

DRAGON A ROLL

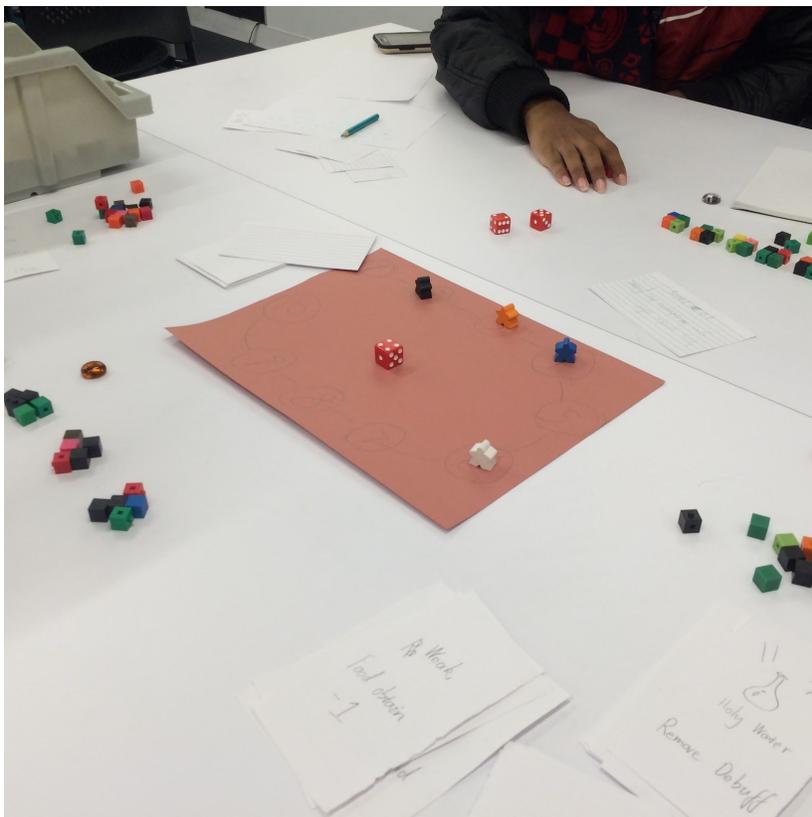
PROCESS STATEMENT

by the Sweet Porridge Group
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The fairy tale our game is based on is “Sweet Porridge.” The team concluded that the theme most prevalent in the story was “too much of a good thing is bad.” After consultation with our instructors, they recommended that we play *Pandemic*, *Zombie Dice*, *The Eldritch Horror*, and *Shadows Over Camelot*. The group was able to play *Pandemic*, *Zombie Dice*, and *The Eldritch Horror*. In *Pandemic*, we enjoyed the feeling that we were racing against the clock in defeating a constantly growing threat. *The Eldritch Horror* was a bit too complicated for our tastes.

The first few ideas we came up with all involved moving around a board in some manner. We played around with the idea of player resources, and how having too much of a resource could be detrimental to a player. Ideas we came up with included a purely card based game themed around building a Narcos empire while staying under the radar, and a “co-opetitive” game based around unique characters trying to make it to the end of a journey together. This idea was inspired primarily by *Pandemic*.

Yet another idea we were presented with was a dice-based game in which the player with the highest resource points rolled the fewest dice to advance up a board. We decided to play around more with that idea since we felt the positive-feedback loop in play was thematically appropriate. Themed around surviving a food crisis in New York city, the game incorporated humorous event cards to determine the amount of resource withdrawn per turn. Some of the more interesting event cards involved creating a source of income, e.g. finding a job.



This created rather hilarious situations in which players would actively resent getting jobs.

Ultimately though we found this system lacking depth, boiling down to a simple game about rolling dice and hoping for lucky results.

Incorporating space to facilitate player strategy seemed to diminish the importance of the dice rolls. Furthermore, the resource gathering management which we found interesting about the system didn't really seem like

a good thing at any point during play-tests. So our idea of an excess of good things becoming bad did not manifest. Even the event cards seemed too random to be able to provide space for deeper strategization.

We went back to the drawing board and looked at the games our instructors recommended. *Zombie Dice* stood out as a simple, but elegant game that, while highly dependent on dice rolls, players had more agency because they could choose whether or not to push their luck--an element that was absent from the first game. Inspired by *Zombie Dice*, the first iteration of this new game was tentatively titled "Cerberus Slayers," a class-based dice game where a band of adventurers attempted to slay a three-headed beast. In this game, the "thing" in "too much of a good thing" was the damage, which was based on dice rolls--good if you get unique rolls, bad if you push your luck.

The game featured several different player classes: Knight, Priest, Archer, Tank, Warlock, Berserker, and Assassin. Each player class had special abilities. Players had to roll a regular D-6 to determine the amount of damage they could inflict on the Cerberus. Rolling two of a kind would result in self-damage equal to the total value of the dice roll. The Cerberus--which we were already calling the Dragon--had a chance to do damage to the players after every player turn. To determine how much damage it would deal, players would have to roll the Dragon Dice. If three heads were still alive, only one die would be rolled. Two heads would allow for two dice to be rolled, and three heads would allow for three rolls. The total damage would then be equal to the total value of the rolls. We felt that this initial Dragon Damage system was overpowered, and that players would die very early in the game. The second iteration involved drastic revisions to the Dragon's damage system. In this second system, the Dragon's damage would increase based on dice rolls at the end of every round (every player has finished their turn). With this version, we felt that it was far too easy to kill the dragon. On further playtesting, it became clear that the Warlock's special ability could be used to grief other players. We felt this was not conducive towards the co-operative feel we wanted players to have, so we decided to remove the Warlock from the game. More importantly, we began to understand that the way in which dice factored into determining the Dragon's damage, which was actually our core gameplay mechanic, was almost too random to strategize around. The values could arbitrarily swing between extremes.. And since player attacks were already heavily dependent on random die rolls, we needed to rework Dragon Damage to make it more predictable while still scaling exponentially. This ultimately led to the creation of the **Dragon Level Up System** - a mechanic whereby the Dragon would do damage equal to its level, with the player rolling a die to determine whether or not the Rage Level would go up. To zero in further on the co-op elements of the game, we decided to cut down the number of classes we created to five. Working with five classes made it easier for us to balance numbers and test out mechanics which encouraged more co-operative play. Though this approach meant losing some interesting class mechanics, it also let us determine which classes were the most fun to play as.

On last week's Playtest Thursday, we tested a new system of dealing damage, which depended on unique die rolls (we were using regular D-6s). Each unique die roll resulted in two damage points to the Dragon. Rolling two of any number would inflict self-damage equal to two damage per die rolled. During this playtest, several issues in our game came to fore. Players who tried it felt that they received too much damage, too often. Since all players could potentially

deal the same amount of damage to the Dragon, they also felt that there was no reason to play cooperatively. “It’s like we’re just sharing a score” was one of the comments that described this lack of incentive for teamwork. Another comment was that there were too many numbers that players had to keep track of. There were the actual numbers carved into the dice, the damage values per die, the Dragon’s health, and the Dragon’s damage to the players. One tester suggested the use of symbols on the dice, rather than numbers, and to perhaps give different sets of dice for different characters. This led to the use of custom dice, which used colors instead of numbers. We created them by sticking colored tape onto the blank colored D-6s.

Pictured: post-Playtest Thursday revisions



A further round of playtesting revealed that the colored tape on the dice was still confusing to players. At that point we decided to replace the colored tape with unique symbols which we felt would be easier for players to understand and less confusing to describe in the rules.

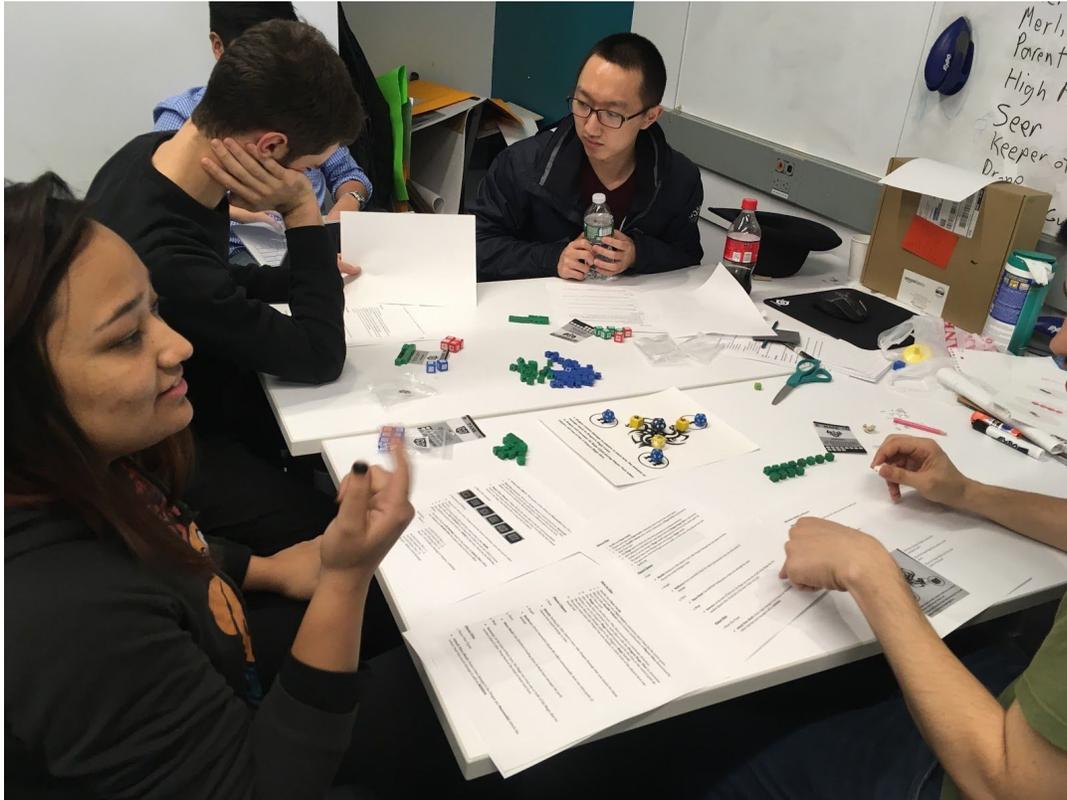
Pictured: unique symbols on player dice



The class formerly known as the Priest was relabeled as the Mage since it fit closer to his new role as a sort of trickster character. This also reduced confusion with the Healer class, which

was renamed the Cleric to sound more gender neutral. The value of armor dice was bumped up to +2 from +1 since we felt that +1 armor wasn't very impactful. For clarity's sake, we reworded the **Dragon Level** system to be the **Dragon Rage** system, since the idea of cutting off a dragon's head clashed with the idea of how more levels are supposed to make a character stronger.

Pictured: the most recent round of playtests



In summary, the final game version we ended up with had four unique classes, each with their own set of dice and special abilities. Each die rolled successfully provided 2 of its corresponding resources--attack, armor or healing, with the Black magic dice taking the characteristics of any dice rolled before it. The Dragon would do damage to each player at the end of their turn based on its current rage level, with the players rolling a special Dragon Rage dice to determine whether or not the rage level would go up. The combination of each character's unique abilities and dice configurations with the ever-present threat of damage from the dragon brought out cooperative styles of play in succeeding playtests.