

Enigma

a cooperative narrative role-playing game by Adriano Longoni, Olga Olina and Nils Steinert

All players collaborate to envision the scenario. There are no restrictions. Use any source of inspiration and follow your imagination from there. *Sentences in italics serve as illustrative examples.*

‘Which painting left a lasting impression upon you?’

‘What are you most afraid to lose?’

‘What is your favorite book?’

To create your character, choose one noun, one or more adjectives and one verb to help you imagine who you are in this scenario.

‘I am an ethereal wisp who shifts reality.’

‘I am a mighty undead king who devours dragon flesh to gain immortality.’

‘I am an obedient pawn who does not understand the grand game.’

Additionally, the party collectively receives one token. Use a coin or any kind of chip which features two differently styled sides. Place it with the light side up. This is the central enigma of the narrative.

Cooperate on building the narrative. Whenever uncertainty about the success of any task arises, consult a D20. Any players not tasked decide on the given task’s difficulty, and the result is incorporated into the narrative by the tasked player.

Level 1 – Simple

‘Hit a small target being a skilled archer.’

Level 2 – Demanding

‘Engage warp speed at just the right time.’

Level 3 – Challenging

‘Create an astonishing work of art to last the ages.’

The same task might vary in difficulty for different characters and depending on circumstance. For any task, rolling a 1 is considered a cataclysmic catastrophe, while rolling a 20 is an outstanding success.

Level 1: Roll 5 or higher and evaluate your result depending on the roll.

‘Phew, pretty close evade.’ (Level 1 task, rolled a 7)

Level 2: Roll 10 or higher and evaluate your result depending on the roll.

‘The audience takes in my every word with rapt attention.’ (Level 2 task, rolled an 18)

Level 3: Roll 15 or higher and evaluate your result depending on the roll.

‘I almost achieved true greatness / Got my wings burned’ (Level 3 task, rolled a 14)

If any player fails a monumentally important task, flip the token to the dark side. Something ‘flips’ inside and dread encroaches upon your characters.

‘We can’t go on like this.’

maniacal laughter

‘Pray I don’t alter our agreement further.’

There might be ways to flip the token back to the light side. Make it part of the narrative.

‘Nothing like a stout feast after a long day of adventuring.’

‘Let strength be granted so the world might be mended.’

‘Emergency maintenance complete.’

If every player fails at fulfilling a monumentally important task while the token is already flipped to the dark side, the party’s tale ends.

‘The infernal terrors devour us.’

‘We ascend to a higher consciousness. Petty needs of the body are no longer ours.’

‘My mind to your mind, my thoughts to your thoughts.’