

The Maze of Memory

A Game of Cosmic Prisons and Great Escapes

by
James & Robyn George



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For Robyn, who wanted
to try something deadlier and faster
paced. You've been warned...

Cover and interior art
from the public domain and re-imagined
by James S. George

With thanks to Edgar Rice Burroughs
and Jules Verne, who both
inspired us with tales of a monster-haunted
underworld still filled with hope...

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I. INTRODUCTION

You awaken in darkness and dressed in rags. Who brought you here and for what nefarious purpose? Your memories have been stripped away, leaving only silence and confusion in their place. Can you get them back? And is escape even possible? This is a chance you will have to take, for the alternative is to rot for all eternity in this impossible dungeon...

THE MAZE OF MEMORY is a role-playing game that tries to answer these questions and, unlike many other systems, is designed primarily for one-off, single-session games. Indeed, it is ideal for introducing newcomers to the hobby because there is virtually no preparation on their part, relying mainly on cleverness and problem solving to succeed.

Role-playing, in this system, works something like this:

One player is the JAILER. Before any play can begin, they map out an extensive dungeon complex and stock it with monsters and useful equipment, taking care to keep all of this secret. Everyone else is a PLAYER, each creating their own character and exploring the dungeon, working as a team to survive, recover lost memories, and escape intact...

Throughout the game, the jailer describes what the players see, and the players decide how their characters are going to react. The rules are then consulted and dice rolled to determine the result of critical actions, like mortal combat and the navigation of obstacles, noting that decision-making and problem solving count for more than rules and rolling dice.

These characters are called PRISONERS, having been mysteriously abducted, stripped of their memories, and imprisoned. It is STRONGLY implied that these come from various times in Earth's considerable history.

PLAYING THE GAME

As prisoners explore the dungeon, they will discover various items, some commonplace, like a wooden pole, and others more unique, including armor and assorted weaponry. Some of these will be of alien and/or futuristic design, hinting at a cosmic connection and possibly time travel, although these things are left to the jailer, who should place equipment to be found.

The dungeons are filled with deadly monsters and terrible traps, making survival uncertain. But as prisoners reach specific points in the labyrinth, they can recover a single memory, like being an archer or blacksmith, and regain the powers and abilities needed to survive and ultimately escape their bondage, perhaps by passing through an extra-dimensional doorway, etc.

Finally, the jailer assumes the role of any supporting characters, such as rival prisoners and/or intelligent life forms, which makes role-playing important to success and survival. Forming alliances and negotiating to avoid hostilities, along with devising clever solutions, should be rewarded by the jailer, who should make this more than a combat scenario.

The Maze of Memory is best with 3-5 players, as much of the challenge (and enjoyment) comes from human interaction and problem solving, although combat with enemies certainly helps to liven things up!

NOTE: The dungeons are hostile and prisoners often die. When this happens, players may be allowed a (newly arrived) replacement, who quickly rejoins the others and possibly inherits any useful equipment left behind.

POLYHEDRAL DICE

This system uses differently shaped (polyhedral) dice to generate random outcomes. This preserves a sense of risk and uncertainty, especially in combat and other dire situations, and includes the following:

4-sided die (d4)	10-sided die (d10)
6-sided die (d6)	12-sided die (d12)
8-sided die (d8)	20-sided die (d20)

When the rules say to roll one 10-sided die, this is written as 1d10, noting that 1 is the number of dice to be rolled and 10 the type needed.

MINIATURE FIGURES

While it is possible to play without them, miniature figures, painted to represent prisoners and their enemies, can be used to add spectacle and make position and movement easier. Note that 25/28mm figures are recommended, being easy to find and made to the right scale, where one inch on the tabletop equals 10' in the game, measured with a ruler or by sight.

CAMPAIGNING

While designed for one-off, single-session games, there is no reason it cannot become an ongoing adventure CAMPAIGN as per the APPENDICES.

In a campaign, each new session picks up where the last one left off, with prisoners interacting with the dungeon's various inhabitants and even getting to involve themselves in its politics. Stolen memories are still recovered, although much more slowly, with the acquisition of new skills, like archery or metalworking, replacing prior experience as a means of advancement...

II. HELD CAPTIVE

THE MAZE OF MEMORY is a game of human prisoners snatched from their rightful place in history, stripped of all memories, and left to rot alongside other victims of the same event. It is only through teamwork that they can hope to survive and ultimately escape; but first they must navigate a fantastic dungeon stocked with enemies and artifacts out of time.

While the jailer should have already designed the maze, each player must develop their own prisoner, and this section explains how to do this and make use of the resources available to them...

THE PRISONER

For game purposes, all such prisoners are human (male or female) clad in simple rags and devoid of memories. But they can still fight and attempt any actions available to an able-bodied adult, like navigating obstacles and/or devising clever solutions. With skill and luck, they may find useful artifacts and even recover lost memories as they explore the dungeon.

Furthermore, they move 50' per round (if unarmored) and are assumed to be intelligent and able to understand one another. The latter is mostly a matter of convenience, but could reflect a mysterious translator working behind the scenes towards some unknown end, noting here that prisoners can be allowed to remember their old NAMES or give each other new ones!

BEARING BURDENS

As a rule, prisoners can wear armor and carry up to 20 items of personal equipment small enough to fit in a backpack and/or hang from a belt, subject to common sense and the jailer. This includes shields and weaponry, but never ammunition, which is too light to worry about.

SURVIVAL POINTS

Otherwise, prisoners begin having 10 SURVIVAL POINTS, which indicate both luck and physical endurance. These are lost in combat or trauma and recovered through rest and/or the consumption of nutritious foodstuffs found along the way, perhaps edible fungi or mushrooms in a natural cave, etc.

As a general rule, prisoners are simple and pre-game generation virtually non-existent. But as they explore their surroundings and look for a way out, they may find armor, equipment (like the aforementioned food), and scattered weaponry in their quest for freedom. Furthermore, each encounter brings them closer to recovering lost memories and escaping their terrible prison!