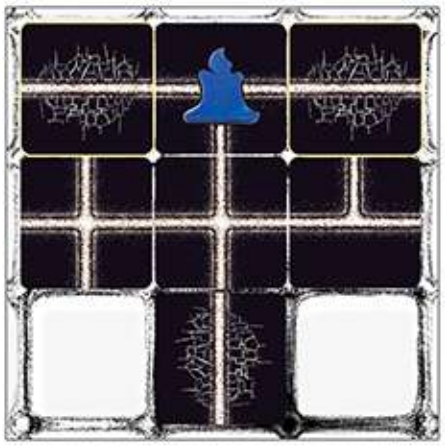


Fig 4. the Passages outside of BLUE's candle are discarded. Gone forever.

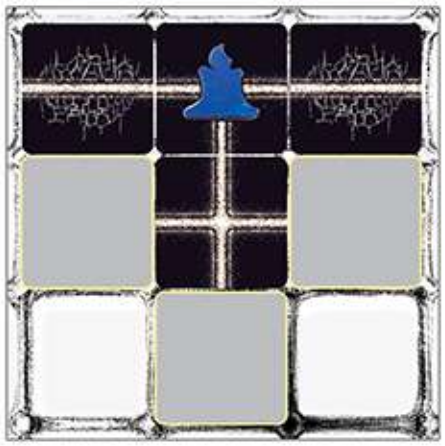
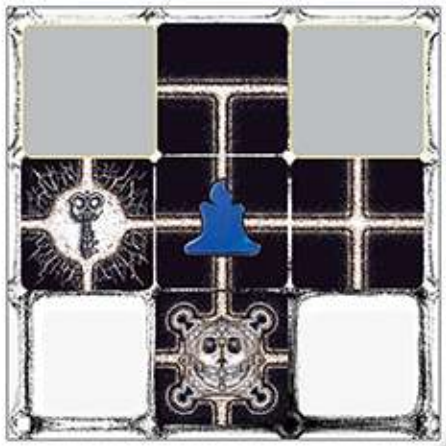


Fig 5. If BLUE backtracked, they would discover NEW Passages.



PLAYING THE GAME

EXPLORING THE MAZE

Starting with the first player and proceeding clockwise, each Prisoner will take a turn. As this is a cooperative game, discussions on strategy are encouraged, but all final decisions fall upon the player controlling the Prisoner.

Each turn you must choose to STAY or MOVE.

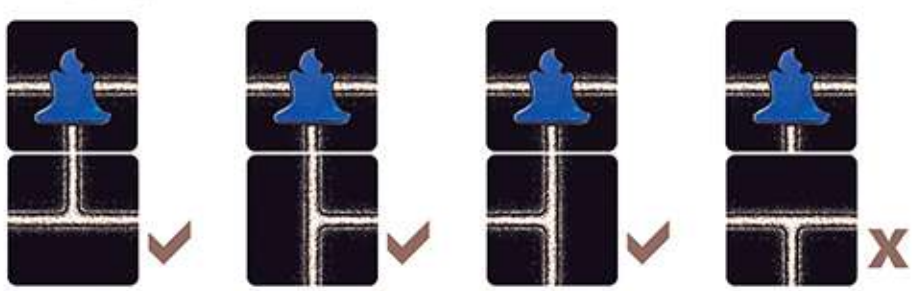
Staying

- You are choosing NOT to move and you remain in the space you currently occupy.
- Gain 1 **Nerve token** (see Nerve)
- Staying still burns wax. Discard 1 tile from the Draw Stack face up, so you can see what was lost to The Darkness, and place it on the Discard board. **IMPORTANT:** If the tile you would discard is a Monster, do not discard it. Instead you MUST replace one of the tiles connected to you with that Monster tile.
- NOTE: Staying does NOT trigger Monsters attacks (see Monsters).
- If you Stay on a Crumbling Tile, you Fall when it crumbles this turn. (see Pits) Falling can trigger Monster attacks.
- Your turn ends and play passes clockwise.

Moving

- You will Move 1 space, along any Passage onto a connected tile.
- NOTE: Passages are too narrow to have more than one Prisoner on the same tile. Gate tiles are the only exception. Any number of Prisoners may occupy a Gate tile at the same time.
- After moving, **Illuminate** the new Passages:
  - Tiles are drawn and placed one at a time. Draw 1 tile from the Draw Stack for each open Passage leading from your new space. Look at the tile and choose which open space to place it in.
    - No tiles are drawn for any Passages already Illuminated by another Prisoner.
  - Tiles may be placed in any orientation as long as the Passageway connects to your current tile (example below).
  - Draw and place until all Passages extending from your current location have been Illuminated.
    - *If there are no more tiles in the Draw Stack, skip Illumination. (See Final Flickers)*
- Remove all tiles no longer Illuminated and place them on the Discard board.
- After Moving, your turn ends and play passes clockwise.

Legal tile orientation



CRUMBLING TILES AND PITS



Starting tiles, Straight Passages and Key tiles all show thin crack lines around them. These are **Crumbling** tiles.

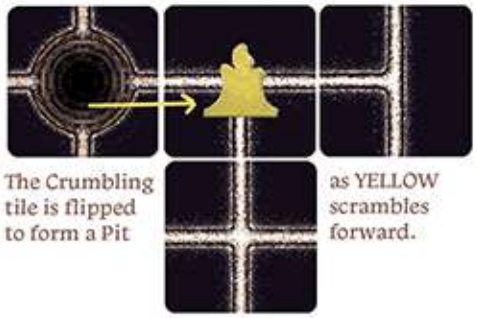
Crumbling tiles collapse into **Pits** the turn AFTER you step on them. When a Pit forms, flip the tile over to reveal the Pit graphic on the back.

- If you decide to **Move**, it collapses as you scramble onto the next tile.
- If you decide to **Stay**, you **Fall** into the Pit this turn. (See Falling)

Pits remain until they are no longer Illuminated, and are then removed as normal.



YELLOW MOVES off a Crumbling tile.



The Crumbling tile is flipped to form a Pit

as YELLOW scrambles forward.



If YELLOW STAYS, the Pit forms beneath them, and they FALL.

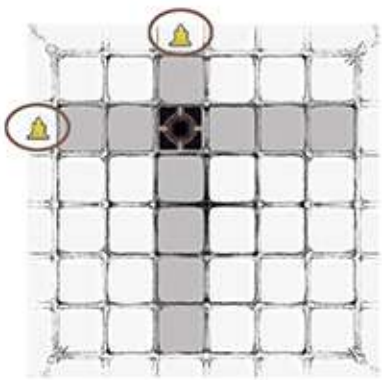
FALLING

Falling into a Pit does *not* mean certain death. On the contrary, at times it is even helpful. In this unnatural place, you will eventually fall right back into the labyrinth. A Prisoner may even choose to jump into an adjacent Pit they are connected to. Whether you leap into the Pit by moving onto a Pit space, or by having one form beneath you when you Stay, falling into a Pit will end your turn.
You will fall through blackness and void, off the board, until the beginning of your next turn.

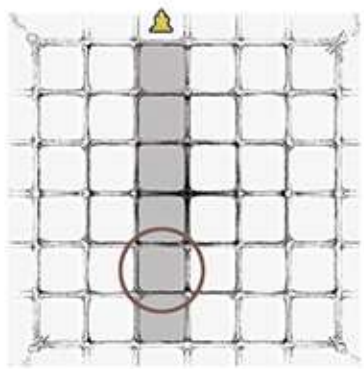
- Place your Prisoner token along the board edge, either by the edge of the row or column you once occupied.
- Discard any tiles no longer Illuminated by your light.
- At the start of your next turn, choose an open, unlit space along the row or column you chose. Draw a tile to land upon and place your Prisoner token on it. Illuminate any unlit connected spaces around you.
- Then, take your turn as normal.

There are, however, **two dangers** that may await you.

- ***If you land on a Monster***, it immediately attacks *before* you illuminate beyond the tile you landed on. (see Monsters) After the attack, move onto an existing adjacent tile or draw a new one. The Monster becomes a Pit.



When you Fall, place the Prisoner along the row or column that intersects the Pit.



Next turn, choose an empty space in the row / column selected to land on. Draw and place a tile to land on.

- If you are falling and there are ***no tiles*** in the Draw Stack left to land on, you fall in Darkness forever and the game ends in a loss.



KEY TILES



Key tiles are drawn and placed like any other tile. Place a Key token from the reserve on the tile when it is revealed. To escape, each Prisoner must recover a Key from one of the Key Tiles. To claim a Key, simply move onto the Key tile and place the Key next to your Player Status card as a free action. If a Key tile is lost to The Darkness for any reason, before the Key is retrieved, the Key itself is lost and removed from the game.

A player can only carry a single Key at a time, as your other hand holds the candle. Therefore, a Prisoner who reveals a Key tile when they already hold a Key is faced with a dilemma. If you walk away and no longer illuminate the space, the Key will be lost. Additionally, Key tiles are Crumbling, so if you walk through the space, the Key will be lost when the tile becomes a Pit next turn. If you block the only Passage to the Key, no one else can get to it.

However, a Prisoner may pass a held Key to another Prisoner if, on one of the Prisoner's turns, they are adjacent to each other by a connected Passage. Passing a Key is a free action.

GATE TILES:



You can only escape The Night Cage through a Gate. Gate tiles are drawn and placed like any other tile. The Gate is the only tile in the game that can be occupied by multiple Prisoners at the same time. To win, all Prisoners must gather on the same Gate, at the same time, with their keys in hand to escape. If all Gates are lost to The Darkness, there can be no escape and you lose the game.

WAX EATERS / MONSTERS:



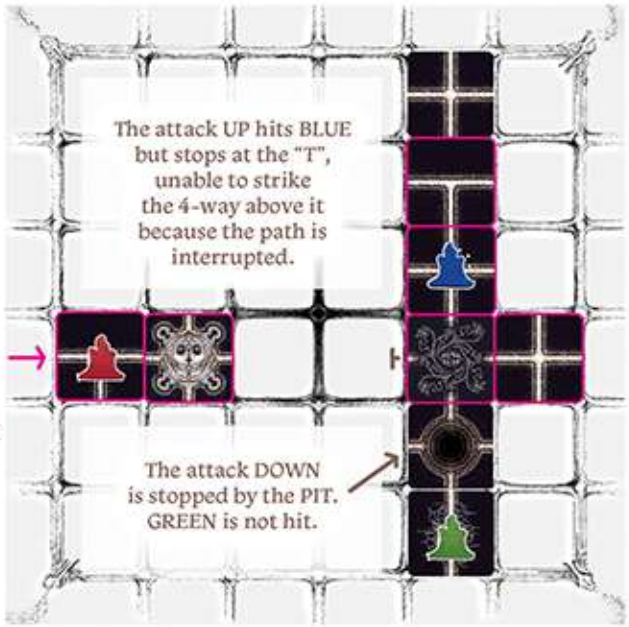
Wax Eaters roam the labyrinth, nightmarish monsters that despise the light and attack any soul that moves in their presence. They are the only monsters inhabiting the core game, but they are to be avoided at all cost.

Wax Eaters are drawn and placed like any other tile. Once placed, Wax Eaters are motion sensitive. They will attack anytime a Prisoner moves along, into, or out of a pathway connected to them in a straight line. Wax Eaters attack in all 4 directions simultaneously, as far as they can reach down an uninterrupted pathway, including around the wrapping edge of the board.

An empty space, without a tile, creates an interruption that the Monster cannot see past. Likewise, Pits interrupt the pathway and therefore a Monster will not trigger, nor strike a Prisoner across an existing Pit.

POTENTIAL range of attack, wrapping around all edges to the opposite side.





WAX EATERS / MONSTERS:

Monsters are triggered to attack when a Prisoner ***moves within their line of sight, by falling onto one***, and/or ***in a chain reaction***, where another Monster's attack hits them.

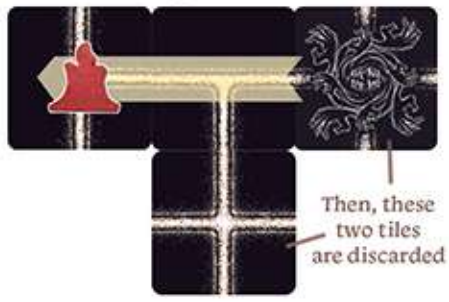
MOVING IN LINE OF SIGHT

While movement in their line of sight triggers an attack, moving out of a Monster's line of attack evades their strike and its penalties.

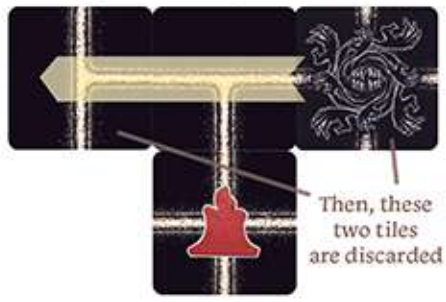
RED has Illuminated a WAX EATER.
Their next move will trigger an attack.



If RED moves down the Passage, the Monster will trigger and hit them.



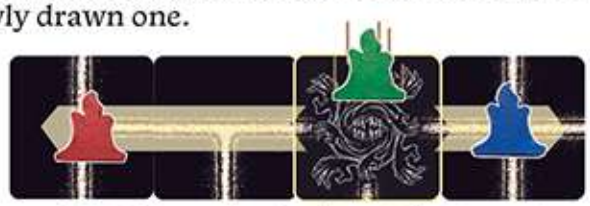
If RED moves to the side, the Monster is triggered, but they avoid the attack.



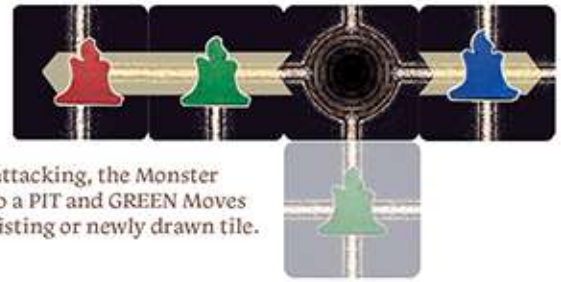
This is true of ***falling through a Crumbling tile*** or ***leaping into a Pit***, as well. It's like taking a side Passage. The Monster will be triggered, but falling avoids the attack.

FALLING ON A MONSTER

This triggers a Monster immediately, attacking the Prisoner who landed on it AND any Prisoner in line of sight. After the attack, the Monster becomes a Pit. The Prisoner scrambles to an adjacent space, either an existing tile, or a newly drawn one.



GREEN places a tile to land upon. It is a Monster!
The Wax Eater attacks, hitting GREEN, BLUE and RED immediately.



After attacking, the Monster turns into a PIT and GREEN Moves onto an existing or newly drawn tile.

CHAIN REACTIONS

If a Wax Eater's attack hits another Monster, that Monster also attacks in a chain reaction. Below, a single move by any Prisoner will trigger all Monsters. Only the first player to Move or Fall can avoid being hit.







WAX EATERS / MONSTERS:

PENALTIES

When a Prisoner is struck by a Wax Eater attack (either at range or by falling on one):

- Discard the top 3 tiles from the Draw Stack face up.
- That Prisoner goes "**LIGHTS OUT**". (see Lights Out)

These penalties are incurred for **each** Prisoner hit by a **given** Monster. Multiple Prisoners can be hit at the same time and/or a Prisoner can be hit by multiple monsters, leading to a massive amount of tiles discarded from the Draw Stack. Such a large loss of tiles risks discarding critical tiles needed to win – or simply devour so much wax that your lights will fail before you can escape.

LIGHTS OUT

When struck by a Wax Eater attack, a Prisoner goes "**LIGHTS OUT**". Flip your Player Status card to its LIGHTS OUT side. With your candle extinguished you can no longer perceive anything beyond the tile you occupy. Remove all tiles that you had been Illuminating (unless still lit by another Prisoner with a lit candle).





Going Lights Out comes with these penalties:

- You are now panicked and compelled to Move every turn. You may not Stay (without spending Nerve. See Nerve).
- Without light, you move forward blind to the dangers ahead. When you move, draw a tile only for the space you move into and discard the tile from the space you left (if no one else Illuminates it). As always, your new tile must be oriented so that it connects to your previous location.

If doing moves you onto a Monster tile, the Monster attacks immediately, hitting you and any other connected Prisoners. You remain LIGHTS OUT, discard 3 tiles – and immediately scramble onto an existing adjacent tile, or a newly drawn one. The Monster becomes a Pit.

RE-LIGHTING

When a "Lights Out" Prisoner becomes adjacent via a connected Passage to a Prisoner with a lit candle, their candle is automatically relit. This may happen on either of the Prisoner's turns. When a Prisoner is relit, the player whose turn it is draws the tiles to fill in newly Illuminated Passages at the end of that turn.

NERVE:



All Prisoners begin the game with a **Nerve** token.
Additional Nerve can be **gained** when a Prisoner chooses to STAY on their turn up to a limit of 2 Nerve.

Nerve can be **spent** to gain temporary advantages, bending the rules to your benefit. Any number of Nerve tokens can be used on a turn.

Spend 1 Nerve to:

- **Move Again.** You may spend as many Nerve as you wish in this way.
- **Stay** when you are Lights Out and otherwise could not. You do NOT gain a Nerve for Staying.
- **Block:** Discard only 2 tiles instead of 3 when hit by a Monster attack.
- **Charge:** You may deliberately move onto a Monster tile, immediately suffering its attack and going Lights Out (therefore not Illuminating unlit spaces adjacent to it). The Monster becomes a Pit and you may Fall or Move onto an existing or newly drawn tile placed adjacent to the Pit.
- **Sustain:** During Final Flickers, skip removing a tile from the board after your turn.

FINAL FLICKERS

No candle burns forever

When the Draw Stack is empty, Prisoners have only the final flickers of their light to make their escape. No new tiles can be added to the board. However, play continues with Prisoners using any tiles still left on the board.

At the end of every Prisoner's turn, after removing tiles that are no longer Illuminated, you must also remove one **additional** tile from anywhere on the board (unless Nerve was spent to prevent this). A Monster can be removed in this way. **Important:** During Final Flickers, the additional tile is removed from the board only after all extra Moves are made through spending Nerve.

The encroaching Darkness may isolate a Prisoner, as they find themselves cut off and unable to bring their Key to the Gate with the others. Or a falling player may end up unable to draw a tile to land upon and keep falling forever. If either of these fates occurs, or you simply lose too many Keys or Gates, the players lose the game, consumed by Eternal Darkness.



ADJUSTING THE DIFFICULTY

The Night Cage is intended to be difficult to win, but you can make simple tweaks to adjust the difficulty for your specific group. To increase the difficulty, try removing a single Key or Gate tile from the recommended number (or both, if you are a glutton for punishment). To make things slightly easier, adding a Key tile or two to the recommended number will make a big difference.



CREDITS

Designed by Chris Chan, Chris McMahon, and Rosswell Saunders / **Additional Development by** Curt Covert
Illustrated by Chris Chan / **Special thanks to** Gavan Brown, Adam Wyse, Matt Tolman, Gil Hova and the NYC Game Center, Linda Baldwin, Avie Wing.





SND 1008
The Night Cage



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THE NIGHT CAGE

TURN PROGRESSION

- *If Falling, Choose a space to land, Draw and place a tile. Place your Prisoner on it. Illuminate all Passages*
- Decide if you will STAY or MOVE
- If on a Cracked tile, it becomes a Pit
  - STAY and Fall: Discard a tile from the Holder, Gain 1 Nerve, Trigger Monster (if any)
  - MOVE, scrambling to next tile (avoiding the Fall) Monster not Triggered across Pit.
- If not on a Cracked tile:
  - STAY, Discard a tile from the Holder, Gain 1 Nerve.
  - MOVE, Trigger Monster (if any)
    - If Move onto a Pit, Fall.
- If Triggered, Monsters Strike in all directions.

  If a Prisoner is hit:
  - LIGHTS OUT.
  - Discard 3 tiles from the Tile Holder.
- Draw, Orient, & Place newly Illuminated tiles.
- Remove all tiles no longer Illuminated & place on Discard board.
- Relight adjacent LIGHTS OUT Prisoner. Current player draws newly Illuminated tiles.
- Option: Spend a Nerve to Move Again. *(Go to STAY or MOVE step)*
- If FINAL FLICKERS: discard a tile from the board.
- Next Player's Turn

