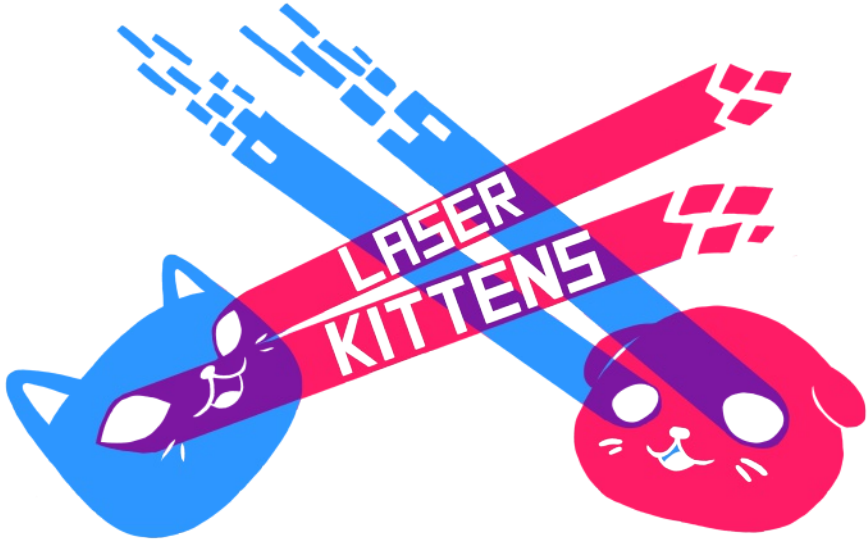


LASER KITTENS

TALES FROM THE KNOLL STREET SCHOOL
FOR WAYWARD KITTENS



by Stentor Danielson
and Cheyenne Wall-Grimes



Tales from the Knoll Street School for
Wayward Kittens

a roleplaying game by Stentor Danielson
and Cheyenne Wall-Grimes
illustrated by Cynthia Lee

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Game development by Stentor Danielson and Cheyenne Wall-Grimes. Art by Cynthia Lee. Edited by Colleen Riley.

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“Magna Scientia Parvīs Fēlibus”

Big Learnings for Tiny Kitties

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I. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Knoll Street School for Wayward Kittens! KSSWK is a foster home for stray and abandoned kittens. The human residents take in litters of tiny kittens from the streets and take care of them until they're big enough to find their Forever Homes.

As a student at KSSWK, you'll learn important lessons from your professors – the adult cats who live at KSSWK. They'll teach you to find spots of sunshine to lay in, how to beg for tasty foods, and how to hide from the vacuum. But the most important skill they'll teach you is how to use your laser. Every cat has a laser, and every laser's power is unique. The humans don't know about lasers, although they sometimes see cats' eyes glowing strangely. Your laser can do a lot of awesome things, but as a tiny kitten, you can't always be sure of it doing what you want. Sometimes your laser will backfire and get you into trouble!

Most litters spend just a month or two at KSSWK, but those are exciting times packed with incredible kitty adventures. Your experiences at KSSWK will shape your life for years to come. As a graduate of KSSWK, you'll join proud alumni who have graduated to be awesome cats around the world.

Collaborative Storytelling

Laser Kittens is a tabletop roleplaying game for three to five players. A typical session lasts two to three hours, but later in the book we'll provide suggestions for playing a multiple-session campaign with the same characters. A successful game of *Laser Kittens* is one you're still laughing about and retelling months later. The only way to “win” *Laser Kittens* is to have a good time.

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Laser Kittens is collaborative storytelling. Each player controls one character, taking on the role of a kitten and deciding what that kitten does. Each player will also have the opportunity to be the Class Captain, controlling everything else in the world around the kitten characters – the humans, the professor cats, the weather, and so forth. When playing your character, you'll want to stay true to their personality and motivations. You'll also want to think about what would make an interesting and fun story. Sometimes, it's better for the story for your character to mess up or make bad choices! In *Laser Kittens*, there's no one person who plans out the adventure for everyone else. Instead, the game is built to bring together everyone's creativity to see what happens!

We'll get to the specifics of how to play in a moment. But first, here are some general principles to keep in mind when playing *Laser Kittens*:

- ❖ **“Yes, And”:** All of the players contribute ideas. It interrupts the story, and makes it harder for people to feel comfortable giving their input, if one player criticizes or tries to deny another player's idea. When other players act, you should say “yes, and” to their idea. That is, you should accept their idea (“yes”), and then build on it with your own ideas (“and”). There is no single person running the game so it's up to all of the players to cooperate.
- ❖ **It's One Big World, and One Small Me:** Some roleplaying games are about mighty heroes who battle gods and save the universe. *Laser Kittens* is not like that. For a tiny kitten, simply going downstairs can be a major adventure. The vacuum is a huge, scary monster. If the humans leave the house to go shopping, they might be Gone Forever and Never Come Back! When playing *Laser Kittens*, remember that small and mundane concerns in our human world are giant issues in the kittens' world. At the same time, tiny kittens might accidentally have big impacts on the world that they don't even realize. Imagine what would happen if a kitten got hold of the nuclear launch codes, or messed with the humans' contraband stash.

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- ❖ **What Is This Thing?:** Your kittens are only a few weeks old. There is so much about this world that they don't know. While the professors may be jaded and cynical about the world, kittens know very little about even the most basic things. And what's more, they may not even realize what they don't know. Explore everything, and be quick to jump to ridiculous or dangerous conclusions about the things you discover.
- ❖ **How Could This Get Us in Trouble? How Could it Get Us Out?:** As a tiny kitten, you don't know how the world works. As a player, when you're trying to succeed at your immediate goals, ask yourself how – through ignorance, over-enthusiasm, or terrible coincidence – this could create even bigger trouble and complications for everyone. When you mess up, ask yourself how – again, through ignorance, over-enthusiasm, or terrible coincidence – your screw-up could actually turn out to save everyone in the end.
- ❖ **Anything Can Happen:** Want to summon emus to ride into battle? Want to be transported into an alternate dimension through a portal in the cabinet? Want to eat all the food and blow up like a balloon? Anything is possible in the world of kittens, whether or not it fits the assumptions of “reality” that the humans have. Feel free to make your world as zany as you like.
- ❖ **When in Doubt, Watch Cat Videos:** If you haven't spent a lot of time around cats recently, a good way to get into the right frame of mind and get some inspiration is to watch cat videos on the internet. We compiled a playlist of some of our favorites – including some showcasing students from the real KSSWK – at tinyurl.com/KSSWK

Playing the Game

The following chapters give more background on the world of *Laser Kittens* and the mechanics of play. This section is a very brief overview to provide a framework for how the rules fit together.

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Step 1: Set up for the game.

To play *Laser Kittens*, you will need:

- ❖ Two to four of your friends (three to five players total) who want to pretend to be tiny kittens.
- ❖ Some empty space to play, such as a table or a cleared section of floor, where everyone can sit comfortably and easily reach and see the center.
- ❖ This book.
- ❖ A character sheet for each player, plus a house sheet showing KSSWK.
- ❖ A pencil or pen for each player.
- ❖ Two decks of standard poker playing cards. Remove the face cards and jokers and shuffle the remaining cards together into one deck.
- ❖ Optional: Extra copies of the setup sheets.

Step 2: Create your characters and the world.

In this step, you'll fill out your character sheet as well as the house sheet describing KSSWK. To do this, each player gets five cards. They select an item from each list that corresponds with one of the cards in their hand and write it on the appropriate sheet, then discard the card and draw a new one. The things you'll select are:

- ❖ A laser for your kitten. When you choose your laser, put five cards from the deck face-down in the laser zone next to your character sheet without looking at them.
- ❖ A non-player character (NPC). There must be at least one professor NPC and one human NPC chosen between all players.
- ❖ A situation at KSSWK to motivate your characters, or get in the way of their adventures.
- ❖ A class for all of the kittens to be taking (If you have less than five players, turn over cards from the top of the deck to pick additional classes so that you have a full schedule of five classes).

Then, each player decides what grade they have in each class. You get two As, two Bs, and one C.

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Step 3: Create a scene.

The game is made up of scenes. To begin a scene, each player may bid to be Class Captain by stating a premise for the scene (one or two sentences) and placing one of the cards from their hand face-down as a bid. Once all players have bid or chosen not to bid, flip over the bid cards. The highest card wins, and that player becomes Class Captain. When comparing cards, black cards are treated as positive



numbers, and red cards as negative numbers. All players who want their characters to be in the scene (including the Class Captain) should flip over one card in their laser. Each player who bid discards the bid card and draws a new one to replace it.

Step 4: Play the scene.

The Class Captain describes what happens in the world around you. They control NPCs, the physical environment, and so on. Each player who is in the scene describes their own character's actions.

When a player tries to do something that they may or may not succeed at, there is a conflict. To resolve a conflict, the player bids one card from their hand. If the conflict is with another player's character, that player makes a counter-bid from their hand. If the conflict is against an NPC or the environment, the Class Captain draws three cards from the deck and chooses a counter-bid from those cards, discarding the others. Once both bids are chosen, flip them over to see who won. The player with the higher bid narrates how the conflict is resolved. As with Class Captain bids, black cards are positive and red cards are negative. Both bid cards are discarded, and players draw back up to five in their hand.

If a conflict involves the topic of a class the player's character

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has an A in, the player draws two additional cards from the deck and may choose one of those instead of one from their hand. If a conflict involves the topic of a class the player's character has a C in, the player shuffles their hand and sets aside two cards at random before choosing their bid from the remaining cards.

At any time during a scene (but only once per scene), a player may use their laser. To do so, they flip over any remaining face-down cards in their laser, and add them up, treating red cards as negatives. If the total is positive, the laser does something useful, and the player who used it narrates what happens. If the total is zero or negative, the laser backfires, and the Class Captain describes what happens. Be creative and outlandish in describing the effects of lasers!

Step 5: Learn your lessons.

The Class Captain decides when the scene is over. They may wait for the action to conclude, or stop on a cliffhanger. Once the scene is over, the Captain draws a number of cards from the deck equal to the number of players. The Captain then decides which player characters worked toward growing up and becoming more mature and responsible during the scene, and which did not. On the basis of this judgment, the Captain may hand each player one card. The player swaps this card for any card currently in their laser.

Step 6: Play another scene.

Once one scene is resolved, begin the bidding for a new Class Captain. In a four- or five-player game, nobody can be Class Captain more than one scene in a row. In a three-player game, nobody can be Class Captain more than two scenes in a row.

Step 7: Share your epilogue.

When all players agree that the game's story arc is complete, each player gets to narrate a short epilogue. They describe what kind of Forever Home their character found, and how the lessons they learned affected the rest of their lives.

2. THE KNOLL STREET SCHOOL FOR WAYWARD KITTENS

According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), each year animal shelters across the USA take in 3.4 million cats, many of them kittens only a few weeks old. Some are litters born to pet cats whose owners don't want more animals, but many are picked up on the street. They may have been born there, or they may simply be discarded by humans who did not want to take care of them.

Cats give birth to litters of four to six kittens at a time. "Kitten season," the time when the largest number of kittens are born, typically begins in late spring and lasts until late fall.

Domestic cats can survive outdoors, but it's not an ideal habitat for them. It's also not an ideal situation for the rest of the environment, as feral cats can have severe impacts on populations of birds and other prey species. So when people find kittens outside, they often try to find a Forever Home to take them in and keep them as pets. The easiest way to do this is to turn them over to a local animal shelter.

When a kitten comes to an animal shelter, there is a lot of work that needs to be done before they are ready to be adopted by their Forever Home. A cat needs to get a variety of vaccinations as well as treatments for ear mites, worms, and upper respiratory infections. Most cats are also spayed or neutered before being adopted. It is tough to do many of these procedures to very tiny kittens. Usually it is best to wait until they weigh around two pounds to do anything other than treating immediate illnesses. A well-fed kitten will reach that size about two months after they are born.

In the meantime, kittens need lots of care and attention. If they have been living on the street, they may be distrustful of humans.

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They may not be used to getting regular meals, so they eat too much too fast and fight over food when they get fed. They haven't learned to clean themselves or use a litter box, and so they often get food and poop stuck to their fur. It can be a rough life when you're a tiny orphaned kitten!

It's difficult for the shelter to provide all the attention kittens needs, especially at the height of kitten season, due to staffing limitations. Moreover, it's not good to have a large number of kittens all in the same place, as illnesses such as upper respiratory infections can spread quickly. (Kittens can be adorable when they sneeze – “atsoo! atsoo!” – but if they are lethargic and too stuffy to smell their food, they may stop eating.) And at certain times of year, the shelter may simply not have enough space to keep all of the animals that are being brought in.

That's where foster homes like the Knoll Street School for Wayward Kittens come in. Many animal shelters maintain a network of foster families, who take in litters of kittens for a month or two at a time. The foster families take care of the kittens, making sure they get socialized and well fed. They also give any medicine they might need (like antibiotics and eye drops), and bathe the kittens until they are able to clean themselves.

Kittens start out tiny and awkward. They have little tails that stick out straight, their fur is poofy and wild, and they don't quite know how to meow, though they may try really hard! They are clumsy when they walk, and they have trouble climbing things

THE REAL KSSWK

Laser Kittens was inspired by the authors' experiences raising foster kittens for the Western Pennsylvania Humane Society in Pittsburgh, PA. Our home was on Knoll Street at the time, so we called it the Knoll Street School for Wayward Kittens. If you'd like to see some of the kittens we've fostered and keep up with the exploits of the real KSSWK, you can find us on Facebook at facebook.com/knollstreetschool/

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PIGPEN'S STORY

Pigpen was a fluffy gray kitten who came to the Western Pennsylvania Humane Society in October 2015. He got his name because he was found in a trash can and was extremely filthy. He also had an upper respiratory infection, so he was kept quarantined from other cats for several weeks.

When Pigpen came to KSSWK, he was terrified of humans. He spent most of his time hiding deep under the bed in the kitten room. When he wanted to eat or use the litter box, he would carefully sneak out, following the wall behind the cat tree. He would do his business as quickly as possible, then run back to safety.

Christina, one of the humans at KSSWK, spent many hours hanging out in the kitten room, getting Pigpen used to the presence of humans. Slowly, he got bolder, coming to the edge of the bed to watch Christina read or type on her laptop.

Finally, one day he let Cheyenne (another human at KSSWK) pet his head. Suddenly, he was hooked! From that day on he couldn't get enough pets. He became one of the cuddliest kittens ever. Pigpen was adopted into a Forever Home almost as soon as he returned to the shelter.

because they don't know how to retract their claws. They get food on their faces and poop on their butts. Some kittens are shy and want to hide in a nest of blankets. Other kittens want to explore!

Over the next month or two, the foster kittens grow up. They get bigger and more in control of their own bodies. They learn to pounce and climb everywhere. They start playing with toys, and wrasslin' with their siblings and any adult cats who will humor them.

When all of the kittens in a foster litter are at least two pounds, it's time for them to go back to the animal shelter. Veterinarians examine them, give vaccines, and any other necessary care before they become available to adopt. If a kitten had a good foster experience, they will be playful and appealing to potential Forever Homes.

A School for Kittens

While fostering kittens, we took to referring to our home as the Knoll Street School for Wayward Kittens. After all, being a foster kitten is like going to a special boarding school. You and your littermates get to go to a special place where you learn important cat skills. There are humans there who take care of you, as well as adult cats who can show you what being a cat is really all about.

Laser Kittens takes this “school” metaphor and expands it. Like our real home, the foster home you live at is called the Knoll Street School for Wayward Kittens. The adult cats who live there are referred to as your professors. Professors have lots of experience, and important lessons to teach you. Kittens may look up to their professors as wise sages, but may also rebel against their authority and make mischief. Some professors may be kindly and accommodating, while others may be strict and demanding, and others may wish to trick or test their students to see what they're made of. Some professors have had hard lives on the street, while others may be alumni of KSSWK who got to stick around.

While at KSSWK, kittens are taking classes. These classes may range from traditional academic subjects such as physics or history, to practical skills like plumbing or parkour, to silly things like astrology or underwater basket weaving. Classes keep the kittens occupied between meals and naps, and give them important skills they will need for their life after KSSWK. Usually the classes will be taught by the professors, but you may decide that your kittens are doing some self-study courses as well. The adventures that your kittens have may start in one of their classes (e.g. if the professor gives them a big project assignment that they have to finish), or your adventure may take place outside of class.

Fostering from the Kitten's Perspective

For a little kitten, going to a foster home is an incredible adventure. You may have gotten used to your small cage at the animal shelter, surrounded by other kittens and checked on periodically by the staff. But now you've been stuck with your littermates in a tiny carrier, moved around disorientingly, and

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The Basement: An exciting adventure for kitties.

deposited in a brand new place. For all you know, you've been moved to the opposite side of the world!

Kittens are often very shy and hesitant when they first reach their foster home. It's usually recommended that kittens be confined to a single room at first so that they don't get lost – but even that one room is much bigger than the space they had at the shelter. There are so many places to check out and so many new scents to smell. And there are all of these large creatures living here, who will pick you up or rub your fur!

A single house can be a source of endless adventures to a group of kittens. Try looking at your own home through a kitten's eyes. Think about all of the nooks and crannies they could get into, all of the ordinary objects that could become kitten toys, all of the dangers that lurk in every Roomba or open jar of pickles.

Over time, kittens start to learn about what the humans are up to. They see that the humans provide food on a regular basis, and change the litter box. But the humans also subject the kittens to

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baths, and force them to take medicine! What could be the meaning behind all of this? Sometimes a kitten will make special friends with one human. For example, Professor Monks was an alumnus of KSSWK who bonded with the humans so much that they had to adopt him themselves!

Kittens can't speak human language, but there are legends that circulate among cats in foster homes and at the animal shelter about the Forever

Home. As a kitten at KSSWK, you know that your time will come to an end, and you will be sent off to find a Forever Home. It is important to study hard and learn all of your important kitty skills so that you can get a good Forever Home and be a successful, happy cat there.

The World of *Laser Kittens*

When you play *Laser Kittens*, you'll be creating your own fictionalized version of the Knoll Street School for Wayward Kittens.

As part of the game setup (see page 21), the players will collaboratively start to define what KSSWK is like within their game. This serves several purposes in the game:

- ❖ It allows all of the players to put their creativity into defining the setting. *Laser Kittens* is a game where everyone should be able to contribute to all parts of the story. Nobody has an advantage because they read this rulebook more thoroughly and know more of the background lore than the other players.
- ❖ It leaves the setting open for whatever the story requires. The real KSSWK doesn't have a backyard with a shed, but if you want the kittens in your story to get into the shed and mess with the humans' power tools, then you simply have to declare that there

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HARD LIMITS AND THE X CARD

Most of the time, *Laser Kittens* will deal with silly subject matter that is unlikely to be upsetting to anyone. The game isn't designed for serious combat or horror, and since the characters are tiny kittens, there shouldn't be any sexual themes. Nevertheless, it's always a good idea to have a check-in with all players to make sure there aren't any topics that they aren't comfortable seeing in the game. For example, one player may not be willing to see any sort of physical violence toward a kitten because it brings up bad memories. If any player wants to set a hard limit on any story elements, the other players should respect that. After all, the goal of the game is to have fun, and being forced to deal with unpleasant topics isn't very fun.

Since *Laser Kittens* has a rotating control of scenes, there's no way to plan out everything that's going to happen in the story and unexpected problematic content might pop up along the way. A common practice is to have an X card on the table, somewhere where all the players can reach it. The X card is an index card with a big X drawn on it. If the game veers into territory that makes any player uncomfortable, the player can tap the X card, and everyone will back up and take the story in a different direction, no questions asked. We don't expect *Laser Kittens* to prompt the use of the X card very often, but it can be a useful just-in-case measure, especially if you're playing with strangers, or if you are uncertain about the maturity level of any of the players.

is a shed. Nothing is true about KSSWK until someone declares it to be so. From then on out, whatever was said becomes canon for the remainder of the game.

- ❖ It allows the game to be replayed with very different scenarios and settings. It might be fun to play one game where the kittens deal with a blizzard, and another where KSSWK is located on a remote tropical island. While it's important to say “yes, and” to

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any facts about KSSWK established within a game, between games you can throw out everything you knew about the setting and create a brand new one for the next game.

Laser Kittens is set, roughly, in our world – at least as far as the humans know. When you begin a game, the first thing to decide on is the general location and time period. We have usually played the game set in the contemporary USA, but there's no reason it couldn't be set in any other country or time period. This will help to determine what's plausible within the game about things like technology and culture. Do the humans have rotary phones or tablet computers? Are they trying to celebrate Christmas with the kittens or Diwali?

The existence of lasers – special supernatural powers that cats have – is a good indication that the world of *Laser Kittens* is not quite the real world we humans think we inhabit. Exactly how it might differ is up to you. Sometimes, a game of *Laser Kittens* involves an increasingly preposterous fantastical scenario, in which cats might find portals into alternate dimensions ruled by giant caterpillars, or travel back in time. Other times, the kittens may believe all kinds of ridiculous things about their world that turn out not to be true. Perhaps they saw *Mad Max* on TV, and now they fear that Outside is a post-apocalyptic hellscape.

We find that it's best to let the level of fantasy in the game develop as the story plays out. Each Class Captain can decide how to deal with the fantastical elements that have already been introduced. Just remember the principle of “yes, and” and you'll do well. (Though as a word of caution: wrapping up outlandish storylines with “it was all a dream” or “it was all a bad catnip trip” usually comes off as cheap. We're not saying you can't ever use these clichés, but you should really make them count for something.)

Deciding features of KSSWK is usually done at the same time as creating characters (see Chapters 3 and 4). We find it works best to pick your laser first, then define KSSWK (in the order given below), then finish fleshing out your character. But you can do these tasks in any order that works for you.

2. THE KNOLL STREET SCHOOL

Setting Up *Laser Kittens*

Laser Kittens requires two standard poker decks of cards. They can have different backs (this helps to separate the decks afterward so that you can play other games with them), as long as they are all the same size. Remove the face cards (jacks, queens, and kings) and jokers, then shuffle all of the aces and number cards together into one big deck. Deal out five cards to each player for their starting hand.



You should print out a copy of the house sheet (page 98-99, or download it from our website). This sheet has room to sketch a floorplan of KSSWK (the gray lines are just a suggestion or framework – feel free to add or change whatever you like). Once this is established, you are ready to start defining specific aspects of the kittens' world. Before play starts, you will decide three key elements:

1. Situations.
2. NPCs (professors, humans, and other animals).
3. Classes.

The house sheet has room to record up to five situations. A situation is something that is going on at the house that might be of concern to the kittens. Situations help to define KSSWK, and provide plot hooks for the story. Not every situation will become an important plot point, but you should not contradict an established situation without a clear reason. For example, if during the world creation phase you establish that there is no wet food in the house, then the kittens shouldn't get a meal of wet food later (unless this is to deliberately set up a mystery about the source of the wet food).

Each player will define a situation. To do this, they look at the chart of situations (see pages 92-93) and choose one that

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corresponds to one of the cards in their hand. They should write this situation down on the house sheet, and then discard the corresponding card and draw a new one. No two players should pick the same situation, so there will be as many different situations as there are players.

In the extremely rare event that all of the situations that correspond to a player's cards have already been chosen, the player should discard their

hand and draw a new one. Use this procedure if a similar problem arises with any other part of the game setup.

The house sheet also has room to list up to five non-player characters (NPCs). These are characters in the story that are not directly controlled by any one player. Instead, whoever is Class Captain at the time controls the actions of the NPCs. NPCs are chosen from the NPC sheets in the same way that situations are selected. That is, each player chooses an NPC that corresponds to one of the cards in their hand, writes that NPC's name and description on the house sheet, then discards the card and draws a new one.

When establishing NPCs, note that there are two setup sheets to look at: one of cats and one of humans and other animals (see pages 94-97). While there are two sheets, each player should still only choose one NPC.

Additionally, KSSWK always needs at least one human and one adult cat professor. Make sure that between all of the players, at least one person picks a human and at least one person picks a cat (it's fine if you do not have any other animals, such as dogs or rabbits, in your game). You will have as many NPCs to start as you do players. These NPCs are established characters within the world of the game. Nevertheless, they are not the only NPCs that may exist. The Class Captain is always free to introduce

2. THE KNOLL STREET SCHOOL

additional NPCs during their scene. These new NPCs may be entirely made up by the current Captain – they need not come from the setup sheets.

To start, each NPC comes with a short personality description. This is meant to give you some ideas and inspiration about the character. Beyond that, it is up to the players (particularly the Class Captain) to decide any other important points about the NPCs as the game progresses. So, the Captain may declare that Rae is gone for the day because she has to visit her grandmother, or that she has top-secret computer equipment at the house because she works as a high-level government scientist. As long as these new pieces of information that emerge during play don't contradict anything that has already been said, they become canon for the rest of the game.

Like situations and NPCs, classes are chosen from a setup sheet (see page 93). All of the kittens are taking the same schedule of five classes. When one player picks a class, all players should write that class on their own character sheet. There is a space next to each class to record your grade in the class. Grades are explained on page 39.

If you have fewer than five players, you will need to choose extra classes to fill up the schedule. Pick each remaining class by flipping over the top card from the deck. If this duplicates a class that has already been chosen, flip another one.

As an alternative to picking classes off the class sheet, you may choose (as a group) to make up your own classes. This can be a good way to create some more zany ideas, or to include subjects that the players at the table know something about. Don't get hung up on making the classes you invent “useful” (whether useful to kittens or useful in terms of game mechanics). Some of the fun of the game comes from thinking up unlikely ways that a certain class might apply to a particular situation.

Classes are important for two reasons. First, attending a class may be a useful plot point. Perhaps you decide that Professor Julius is going to take you on a field trip Outside as part of your geography class. Second, classes can give you bonuses or penalties when you

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try to do things associated with that class, depending on your grade. This is discussed on page 47.

As the game progresses, keep the house sheet handy. Use it to record any important new facts that are established about KSSWK, such as the floorplan, the presence of things (like boxes or food) that are of interest to kittens, or any additional NPCs that may make an appearance. This will help to make sure that you are consistent with things that were done earlier in the story. If there is conflict about how to represent a feature of KSSWK (e.g. does the bathroom open off the hallway, or off the living room?), the player who originally made up the feature should be the one to decide.

3. LESSONS AND LASERS

One important fact to understand about cats is that they have lasers. Lasers give cats special powers which are not shared by other animals. Humans and other animals don't know about cats' lasers, though some have their suspicions. Lasers are one of the things that make being a cat fun, but they are also an important responsibility.

Lasers are connected to a cat's eyes. When a cat uses their laser, their eyes glow with energy and release the laser's power. Sometimes, a camera will capture evidence of a cat using their laser. In that case, the cat's eyes will show up glowing in the picture. Lasers may also make a noise, which sounds like "pew pew pew!" The noise is not necessary, but it can help make the laser more effective.

Each cat has a unique laser with a unique set of effects. There is a list of lasers on pages 90-91, as well as more detailed descriptions on pages 32-38. Every laser has a name that rhymes with "pew pew pew." This is because cats love puns.

Lasers must be charged up before they can be used. A cat can't just go around using their laser at every opportunity. The power for a laser builds up in a cat's body until the cat releases it through their eyes. An adult cat has great control over their laser. They can choose when to set it off, and how powerful it will be. Sometimes a cat only needs a minor laser effect to get what they want. Other times they may charge longer if they want to do something extreme.

For kittens, the story is a bit different. A kitten is not entirely in control of their laser. As their laser charges up, it gets harder and harder to keep it in check. Eventually, a kitten's laser will just go off on its own, even without the kitten wanting it to. As a kitten, it's important to be aware of how charged up your laser is and to be

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careful about when it might fire.

Kittens also have trouble controlling exactly what their laser does. Sometimes it may do something good, and sometimes it may do something that gets them in trouble or worsens their predicament. For example, say a kitten whose laser duplicates things is being chased by some rats. They set off their laser with the intent of doubling the distance between themselves and the rats, so that they can get away more easily. If they aren't careful, their laser may backfire and double the number of rats chasing them instead!

Control over one's lasers comes with maturity. As a kitten grows up and learns how to be a good cat, they improve at using their laser. However, a kitten who continues to act immaturely will find their laser continuing to go astray, causing unexpected complications and chaos.

Lasers are important because their extraordinary powers can help get you out of a jam – but they can also get you into a sticky situation if you aren't careful!

Choosing Your Laser

To begin playing *Laser Kittens*, every player should take a character sheet and a writing instrument. Prepare the cards (as described on page 21) and deal each player a hand of five. Each player should then pick a laser from the lasers sheet that corresponds to one of the cards in their hand. After choosing, the player should discard the card they used, and draw a new one.

When you have chosen your laser, write down its name and its description in the area indicated on your character sheet. The descriptions are deliberately vague. Rather than being a pre-defined power like abilities in other roleplaying games, the effects of your laser are up to you and the Class Captain. You'll want to start considering what kinds of effects you can imagine your laser performing. We give some suggestions for each laser at the end of this chapter, but don't restrict yourself to those ideas.

Your choice of laser provides the first seed for building your character. Think about what kind of kitten might have the kind of laser you have chosen. What kind of personality and appearance

3. LESSONS AND LASERS



Lasers can do all kinds of wild things!

appeal to you? Write these in the description area of your character sheet, and, if you'd like, draw a picture of your kitten.

As you are developing your character, think about what type of immature behavior your kitten might exhibit. *Laser Kittens* is a game about growing up, so your character needs to start out having some growing up to do! Perhaps your kitten is rambunctious and likes to run around at all hours of the night, so they need to learn to calm down. Perhaps your kitten is very bossy, and so they need to learn how to listen to others. Another way to think of this is that kittens start out driven by their id, in the Freudian sense. That is, they act on their immediate impulses and desires, and don't always stop to think about whether something is a good idea. As a cat matures, they gain more self-control and learn to rein in their impulses and make wiser choices.

Once you have chosen your laser, take five more cards from the deck. These are your laser cards. Without looking at these cards, place them face-down next to your character sheet in the

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USING CARDS

There are a few principles that always apply any time you use cards in *Laser Kittens*:

- ❖ Black cards are positive numbers, red cards are negative numbers.
- ❖ Aces count as 1s (not 11s).
- ❖ Whenever you use a card from your hand, draw a new one to replace it.
- ❖ When the deck runs out, reshuffle the discard pile and make it the new deck.

laser cards zone. These cards will determine what your laser does when it fires.

Adult cat NPCs have lasers as well. It is not necessary to decide in advance what laser each of them has, and it may never come up in the game. However, the Class Captain should define a professor's laser anytime they think it makes sense (either through the professor telling the kittens about their laser, or through the professor using it). Adult cats will always be successful in using their laser, unless they are seriously impaired (for example, if they've been hitting the 'nip too hard). The Class Captain will describe the effects of the professor's laser, which should make sense from the professor's point of view. So a professor's laser might still cause trouble, if the professor is not fully informed of the situation, or if they have their own agenda working against the kittens' goals.

Using Your Laser

Your laser begins as a mystery. You do not know what five cards are in the laser, and so you don't know whether using it will bring good or bad results.

The longer you wait and charge up your laser, the more information you get about its likely effects. This happens when you join a scene. After the Class Captain has set the stage (see page 64-

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66), each player can decide whether their kitten is going to take part in the scene. There should usually be a good reason why your kitten is in a scene or not, but it's perfectly OK to say something like "I don't want to be part of this scene, so my kitten has gone off to take a nap" or "I want to be in this scene, so my kitten comes rushing in to join the others."

When you join a scene, flip over one of your face-down laser cards, so you (and everyone else) can see its value. You may flip over any of the cards – the order doesn't matter. This information can help you decide when to use your laser. If your laser is looking good (lots of black cards), you may decide to use it for something important. If it's looking uncertain or dangerous (lots of red cards), you may decide to use your laser for something inconsequential (to keep it from screwing up too badly). Or you may decide to not use it, hoping to get better cards for it at the end of the scene (see page 31).

At any time, any kitten who is participating in the current scene may choose to use their laser. To do this, a player flips over the remaining face-down cards in their laser, then adds up the total

SCALING YOUR LASER

Imagine that Jake, a human that the kittens do not like, has come to take them away from KSSWK. A kitten sets off their "Shoo Shoo Shoo" laser, which makes unwanted things go away. Depending on the total from their laser cards, they may get one of the following outcomes:

-35 (fail): The laser has made KSSWK go away. The kittens and Jake find themselves stranded in an abandoned field.

-5 (fail): The box that the kittens were hiding behind disappears. Now Jake can easily find them.

+5 (win): Jake suddenly realizes he left the oven on. He forgets all about the kittens for the moment and rushes off.

+35 (win): Jake disappears. He has been erased from history, as if he never existed in the first place.

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value of all five cards (red cards count as negative numbers, and black cards count as positive numbers).

If the total of the laser cards is a positive number, the laser has a desirable effect (a win). The player who set off their laser describes the outcome. If the total is zero or negative, the laser fails to help (a fail). The Class Captain should describe how the laser backfires, causing complications and chaos.

The size of the fail or win should be roughly scaled to the size of the total number from the laser cards. So, for example, a win of +5 should be a more modest effect than a win of +20. A laser can theoretically go as high as +49 or as low as -49, but those extreme values are rare. A laser above +25 or below -25 can be considered a pretty big result, and calls for the most extreme outcomes the players can conceive.

After the effects of the laser are described, the player should discard their laser cards. They are not able to use their laser again for the remainder of the scene – after all, they haven't had time to charge up again! At the end of the scene, the player should take five new cards and place them face-down in their laser card zone. They may now use their laser again in the next scene that they participate in.

Players are always free to set off their own laser at a time of their choosing. However, a kitten can't hold back their laser forever. Eventually, the laser charge gets to be too much, and it will activate.

This happens when the player has been in their fourth scene without using their laser. When a player flips over their fourth laser card in order to join a scene, their laser must fire during that scene. Note that while you have five laser cards, your laser must activate in at least every fourth scene. This ensures there will always be at least a little mystery about the intensity of your laser's effects.

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When a player has four face-up laser cards, they may still choose to use their laser on their own accord during that scene. However, the Class Captain may also trigger the player's laser. It is the Class Captain's responsibility to ensure that the laser goes off at some point during the scene. Even if it's a very inconvenient time for the kittens!

When a player decides to use their laser, the laser's effects cannot be altered or stopped by anyone else. This is the case even if someone else immediately uses a laser with a seemingly opposite effect (e.g. "Hew Hew Hew," which breaks things, followed by "New New New," which repairs them). Lasers should be resolved in the order that their use is declared. After the player or Class Captain finishes describing the effects of the first laser, then the game can move on to the second laser. The second laser should not simply undo the effects of the first laser. The effects of both lasers should be apparent in the aftermath. A laser can be used to clean up after a previous one only once a new scene has begun. At that point, the initial laser has had enough time to make its mark on the world.

Learning Your Lessons

To start out, your laser is entirely random – there could be almost any five cards powering it. That is because, as a tiny kitten, it's hard to know how to use your laser. But by learning to act more maturely, a kitten can gain control over the effects of their laser.

The final duty of the Class Captain at the end of a scene is to determine who acted in a mature fashion, and who did not. The process for making that decision is covered on page 68. The upshot of it for a player is that at the end of any scene they participated in, they may receive a new card. If they acted maturely during the scene, this will be a good card. If they acted immaturely, this will be a bad card. (Note that good and bad are relative – if your laser is currently showing a red 10 and a red 6, then getting a red 3 is a positive step.)

The new card you receive must be swapped for one of the cards currently in your laser. It is entirely up to the player receiving the card which spot to swap it into. Usually, a player will swap the card they receive for their worst visible card – in order to cancel it out, if

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the new card is good, or to minimize the damage, if the new card is bad. A player may choose to swap cards in a way that worsens their laser if they think it makes sense in the story for their kitten to end up with a bad laser result.

It is also permissible to swap the new card for one that is still face-down. If you do this, make sure the new card is also placed face-down. You know the card, but the face-up versus face-down orientation tracks the number of scenes you have been in, so you don't want to mess that up.

Types of Lasers

The laser sheet on pages 90-91 describes twenty lasers that kittens might have. The descriptions of each laser are deliberately vague. The laser has effects in some general domain, but the exact nature of those effects depends on the context and the total number of the laser cards.

Describing the effects of a laser – whether it's a win on your own laser, or a fail on someone else's while you're Class Captain – is one of the critical ways that *Laser Kittens* calls for you to exercise your creativity. Don't be afraid to go wild and think of zany, interesting, or ironic outcomes, especially if you have an extreme result.

Below, we provide some ideas for the sorts of effects each laser might cause. We cannot stress enough that these are just suggestions. Any effect that matches the general theme of the laser is permissible. We hope these ideas will spark creativity. They should never be used to tell someone that what their laser is doing is wrong!

Achoo Achoo Achoo: It's not very fun when little kitties get sick – but now you also control the kitty medicines.

Big fail: The humans have all died of dysentery, and now there's nobody to feed you.

Small fail: All the kittens get sick and need eye drops.

Small win: A human who was bothering you suddenly discovers they are very allergic.

Big win: One of the professors tells you of a medicine that makes all sickness go away forever and they know where it is!

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Chew Chew Chew: What kitties want more than anything is food, and you can give it to them. Just hope it's a tasty kind.

Big fail: Jars burst open and a tidal wave of gross pickle juice sweeps through the house.

Small fail: Everyone who ate that last batch of food is suddenly feeling very queasy.

Small win: The door to the fridge swings open. A shelf snaps, spilling various foods onto the floor.

Big win: Behind the box of wet food, you find a strange device – a can opener that can be operated with tiny kitten paws!

Clue Clue Clue: Important information becomes known to those who want it bad enough.

Big fail: You experience a terrifying prophetic vision of an apocalyptic future that could result from your innocent course of action.

Small fail: It seems the information you received is a touch inaccurate.

Small win: Now you know where your professor went.

Big win: You realize you know the humans' computer passwords, and their security questions, and the nuclear launch codes...

Coo Coo Coo: You have the ability to use your adorable ways to soothe even the biggest tantrum.

Big fail: Instead of calming the big mean dog, suddenly all of the kittens and professors get really mellow. "Why worry about the dog?"

Small fail: This human is fed up with adorable kittens, and decides to shave your fur so that you can't be so cute anymore.

Small win: You see the small human of the house start to cry. One look into their eyes stops it.

Big win: You cry at the TV. On the screen, you see the human president cock their head, and suddenly they stop talking about starting a war, and instead begin detailing their kitten rights agenda.

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Crew Crew Crew: You are always the leader of your kitten posse.

Big fail: Zombie kittens rise up from the ground and begin carrying out your orders – but also trying to eat living kittens’ brains.

Small fail: A professor shows up to stop the plan you just made.

Small win: Everyone who follows your suggestion to go downstairs finds themselves suddenly at the bottom of the staircase.

Big win: The rats who live in the walls offer a peace treaty because they are inspired by your leadership skills.

Dew Dew Dew: Water, water, everywhere, whether it just gets you a little damp or causes buckets to pour.

Big fail: You have flooded the whole house, washing away all of the food and cat toys.

Small fail: Suddenly, you are soaking wet, making a puddle on the floor.

Small win: Your water dish refills with cool, clean water.

Big win: An enormous hurricane sends the bad guys packing.

Drew Drew Drew: Humans make all these funny little pictures on papers. Maybe instead of just sitting on them, you can figure out what they mean, or even make your own.

Big fail: The mark you made on that paper just signed over the entirety of the humans’ possessions to the International Foundation for Eradicating Cats.

Small fail: There’s this thick liquid that helps you slide about the floor with ease. It came out of a tube that says “PAINT.”

Small win: You can only read one word on this paper, but that word is “declawed.”

Big win: All of the knowledge on the Internet is revealed to you.

Eww Eww Eww: Sometimes kittens make a mess. If you have a poopy butt or gravy on your head, surely you can use this to your advantage.

Big fail: A tornado blows through, scattering everything in the house – including the kittens!

Small fail: Cans of people food fly off the shelves, smashing open and waking the dog.

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Small win: The mean human slips on your dirty footprints and falls.

Big win: The pile of trash comes alive as a garbage monster who will do your bidding.

Few Few Few: Plenty becomes scarcity. Things disappear. The many have become one.

Big fail: Suddenly there are hundreds of new doors and hallways in the house, and you don't know where any of them lead.

Small fail: The humans' keys, which you spent so long trying to find, slide under the couch where you can't get them.

Small win: Where you had been chased by a dozen rats, now it is only one.

Big win: The kittens merge together into one fearsome, giant cat.

Hew Hew Hew: Pounce! Grab! Break all the things!

Big fail: A volcano erupts in the backyard, spewing lava right at the house.

Small fail: A tree falls down, blocking your path.

Small win: The door blocking your way falls off the hinges.

Big win: A cargo plane filled with catnip falls out of the sky.

Loo Loo Loo: Grants control over the litter box, the most important of kitten appliances.

Big fail: The toilet overflows until the entire neighborhood is underwater.

Small fail: You find yourself stuck in a big litter box, unable to get out.

Small win: Poops fire from the litter box into your enemies.

Big win: The litter box opens into a portal to another dimension.

Mew Mew Mew: You are a siren amongst cats.

Big fail: Your song is so loud that the neighbors call the police, who raid the house.

Small fail: A sound like that must mean the kittens are sick – time for kitty medicines!

Small win: The humans hear a very persuasive wet food jingle in a TV commercial.

Big win: A heavenly choir descends to sing the praises of tiny kittens.

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New New New: Returns things to their original state. This might fix them if they're broken, but if they're not broken...

Big fail: The adult humans all turn into tiny infants, crying and flailing their pacifiers around. Now who will take care of the kittens?

Small fail: Suddenly the wet food is all back in the can!

Small win: You hear the footsteps coming and when you turn around, the toilet paper roll you just spent ten minutes destroying is now intact.

Big win: The house had burned down, but now it's repaired, with beautiful original hardwood floors.

Shoo Shoo Shoo: You can make them go away. Far, far away.

Big fail: With a great snap, the house breaks away from the earth and shoots off into outer space.

Small fail: The hot water twists as it falls, splashing right over the kittens.

Small win: A noise in the kitchen distracts the humans.

Big win: The dog is teleported into the neighbors' house.

Sue Sue Sue: Somebody's going to get in big trouble, whether it's a swat from one of the professors or being locked up in Kitty Jail.

Big fail: The humans find convincing evidence that the kittens are responsible for all of the bad things the dog has been doing.

Small fail: The humans decide your professor is teaching you bad lessons, and lock her up in the other room.

Small win: The humans heard that crash coming from the other room, but they immediately blame the dog.

Big win: The FBI raids the house, looking for evidence of the humans' illicit activities, but somehow they don't find anything incriminating.

True True True: A kitten lie detector. Just make sure you really want to hear the truth.

Big fail: Everything you knew about the house turns out to be exactly backwards now.

Small fail: You become convinced that the scary scene you saw on TV is real.

3. LESSONS AND LASERS

Small win: You learn that your professor has been misleading you for their own purposes.

Big win: Reality warps, making your previous wild guesses turn out to be true after all.

Two Two Two: Seeing double, indistinguishable twins, multiplying fishes and loaves, permanent doppelgangers...

Big fail: Doppelgangers of all of the kittens appear, and you know you must fight your own double, because there can be only one.

Small fail: Now you are being chased by two angry birds!

Small win: The tree branch got twice as long, providing an easy escape route.

Big win: Time has slowed down to half speed, giving you an opportunity to do whatever you need to do.

View View View: You have the ability to see better than any other kitten.

Big fail: A dark fog descends over the entire house, making everyone unable to see.

Small fail: You see a bag that looks like the treat bag, but you can't read what it says.

Small win: You've never seen tuna before, but you can tell that is what is on the table, unattended.

Big win: Your enemies begin to see terrible visions of the dire fate that awaits them if they continue on their current path.

Woo Woo Woo: Excitement! Mass panic! Rioting in the streets!

Big fail: An angry mob has formed outside the house, and they want vengeance.

Small fail: The dog freaks out at a small noise, upending the tower you have carefully built.

Small win: Your bird allies are all fired up to help you!

Big win: The humans are so excited to have such adorable kittens that they will give you whatever you want.

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Zoo Zoo Zoo: Non-felines of the world appear – at the window, on TV, or in your home.

Big fail: Three giant dogs appear out of nowhere and they are scary!

Small fail: A tidal wave of cockroaches sweeps the wet foods away.

Small win: Before the dog gets to you, birds swoop in from the open window and carry you to safety.

Big win: The Midgard Serpent stirs, causing a massive earthquake that swallows up the veterinarian's office.

4. BEING A KITTEN

The best part about playing *Laser Kittens* is getting to be a tiny kitten. You explore the world through a kitten's eyes and learn what it takes to become an awesome cat. To do this, you need to flesh out your character concept. A kitten character is built around two key mechanical aspects: your laser and your classes. To complete your character, you will choose a name, detail your appearance, and select your lessons.

Classes and Grades

As part of the game setup, the players collectively picked a schedule of five classes (see page 23). Next to each class on your character sheet, there is space for a grade. At the beginning of the game, you will pick your grades in each class. Each kitten has two classes that they have an A in, two that they have a B in, and one that they have a C in. It is up to you which grades you assign to which classes. Players may wish to coordinate among themselves so that they have a diversity of grades, with at least one kitten being good at each class, but this is not necessary.

Grades are important to your character for two reasons. First, they can provide bonuses or penalties when you attempt certain actions. These bonuses and penalties can arise in situations widely removed from the official subject matter of the class, as long as they bear some sort of relationship to it. As you're deciding on your grades, think creatively about all the ways you might be able to use a certain class. You should also embrace failure – think of all of the ways that your C class might lead you to fail at things in interesting ways. These failures can help drive the story forward! The mechanics of class-based bonuses and penalties are explained in more detail on pages 47-49.

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Second, your grades help to provide some structure to your character. Think about what kind of kitten would end up with the distribution of grades that you selected. If your character has an A in Political Science but a C in Gymnastics, perhaps they are a bossy kitten that likes to tell others what to do and is reluctant to get into harm's way.

Grades do not change during the course of a single session. So if you're playing *Laser Kittens* as a one-shot game, the grades that you choose at the beginning will be your grades for the entire game. If you are playing a longer game, you will have the opportunity to change your grades between sessions (see pages 75-77).

Developing Your Character

The remainder of your character sheet is there to help you get inside your kitten's life. The more you can think like your kitten, the better you will be able to play your kitten.

First, you will need to pick out a name. A kitten can be named anything, of course. Some players like to give their kitten a name taken from a cat they have known in real life. Others like to make up something new. Here are a few tips for naming kittens:

- ❖ **Too long or too short.** Kittens may have names that are much longer and more grandiose than ordinary human names, or much shorter and cuter. For example, the real KSSWK has had kittens with names like Brigadier Fuzzykins, Hercules Magellan, and Toad.
- ❖ **Themed names.** Sometimes a whole litter will be given names on a particular theme. There might be a *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* litter (Daniel Tiger, King Friday, Cornflake), or a dinosaurs litter (T-Rex, Stegosaurus, Triceratops).
- ❖ **Puns!** Cats love puns. There are lots of good cat-related words to work into puns – cat, claw, kitten, feline, meow, mew, purr, paw, etc. Puns can be combined with themes. Consider a 2016 US presidential election litter with names like Purnie Sanders, Marco Mewbio, Pawnald Trump, and Hillary Kitten.

It is also important to decide what your kitten looks like. Are you fat or skinny? Short-haired or fluffy? Long-faced or smushed?

4. BEING A KITTEN

What color fur (black, white gray, orange, tabby, tortoiseshell)? What color nose and toe beans (pink, brown, black)? There is space on your character sheet to sketch a picture of your kitten, if you are so inclined.

Sometimes kittens in a single litter look very similar. This could be a fun plot point if the humans are unable to tell some kittens apart. Other times, the litter may contain diverse kittens. A litter with different-looking kittens might be due to chance or it may be due to the fact that a mother cat can be impregnated by several different fathers, and produce a single litter whose kittens are genetic half-siblings.

Lessons and Your Kitten Id

The most important thing to decide is your kitten's personality. As you are thinking about your personality, try to imagine a character growth arc for your kitten. *Laser Kittens* is a game about growing up. A kitten with no room to grow (whether because they're quite mature already, or because they are set in their profligate ways) will not be a very interesting character!

A good way to think about developing your character is to think about your kitten's id. (We're not saying that Freudian psychology is necessarily an accurate model for cats – this is just a guideline for creating a character!) The id is the impulsive, selfish, present-focused aspect of the mind. Kittens start out ruled by their id. They make poor decisions and give in to temptation easily. They quickly forget what they are doing. They rush in fearlessly after something they want, and just as quickly take fright and run to hide. Your id is your instincts and impulses that happen without really thinking.

Over the course of the game, your kitten id will be tamed by your growing ego (in Freudian terms, your ability to think rationally and seek your longer-term best interests) and superego (your sense of obligation to others and obedience to social norms).

Think about what impulses make up your kitten's overactive id. Are they shy and easily frightened? Are they brash and overconfident? Are they too wound up with energy to sit still? Do they fixate on food or catnip? Do they trust, or distrust, all humans to an excessive degree? This will help guide you in thinking about

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what kinds of choices your kitten would make and how they would be likely to get into trouble. This will also help you see the direction of growth that your kitten will take over the course of the game. Actions that move you toward or away from your id will be the kinds of things that a Class Captain may reward or punish with new cards for your laser at the end of a scene (see pages 31 and 68).

At the bottom of your character sheet, there are spaces for several lessons. If you are playing a one-shot game, it is not necessary to write anything here. Lessons have no mechanical significance except in a campaign that runs for several sessions. Nevertheless, writing a lesson (as described below) can be a good way to help think about your character concept and what kind of things your kitten would try to do.

If you are playing a campaign, you will need to write one lesson in the first spot. The others will be used for later lessons after you have learned your current one. A lesson should describe a form of personal growth that your kitten needs. It is not a concrete, specific subject matter or skill – that type of material is covered in your classes. Rather, a lesson is a guideline to what maturity would look like for you. A lesson is usually the reverse of your id’s biggest impulses. For example, a kitten who is too overbearing might have as their lesson “Learn to listen to others.” A kitten who is too energetic may have as their lesson “Learn when it is time to be quiet.”

5. RESOLVING CONFLICTS

While playing *Laser Kittens*, each player is in charge of their own character's actions. They describe what their character chooses to do. But just like kittens don't always succeed at what they try to do in real life, kitten characters in *Laser Kittens* also do not always succeed.

When a character tries to do something that they may or may not succeed at, it is referred to as a conflict. It is important to distinguish conflicts from both definite successes and definite failures. Some tasks a character is obviously able to do without trouble – such as walking across a room when they don't mind being seen, or speaking to another character who is present. On the other hand, certain things are obviously completely impossible. Barring a relevant laser usage, a kitten cannot teleport to another house, or speak fluently in a human language.

The interesting bits of the game happen in between those two extremes. For example, a kitten may want to jump up onto the table. That is something that is within the realm of possibility – a kitten could really do that. But it is by no means a sure thing. The kitten could undershoot the table and bonk their head on it. Or they could grab onto a placemat and slide off. The possibility of either failure or success is what makes for an interesting conflict.

The player should declare what their character tries to do. It is ultimately the Class Captain's decision whether to declare that intended action to be a conflict or not. In making this decision, the Captain should consider both what is physically possible, and what is interesting for the story.

In terms of physical possibility, the Class Captain should consider the likely success of a tiny kitten trying to do something. Is

it within a kitten's power to do this, or not? It wouldn't make sense, and is likely to annoy the players, if the Captain treated simple everyday actions as challenges. The Captain can also declare certain things to be automatic failures, if they lie outside the range of what a kitten could really do. (Note that this is not a violation of the “yes, and” principle. The player is free to try to do anything they like. The Captain is just declaring the consequences.)

In terms of the story, the Class Captain should focus on calling for conflicts when they will make interesting plot points. For example, the first time the kittens try to go down the stairs, it may be a big deal. You may want to play through the stair-descending scene in detail, talking about the twists and turns of each kitten's descent. In this case, it makes sense to treat descending the stairs as a conflict. Later in the game, the kittens may need to navigate the same staircase. But since you've already done a stairs scene, and the kittens have bigger issues to deal with at this point of the story, the Captain may wish to waive the conflict mechanics the second time.

Bidding on a Conflict

The central mechanic in *Laser Kittens* is a blind bidding system to determine control of the narrative. The same basic approach is taken for resolving conflicts within a scene, as well as for choosing the Class Captain (see page 61). Think of bidding as a way of answering the question “who gets to decide what happens next,” rather than just “what happens next.” After all, the goal of *Laser Kittens* is to bring together the creativity of everyone at the table.

The outcome of a conflict is determined by a blind bid between the Class Captain and the player of the involved character. The player should select a card from their hand and place it face-down in front of them. This is their bid to indicate how successful they hope to be in this conflict.

The Class Captain should set aside their own hand and draw three cards from the top of the deck. From these three cards, the Captain should select a counter-bid, and place it face-down on the table. The Captain should discard the other two cards.

Once the two bids have been selected, the players should turn

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Sneaking past the dog – be careful, kitties!

the cards over and compare their values. For bidding, just like for lasers, red cards are considered negative values, and black cards are positive. That means that any black card would beat any red card. A higher-number black card will beat a lower-number black card, but a lower-number red card will beat a higher-number red card (i.e., -4 is greater than -6). Aces should be treated as 1s.

Once the outcome of the challenge is determined, the bid cards are discarded, and the player draws a new one (bringing their hand back up to five).

It is entirely up to the player what card to choose as their bid. Most of the time, a player will try to choose a high card. But they may want to save their highest card for a time when they really need it. They may suspect the Class Captain's bid will be low, and not want to waste a good card. A player may also deliberately get into a conflict and bid a low card just to get that card out of their hand and be able to get a new (hopefully better) one. This is an

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important element of the game. The story gets more interesting when kittens fail at things, and needing to dump bad cards from your hand is a good incentive to embrace failure!

The Class Captain also has freedom to choose any card they like as the counter-bid. They may deliberately choose to make the conflict easier on the kittens. Or they may put up a tough challenge.

One exception is when the conflict involves the Class Captain's own character. The Captain is on their honor to be fair in deciding when their character encounters a conflict. When the Captain is involved in a conflict with their own character, they should pick their bid (out of their hand) first, then draw three cards. The highest card of the ones drawn must be used as the counter-bid (that is, the Captain cannot deliberately low-bid against themselves).

The outcome of a conflict bid determines two things. First, it determines whether the kitten is successful at what they try to do. Second, it determines who gets to narrate the outcome of the action. If the player wins the bid, they describe how their character succeeds. The player should feel free to take advantage of this moment in the spotlight to be creative and show off. They should think about how their kitten would approach this task, showcasing the character's personality. It may make sense – and be a more fun scene – for your kitten to bumble and just barely make it, or to seemingly screw up but ironically get what they wanted anyway. The degree by which they won the bid can be a guideline to how spectacularly the kitten succeeds. For example, if you bid a +4 and beat the Class Captain's +2 to jump up onto the table, your kitten might make a leap and just barely grab the table edge, then scramble up. But if the Captain had bid a -5 to your +4, you might make a crazy acrobatic leap that lands

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you on the table after three backflips.

The Class Captain should think likewise if they win the bid. They should be creative in describing the kitten's failure, and scale the level of failure to the size of the gap between the bids. Moreover, failure should not just mean not getting what the player wanted. When the Captain wins a conflict bid, the kitten's failure should introduce new complications into the story. Perhaps the kitten fell short of the table and knocked over a plant, making a noise that attracts the attention of the dog. Or maybe the kitten grabs onto a placemat but pulls it off the table, spilling the people food that the kittens were trying to get into.

A winning player may choose to have their kitten fail at their immediate goal, but in a way that helps out their larger goals. Likewise, the Captain may let the kitten succeed at their immediate goal, but in a way that generates more serious complications for the kittens in the big picture.

Classes

The chaotic nature of the conflict resolution system in *Laser Kittens* represents the chaotic life of tiny kittens, who aren't fully in control of their own abilities and who don't quite know what kinds of things are possible or not for them. The stories you tell in a game of *Laser Kittens* are driven by unexpected failures and successes, and the hijinks they lead to. You will have more fun with the game if you embrace this aspect as a core part of play.

Nevertheless, kittens do have some level of skills. Some kittens are better at certain things than others. This is where classes come in. During the setup phase, you picked a schedule of five classes that all of the kittens are taking, and you each picked your grades – two As, two Bs, and a C.

When a player gets involved in a conflict, the player or Class Captain may propose that the task the kitten is attempting is related in some way to the material they would be learning in one of their classes. For example, if the kitten is trying to negotiate with the rats that live in the walls, that might be relevant to their Political Science studies. If the kitten is trying to knock over the dog's bowl, that

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could be related to Physics. Feel free to be creative about drawing connections between tasks and classes. Perhaps a kitten is trying to make a tricky jump and the player thinks this could be connected to Film Studies, because the kittens have been watching kung fu movies. The final say as to whether a certain class is relevant is up to the Class Captain.

Only one class should be invoked for a conflict – classes don't stack. While the Class Captain makes the final decision about what class applies, they should be generous about accepting proposals about relevant classes. At the same time, many conflicts may not have a relevant class, and that's fine.

If the relevant class is one that the kitten has an A in, the player gets a bonus. They should draw two cards from the deck. They may choose one of those cards as their bid instead of using a card from their hand. The player may still use a card from their hand if they have a better one there. Any cards drawn in this way which are not used should be discarded. After the bid, if the player used a bonus card for their bid, they do not draw a new one (since they still have a full hand of five cards).

If the relevant class is one that the kitten has a C in, the player gets a penalty. They should shuffle their hand and randomly set aside two cards, then choose their bid from the remaining three. After the bid is over, they can return the set-aside cards to their hand.

If the relevant class is one that the kitten has a B in, there is no bonus or penalty. It is usually not necessary to determine the relevance of a class if the kitten has a B, since it would have no effect on the outcome. But it may come into play as the player or Class Captain describes the outcome. For example, if the player succeeds they may attribute their success to something they learned in their B class.

If you are playing a longer game (see Chapter 9), it will be possible for kittens to raise or lower their grades beyond the A through C range. If a kitten has an A+ in a class, they get a double bonus – they should draw four cards from the deck, and may choose from that set instead of their hand. If a kitten has a D in a class, they get a double penalty – the player should shuffle their hand and set

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aside four cards, then bid with the remaining one – essentially picking their bid at random from their hand.

Once a kitten has decided to do something which requires a conflict bid, they cannot back out after hearing what class may be relevant. A conflict about a class in which you have a C (or even a D) may still succeed. And even if it doesn't, failure is what makes the story interesting!

Conflicts Over Facts

The following section explains an optional rule. It can enhance the game, but is not necessary. Players may agree beforehand not to allow conflicts over facts in their game if they think it would disrupt the flow of the game.

Sometimes, a player wishes to establish a fact about the world during a scene in which they are not Class Captain. For example, when the kittens get into the living room, the player may want them to discover that all of the boxes that they had played in earlier are gone. Or they may want there to be big trees up against the windows of the second floor of the house. When this happens, the player can request a conflict over facts.

A conflict over facts should not be used to directly contradict something that the Class Captain has said (unless there is a good reason for the fact in question to have changed since the time it was established, as in the example of the boxes being gone when the kittens return to the room). That is, conflicts over facts are not a way of challenging the Class Captain's authority. Rather, they are ways for players to insert their own creative ideas into the scene. A conflict over facts should address some issue that has not yet been established one way or another. Once established, a fact about the world or about the story should be embraced by all players, in accordance with the “yes, and” principle.

A conflict over facts is resolved by a bid in exactly the same way as a regular conflict. The player picks a bid from their hand, and the Class Captain picks a bid from the top three cards from the deck.

Classes may be deemed relevant to a conflict over facts. In this case, the question to ask is whether being good at a certain subject

would make the kitten more likely to know that the player's proposed fact is true. So for example, if a player is proposing that the kittens find a colony of rats below the floor, they may be helped by their A in Zoology.

Multiplayer Conflicts and Helping

Sometimes multiple characters will be trying to do the same thing. For example, perhaps the kittens were outside, but they all need to get back in before the scary truck pulls into the driveway. When several kittens are trying to do the same action separately (such that some could fail and others could succeed), it is known as a multiplayer conflict.

For a multiplayer conflict, rather than treating each character's action as a separate conflict, each player should choose a bid simultaneously. The Class Captain selects a single bid against all of them. Different players may invoke different classes to boost their bids, at the Class Captain's discretion. The Captain should be generous here, and shouldn't force one player to use a class they're bad at if another player got to use a class that the player in question is good at. When everyone reveals their cards, anyone whose bid beat the Captain's succeeds, and anyone whose bid did not beat the Captain's fails.

The Class Captain should decide the order in which the outcomes are described. Sometimes it makes sense to describe the failures before the successes, while sometimes the opposite makes sense.

Kittens can also try to work together on a single project. In this case they are acting as a team, and they will all succeed or fail together. For example, they may be trying to stand on each other's shoulders to reach a high shelf, or to cooperate to distract the dog. This sort of situation is referred to as helping.

In a helping situation, the Class Captain should choose one bid, while all of the players whose kittens are helping each other should make a bid. When all bids are flipped over, the outcome is determined as follows:

- ❖ If at least one bid from a helping player beats the Class Captain's bid, the overall project is successful (the kittens reach the shelf, the dog is distracted).

5. RESOLVING CONFLICTS

AN EXAMPLE OF HELPING

In this scene, the kittens Bartholomew von Hamsandwich, Dr. Marvin Tofu, and Ramen are trying to get the keys to the basement out of the human's coat pocket. Because they are working together, the Class Captain declares that this is a case of helping.

The bids are as follows:

Captain: +3

Bartholomew: -2

Marvin: +5

Ramen: +4

Because at least one of the kittens' bids beat the Class Captain's, the project succeeds. Since Marvin had the highest bid, he describes how things go down. Bartholomew and Ramen pitch in to describe how they were unhelpful or helpful, respectively:

Marvin: "I decide to climb up on the backs of Bartholomew and Ramen, trying to reach the bottom of the coat with my claws. I stretch up to reach it..."

Class Captain: "But as you do that, your back claws scratch Bartholomew, and he jumps, knocking you off."

Marvin: "As I fall, I grab onto the post of the coat rack."

Ramen: "Yes, and I see him do that and assume that's the new plan, so I jump on the coat rack too."

Marvin: "And our weight knocks the coat rack over, letting us get at the keys."

Class Captain: "That sounds about right. The coat rack comes crashing down, making a lot of noise, but the human's coat flops to the floor and you can see the keys poking out of the pocket."

- ❖ Whether each bid beats the Class Captain's bid (and by how much) determines whether their kitten's contribution to the project was helpful or not.

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If no player's helping bid beat the Class Captain's bid, the Captain describes how the kittens fail, in the same way as they would for a regular conflict. If at least one player's bid beat the Captain's, that player takes the lead in describing how the kittens succeeded. Any other player whose bid beat the Captain's should contribute suggestions about their kitten's role in the success. The Captain should contribute suggestions about the kittens who failed. These kittens should do something unhelpful, but not fatal to the goal.

Multiplayer conflicts and helping should not apply to conflicts over facts. If a player wants to establish a new fact about the world, they are on their own!

Breaking Ties

From time to time, there may be a tie bid. After all, for any card that a player may bid, there are three others in the deck with the same number and color. When a tie happens, the game experiences a lateral change.

At the start of the game, the players established a variety of facts about the world of the story, including NPCs and situations at KSSWK. Not all of these are likely to play big roles in the story as it gets going. Players will usually end up focusing on one or two that stand out as interesting.

When a tie occurs in a conflict, the player gains narrative control as if they had won outright. But instead of describing their kitten's success, they must choose one element of the setup that hasn't played a part in the current scene, and describe how that element intervenes to make the thing they were trying to do irrelevant. So for example, if a player gets a tie when trying to climb up on the table, they may declare that the dog Shania (who was established as an NPC at the beginning of the game but hasn't made an appearance in this scene) runs in and knocks everything off the table. This kind of event is known as a lateral change. Rather than success or failure, the story moved sideways with the addition of this new element.

In a multiplayer conflict, any player who ties will get to create this kind of lateral change in the story. If two or more players tie, they may agree to have the same lateral change affect them both, so

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as not to overcomplicate things. A lateral change may occur at the same time as successes and/or failures in a multiplayer conflict.

In a helping situation, if the highest player bid ties the Class Captain's bid, the player who made that bid should describe a lateral change that affects the project overall. If there is a winning bid but one or more helping players tie, those players who tied are considered to have neither contributed to nor detracted from the overall goal and no lateral change is needed.



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Are those foods for people, or for kitties?

6. FIGHTING AND WRASSLIN'

Kittens may be fierce, but they are tiny. Most of their enemies are much bigger than them, and are unlikely to be defeated by combat alone. On the other hand, kittens love to play-fight. We like to refer to a play fight between kittens as wrasslin' and a real one as a hissyfight.

In brief, physical combat – whether between kittens or between a kitten and an NPC, and whether playful or serious – is handled by the same rules that govern any sort of story conflict, as described in Chapter 5. This short chapter elaborates on a few points that may come up if physical combat occurs in a game.

Avoiding Combat

In general, stories in *Laser Kittens* should be structured to avoid large-scale combat, especially as a climactic event. If you are more familiar with traditional roleplaying games that emphasize building up to a fight against a big boss, this may require a different sort of thinking. Some possible ways that problems may be resolved without fighting include:

- ❖ **Investigation:** The kittens discover some important fact that clarifies the situation, or shows that they have nothing to worry about, or allows another character to fix things. For example, the humans may have gone away and not come back, so the kittens have to find out what happened to them. The result could be that the kittens discover what a “job” is – or that they find the humans have slipped through a crack into another dimension.
- ❖ **Delivery:** The kittens may need to find some important item and bring it back – or conversely, find it and destroy it. For example, if the main human's brother has come to stay at

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KSSWK and is hassling the kittens, they may find and destroy his favorite shirt, prompting him to leave the house.

- ❖ **Persuasion:** The kittens may need to make a deal or peace treaty, or persuade the bad guy to change their ways. For example, if the kittens have been fighting with the rats in the walls over the stash of wet food, they may negotiate a deal with the King of the Rats to share the food.

Player versus Player

Sometimes, two players will engage in conflict with each other, rather than against the world around them. Though this is being addressed in the combat chapter, since fighting is an obvious form of player versus player conflict, the same rules apply to any conflict between two players.

Player versus player combat is resolved in much the same way as ordinary conflict. The only difference is that the Class Captain does not place a bid. Instead, each of the involved players places a bid against the other. The Captain acts as a referee, ensuring that the stakes of the conflict are clearly stated, and giving the final word on which classes may be invoked for bonuses or penalties. Note that two kittens in player versus player conflict may get bonuses or penalties from different classes, if they are approaching the conflict in different ways.

If more than two kittens are involved in a conflict, the Class Captain should help to sort the situation out into a series of manageable conflicts. This may involve resolving certain parts of the larger conflict through a separate set of bids before moving on to another. It may also involve the use of the rules for helping or multiplayer conflicts. For example, if three kittens gang up on a fourth to steal their mouse toy, that would be a helping situation – if any one of the three outbid the one's bid, the gang as a whole would succeed in stealing it.

If there is a tie in player versus player conflict, the player who initiated the conflict is the one to make a lateral change, as described on pages 52-53 for breaking ties.

E. FIGHTING AND WRASSLIN'

Health, Damage, and Death

On your character sheet, you will notice there are no hit points, damage boxes, or other methods for recording health and harm. We deliberately did not include a mechanic for that, because deadly combat is not what *Laser Kittens* is all about.

Kittens are resilient creatures. If a kitten suffers an injury within the context of a scene (e.g., they failed in a bid to run away from an enemy, or to jump down from a high place), that injury should be incorporated into the story. The player should say “yes, and” to the fact of being injured, and take that into account when making choices about their character's behavior. The player, or the Class Captain, may choose to bid differently when dealing with a conflict that might be affected by an injury.

However, there is no direct mechanical impact from being hurt. A kitten still could succeed at all the same things they could before. If a kitten succeeds despite an injury, it is up to the player to explain how that is possible. For example, if a kitten runs away from a bird despite having broken their leg in an earlier scene, perhaps they zigzagged in a way that confused the bird, or perhaps they were able to slide down a slope and pick up speed that way.

Within the scope of a *Laser Kittens* game, a player character cannot die. Kittens may encounter big scary dangers, but those dangers should never be able to actually kill them. It is the responsibility of the Class Captain to be sure never to put the kittens in truly mortal danger. Even if a player fails a conflict bid spectacularly, the Captain ensures that their kitten survives.

Likewise, enemy NPCs do not have hit points or any other way of tracking their injuries. Any harm done to them should be incorporated narratively into the story. When a kitten tries to hurt another character (NPC or PC), they should declare what type of injury they are intending to inflict. It's the Class Captain's responsibility to rule out any preposterously large injury that a player may propose. For example, if a kitten proposes to kill a large dog in one pounce, the Captain should declare that impossible and suggest a more reasonable attack.

KEEPING IT INTERESTING

There are lots of ways that kittens can encounter problems that don't require being injured or risking death. Consider some of the ideas below if you are stumped for ways to challenge players, or to make them suffer from a failed bid:

- ❖ **The kittens get stuck.** A door is closed, trapping the kittens Outside or in the basement.
- ❖ **The kittens lose something important.** A human takes away the catnip, or the wet food all falls down somewhere that the kittens can't reach it.
- ❖ **Misinformation spreads.** A seemingly trustworthy source gives the kittens bad info, maliciously or unintentionally.
- ❖ **Someone gets in trouble.** The humans subject the kittens to punishments or humiliating treatment, such as a stint in Kitty Jail or a bath.

When a player wins a conflict over attempting to injure another character, they may do harm of a severity up to the amount that they proposed when initiating the conflict. The Class Captain may also declare a character (PC or NPC) to be injured as a result of a failed conflict. A failed conflict is the only circumstance in which a PC should be harmed. The Class Captain may decide at their own discretion to have NPCs be injured by other NPCs or other events in the world.

The severity of injuries sustained by any character should be driven by the narrative, not by a mechanical recording of health levels. The key question should not be how much injury a character can sustain; it should be what would make the scene interesting.

7. BEING CLASS CAPTAIN

Laser Kittens does not have a single person assigned to run the game, in the way that a game master or storyteller would in many other roleplaying games. Instead, this job rotates between players over the course of the game. Each scene, the person in charge – called the Class Captain – may be a different player.

There is never a requirement to be Class Captain in *Laser Kittens*. If someone prefers never to hold that role, that's fine. Not everyone enjoys the job of running the game.

As Class Captain, you get to shape the direction of the story. You get to decide what sorts of challenges arise for the kittens. And you get to play all of the NPCs in a scene. Being Class Captain can be a very rewarding experience.

Duties of the Class Captain

While a scene is running, the Class Captain has a variety of jobs. The principal ones are:

- ❖ **Set the premise of the scene.** The Class Captain decides the general outline of what will happen in the scene. While the other players control their own characters' reactions and choices, the Captain's job is to present them with an engaging scenario.
- ❖ **Describe the environment.** Any facts about the environment around the players – from the layout of the house to the presence of particular objects to the paint color – is under the Class Captain's control. The Captain shouldn't contradict facts already established in earlier scenes, but they have free rein over anything not already specified. (See the rules for conflicts over facts on page 49 for a way that other players may influence the content of the environment.)

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- ❖ **Control all NPCs.** The Class Captain is in charge of all of the non-player characters in the scene. The Captain decides when they enter or exit the scene, what they say, and how they behave. The Captain should keep the NPCs' activities consistent with what has been established in previous scenes, with regard to appearance, motives, knowledge, abilities, etc. But anything that has not been definitively established in the past is up for grabs. Thus the Captain is free to flesh out the NPCs, giving added information about who they are and what they're up to.
- ❖ **Call for conflicts, and resolve them.** The Class Captain decides when a conflict, and a bid to resolve it, is necessary. The Captain is the final authority on what things the kittens can try to do in a scene. The Captain is also the final authority on what class (if any) applies to a given conflict. The Captain participates in conflict bids (except player versus player conflicts) by drawing three cards from the deck and choosing one to bid. If the player loses the conflict, it is the Captain's job to describe how they fail at what they were trying to do.
- ❖ **Trigger lasers and describe laser fails.** If a player uses their laser and gets a negative result, it is the Class Captain's job to describe how the laser fails. The Captain should come up with a creative way that the laser backfires on the kittens, scaled in severity to match the total number from the laser. The Captain is also responsible for keeping an eye on lasers' charge levels. If a player has four laser cards flipped over, the Captain must make sure their laser goes off before the scene concludes. The Captain may do this by simply declaring that the laser in question fires.
- ❖ **Decide when the scene ends.** The Class Captain determines when the scene ends and when it's time to pick a new Class Captain. They may make this choice at any time, either when the action has resolved or when there's a cliffhanger.
- ❖ **Distribute new laser cards.** After the scene ends, the Class Captain's last job is to decide which characters in the scene worked toward becoming more mature cats and which didn't, and to distribute new cards for their lasers. This also means that during the scene, the Captain should be paying attention to all of

7. BEING CLASS CAPTAIN

the kittens in the scene and considering their choices.

As you can see, being Class Captain can be a lot of work but also an enjoyable way to shape the story. Having a few players willing to step up and take turns as Class Captain will make your game really shine.

In order to keep track of who is Class Captain, it can be helpful to have some sort of token to pass around. This could be as simple as placing one of the face cards (since they're not used in the game) in front of the Captain. We like to have a headband with a set of fake cat ears that the Class Captain can wear!



Bidding to be Class Captain

Each scene begins with a round of bidding for the Class Captain role. To become Class Captain, a player needs to propose an idea for what the next scene should be about. This does not have to be an elaborate, detailed idea. In fact, it's best to keep your scene ideas simple. This gives the players more room to shape the scene, because the Captain won't be trying to railroad them into a particular outcome. One of the fun things about being Class Captain is getting to see what the other players do with your idea and the strange twists that they put on it!

At the same time, a scene idea should have a compelling hook. The hook tells you what makes this scene worth playing. While tiny kittens are always adorable to watch, not everything that happens to the kittens is interesting enough for a whole scene. A good hook provides some dramatic tension, such as a mystery, a challenge, or a conflict.

An engaging hook also builds on what has happened earlier in the story and moves the plot forward. After the first few scenes, everyone should have a good idea of what the overall plot arc of the

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story is going to be. Dramatic arcs may be “find out what happened to all of the wet food,” or “get the dog to stop harassing the kittens,” or “escape from the alternate dimension behind the washing machine.” An individual scene’s hook would be one building block in that dramatic arc, either something that moves the kittens toward their goal or throws in an exciting complication.

If you’re having trouble thinking of good scene ideas, try picking a card from your hand and then looking at the chart on the next page. It gives some general scene prompts, which you can make specific to your game. The card you use to choose a scene prompt does not have to be the card you use to bid for Class Captain.

Once all of the players have had a moment to think about what scene should come next, the bidding starts. Beginning with the player to the left of the previous scene’s Class Captain, each player gets a chance to propose an idea for the next scene. The proposal should be short, just a sentence or two. You don’t want to spell out the entire scene in advance, or else what would be the fun of playing through it? When you make a proposal, place one card from your hand face-down in front of you as your bid.

A new scene proposal should be at least a little bit different from any others that have been made this round. For example, if one player proposes “Ben comes into the pantry and finds the kittens covered in people food,” another player might propose, “We hear Ben coming but he is momentarily held up talking to Rae so we have time to try to hide.” Of course, a scene proposal may also be wildly different from the other suggestions!

It is permissible to recycle scene ideas between rounds, if the scene in question did not get played but is still relevant. This will mostly come into play when the kittens become separated, so there is a choice of which group’s storyline to follow in a given scene. Each scene should be set later in time than the previous scene that involved the characters in question (assuming that time travel is not part of your story). This ensures that the outcome of the scene will be open-ended – that is, there would be no need to force a certain outcome in order to get the situation in place for a subsequent scene that has already been played.

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SCENE PROMPTS

+10: A human returns.	-10: A human leaves.
+9: A professor expresses approval.	-9: A professor expresses displeasure.
+8: The thing you were looking for is there.	-8: The thing you were looking for is not there.
+7: An encounter with a friendly stranger.	-7: An encounter with a hostile stranger.
+6: A door that is usually closed is open.	-6: A door that is usually open is closed.
+5: Someone finds a useful clue.	-5: Someone finds a misleading piece of information.
+4: The weather takes a turn for the better.	-4: The weather takes a turn for the worse.
+3: Something brings together characters who were separated.	-3: Something separates characters who were together.
+2: A tempting noise or smell.	-2: A scary noise or smell.
+1: A trip outside the house.	-1: Exploring a secret part of the house.

In a four- or five-player game, the previous Class Captain may not bid to be Class Captain again. They must sit out a turn before taking on the Class Captain role. In a three-player game, one player may be Class Captain two scenes in a row. No one is ever required to bid to be Class Captain. If a player prefers to let others always be Captain, that's fine, as long as enough other players are willing to take the Captain role.

Some players find the Class Captain bid phase to be a good way to get rid of bad cards from their hands. Since all bids are discarded, a player may deliberately toss out a scene idea and bid with a bad card, in the expectation that they won't win the bid and thus won't have to lead that scene. This can be a good way for players who are more shy about the Captain role to ease into bidding on it. But any player who takes this strategy should be careful. If everyone else is

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also bidding just to throw away bad cards, you could get stuck having to run that scene after all. So make sure that the scene you suggest is one that will work in the game, just in case.

As an optional rule, you may allow players to second others' bids for Class Captain. The players should decide in advance if they want to use the seconding rules for their game. Seconding can be fun, because it can allow players to endorse each other's ideas, and it allows players who do not want to be Class Captain to influence the direction of the story. Nevertheless, some people don't like seconding, because it can cause conflict or make players feel pushed into the Captain role.

If you are using the seconding rules, once everyone has had a chance to put forward a bid, anyone who did not propose a scene idea has a chance to second a bid. To do this, the seconding player takes a card from their hand and places it face-down next to the bid of another player.

Once all of the bids (and seconds, if applicable) have been made, the prospective Class Captains flip over their bids. If there is a second, add together the values on all of the cards. The highest total wins, and the person who proposed that scene idea becomes Class Captain.

If there is a tie for Class Captain, each player bids another card from their hand to break the tie. Repeat this as necessary until a winner is chosen. Other players may not second a tiebreaker bid.

After the Class Captain is chosen, everyone who placed a bid or seconded a bid discards their bid card, and draws a new one to return their hand to five.

Starting a Scene

To start off a scene, the Class Captain should restate the premise of the scene, giving a quick description of the situation at the start of the scene. At this point, any player who wants their kitten to be in the scene should state that, and flip over one of the face-down cards in their laser. The card the player flips may be any card – it does not have to be the next one in line.

The Class Captain cannot force any kitten to be in a scene, nor

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BIDDING TO BE CLASS CAPTAIN

In the last scene, the kittens panicked when Jake, their human's cat-hating brother, came into the kitchen. Based on the results of their conflict bids, two kittens (Favonia and Marcellus, played by Alicia and Deshawn) ended up in one of the cabinets, while two other kittens (Lusia and Sextus, played by Maisha and Julia) ran up the stairs.

Maisha was Class Captain for the previous scene, so she can't be Captain again. Alicia starts the bidding by suggesting: "In the next scene, Lusia and Sextus go looking for the birds, hoping that they will help to rescue their compatriots from the kitchen." She puts down a bid from her hand.

Deshawn offers a different idea: "I think that in this scene, Favonia and Marcellus discover that inside the cabinet there is a strange tunnel leading off somewhere mysterious."

Julia considers these two ideas. She had thought about bidding, but her idea was a lot like Alicia's. So instead of putting out her own bid, she decides to second Alicia's bid.

All the cards are flipped over. Alicia bid a red 4, and Julia added a black 5 to it, for a total of +1. That's not enough to beat Deshawn's bid of a black 4, so Deshawn becomes the Class Captain for the next scene.

can they bar a kitten from being in a scene. However, a player should be able to give a plausible reason for their kitten to be present or not present. For example, a player might say "I'm not in this scene because after we got to the bottom of the stairs, I was too scared to go into the kitchen," or "After hearing that everyone made it safely down the stairs in the last scene, I decided to join the kitchen mission after all." That being said, players should generally be accommodating to the direction of the story in choosing whether to join a scene. If it makes sense for your kitten to be there, jump in and make it happen!

There is no limit to how often a kitten can be in a scene. Obviously, the game won't be much fun if you never join a scene.

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Players and the Class Captain should work together to ensure that all kittens get some time in the spotlight.

The Class Captain's own character may or may not be in the scene. Sometimes, it will make sense for the Captain's kitten to be part of the action, while other times the Captain will be running a scene that involves a different group of kittens who have gone off on a separate adventure. The involvement of the Captain's character is up to the player. Some players find it difficult to manage both the Class Captain role and playing an individual character, and that is fine. It is OK for the Captain's character to be a relatively minor actor in the scene. It is generally bad manners for the Captain to plan a scene aimed at spotlighting their own character at the expense of everyone else. The Captain also should not use their own character to railroad the plot, forcing events when the other players clearly want things to go in a different direction. But as long as a player can be respectful and generous about how their character works within the scene, they are welcome to be part of it.

As the scene progresses, the Class Captain describes what is going on in the world around the kittens. The Captain also prompts the players to describe what their kittens do. The Captain's narration should provide the kittens with the opportunity for interesting choices. Events happening around them should threaten them or tempt them, scare them or intrigue them.

While the Class Captain is in charge of the scene, the players should not simply be passive and reactive. The Captain provides a framework for the story, but all of the players are responsible for helping to move the story forward. Every scene is a collaboration between all of the players.

Ending a Scene

The Class Captain is the ultimate authority on when a scene ends. There are two basic philosophies on ending a scene: ending at a resolution or ending at a cliffhanger.

Ending at a resolution is the simpler way to note the end of a scene. Each scene will be centered around something happening. A new threat enters and the kittens have to react to it, or the kittens

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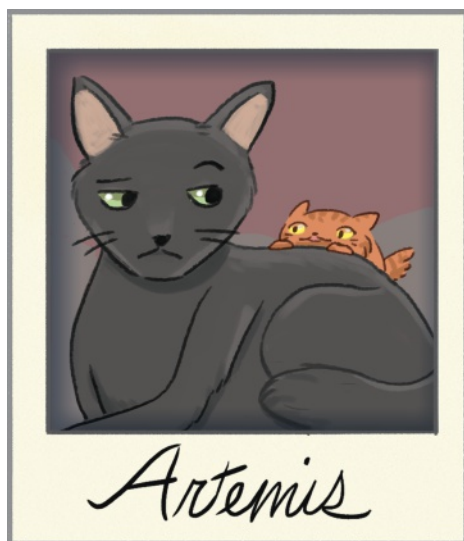
Kittens love to play in the snow!

make and carry out a plan, etc. The scene will have a moment of tension, and then something will happen that moves the story forward. Once the climax has happened, there will be a noticeable lull in the action. The kittens will be pausing to rest, or to consider their next step.

Such a moment of resolution is a good point to end the scene, because the idea introduced by the Class Captain has now run its course. It has been absorbed into the story, and now it is time for a new Captain to take over and decide where the story goes. The next Captain brings in new ideas or a plot twist to drive the action toward another moment of tension.

Ending on a cliffhanger is, in some ways, just the opposite. The scene will drive toward a moment of tension, and then the Class Captain cuts it off just before it can resolve. The scene will end with a major uncertainty hanging over the kittens. The point of this sort of scene end is to pass the baton to a new Class Captain who can help decide how the tension shakes out. For example, the premise of a scene might be that the kittens are trying to break into the basement. After much struggle, they have finally gotten the door

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open. If the Captain ends the scene at this moment, the question of what the kittens find in the basement is thrown open to the other players, who may bid to shape a scene around different ideas of what is in the basement. Perhaps one player will suggest that the basement is a well-furnished den where several humans are watching the big game, while another proposes that the basement is unfinished and full of spiders.

Lasers

Once the scene is called to an end, it is time for the Class Captain to judge the kittens' progress and hand out cards for their lasers.

The first step is to decide which characters acted immaturely, and which ones acted maturely. The Class Captain should go around the table and make that judgment for each character that was in the scene. If the Captain's character was in the scene, the other players should collectively decide whether the Captain's character acted maturely or immaturely. Sometimes, a character's actions aren't clearly mature or immature. This often happens when a character doesn't do much because the scene was more focused on others. In that case, the character can be rated as "neither."

Next, the Class Captain should turn over cards from the deck equal to the total number of players. The Captain should pick one card to give to each player who acted maturely or immaturely. Players whose characters acted neither maturely nor immaturely do not get a card. If there are too many good cards or too many bad cards among the ones that got flipped over, the Captain may decide not to give a card to a certain player, to avoid hurting them if they acted maturely, or rewarding them if they acted immaturely. Any cards not handed out are discarded.

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After being given a card by the Captain, the player adds it to their laser as described on page 32.

Being a Good Class Captain

Being Class Captain is an important responsibility and potentially one of the most fun parts of playing *Laser Kittens*. Here are some principles that can help you be a better Class Captain:

- ❖ **Describe the scene evocatively.** The Class Captain is in charge of the whole environment, so make it count. Give compelling descriptions of the places the kittens visit to help the players immerse themselves in the world and get invested in what's happening.
- ❖ **Leave room for the next Class Captain.** At the same time, don't get too bogged down in detail. Be economical about what you describe, focusing on the elements most important for the current scene. This leaves room for future Class Captains to add to the world in ways that are good for their scenes.
- ❖ **Flesh out the NPCs.** As Class Captain, you get control over any NPCs in the scene, including new ones that you introduce. Make the most of it! Remember that every NPC has their own backstory, their own motives, thoughts, and complexity. As long as you stay consistent with what has already been established about an NPC, you can feel free to add and elaborate as much as you like.
- ❖ **Provoke but don't push.** The Class Captain's most important job is to give the other players a good reason to act. The Captain should set up scenarios that demand a response of some kind from the kittens. However, that response should not force them in a particular direction. The Captain should avoid being wedded to a particular outcome of their scene. The players should be able to make their own choices and their own failures and successes, without feeling like they are being driven toward a specific ending.
- ❖ **Be a fan of the kittens.** The characters in the game are, after all, tiny kittens – and what's more adorable than that? The Class Captain should want to see the kittens show off their best moves

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– even when their “best” involves being a clumsy goof! The Captain should create opportunities for failure to happen in interesting ways, but the Captain should not see themselves as an opponent of the kittens.

- ❖ **Share the spotlight.** Especially with a larger number of players, there may be a lot of kittens in a particular scene. And some players may not be as assertive about pushing their kitten into the action. The Class Captain should encourage participation from all players. This could mean simply asking the shy player what their kitten is doing when they haven’t been very active. Or it could mean creating circumstances that specifically draw in that character.
- ❖ **“Yes, And.”** The Class Captain role rotates among players, so there is no secret background story to keep everything consistent. Instead, players are expected to use the principle of “yes, and” when building on the work of past Captains. “Yes” means to accept everything laid down previously – don’t directly contradict, or indirectly sideline, previous Captains’ ideas and statements about the world. “And” means to build on that previously established material, making good use of it and adding your own twists to it. When you create something while Class Captain, you are putting it out for all players. It no longer belongs to you alone, and you should accept what other players might do with your ideas even if it’s different from where you hoped an idea would go.

B. EPILOGUES AND FOREVER HOMES

As a game of *Laser Kittens* proceeds, a plot arc should emerge. The main conflict in the story should drive the action toward a climax and resolution. This indicates the point at which a session of play should end.

In most cases, a session of *Laser Kittens* will take around two to three hours (including setup and character creation). This is enough time for a major issue to arise, be played out, and come to a resolution.

The resolution will usually be a happy one. *Laser Kittens* is a game intended for stories with a positive ending – comedies, in the ancient Greek sense of stories that work out well for their characters. Of course, a game of *Laser Kittens* will often be a comedy in the modern sense of a funny story as well! Characters may get a certain amount of comeuppance or humbling for their sins or flaws. But they should learn from their experiences, in a way that allows them to move forward as better and more awesome cats.

It is not strictly necessary that the kittens learn any big moral lesson. In fact, sometimes they may seem to learn the opposite of what their humans and professors wanted them to learn. But in either case, they should have something that they take away from their adventure that gives them more confidence in themselves and a better handle on the big world around them.

At some point during the game, players should come to a consensus that the last scene that they played was a good climax to the story. Or they may form a consensus that the upcoming scene will be the last. If there is disagreement about whether the session should end at a certain point, a player may simply place a bid for Class Captain, but with a proposal to end the session rather than a proposal for the content of a scene. If other players agree or disagree with this

assessment, they may contribute to that player's bid, or to the bid from another player who has an idea for another scene.

If you are playing a campaign, the end of the session is when the player advancement rules described on page 75-76 come into play. If you are playing a single-session game, or if your recent session is the last one you plan to play in a longer campaign, then it is time for the epilogues.

Epilogues

The Knoll Street School for Wayward Kittens is a foster home, not a Forever Home. Kittens come to KSSWK for a few months in order to grow up and learn to be awesome cats. Eventually, they will return to the animal shelter. There, they will get the vaccinations and other medical treatment that they need, and usually be spayed or neutered. Then they will go up for adoption. If they have learned their lessons well, someone will be excited to adopt them.

When a kitten is adopted, they go off (usually by themselves, but sometimes in pairs) to their Forever Home. It could be very different from KSSWK. There may be other cats and other animals who live there, or the kitten may be the lone pet. There may be many humans or just one. They may be nice or they may be jerks.

Sometimes a kitten does not find a Forever Home. Some cats have surly personalities that don't appeal to potential adopters. Humans also have prejudices against cats that they think are ugly, or that have visible disabilities (e.g., a missing leg or cataract in their eye), or who are black (because of superstitions that black cats are bad luck). This is sad, though it may work out well for your kitten, depending on their personality. Other times, a cat may manage to escape from the animal shelter and live on the streets.

Some shelters will euthanize animals that they believe will not get adopted, especially if they are short on space. It is a good idea to check with the other players if you want this to happen to your kitten in *Laser Kittens*, to make sure they are comfortable with this type of outcome. It is fine for one player to declare that the animal shelter where the kittens go in the game is a no-kill shelter.

B. EPILOGUES AND FOREVER HOMES



There are many different kinds of Forever Homes.

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When it is time for the epilogues, players should take turns (in any order) describing what happens to their kitten when they return to the animal shelter and go up for adoption. Their epilogue should answer questions like:

- ❖ What kind of Forever Home (if any) are they adopted into?
- ❖ What lessons do they take away from the adventure they had at KSSWK?
- ❖ What is their life like after KSSWK?

Once all players have given their epilogue, the game comes to a conclusion. Hooray!

9. LONGER PLAY

Laser Kittens was originally designed for one-shot games, telling a complete story in two to three hours. However, it is possible to play a multiple session campaign. Most of the rules will be the same, but there are a few added twists.

The first thing to keep in mind is that kittens will usually stay in a foster home for about one to two months. So a campaign involving the same litter of kittens will cover a relatively short amount of in-world time. Of course, wild things might happen in your game that get around this limit (e.g., time travel), but for the most part you should remember that kittens grow up fairly fast.

Because there is no single person guiding the story in *Laser Kittens*, it can be tricky to plan out a longer campaign. Each session would have to pick up from where the last one left off, which is in turn highly dependent on who happens to become Class Captain at various points in the session. It may be helpful to have a conversation among the players about the overall direction of the story, so that everyone is on the same page and working toward the same goals even as they insert their own ideas when they become Class Captain.

A longer campaign may be episodic, with each session's story standing alone but using the same characters. Or it may have an overarching thread, with each session contributing to a larger plot. Either approach can work, and both of them use the same rules.

Getting a New Report Card

One of the main changes in a longer campaign is that your kitten's grades can change. Grades can change in two ways: studying and learning lessons. Each of these changes makes use of a five-

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point grade scale: A+, A, B, C, D. Kittens can't get an F and fail their classes, because they're too adorable!

Studying happens at the end of each session. Each kitten is able to adjust their study habits, putting more effort into some classes and less effort into others. This will be reflected in changes to their grades. At the end of a session, each player may raise one of their grades by one point on the scale. If they do this, they must lower one of their other grades by one point. Studying may be used to even out grades, or to make some more extreme at the expense of others. The key thing is that studying is a trade-off – you have to get worse at something in order to have time to get better at something else.

At the end of a scene, a player may also propose that they have learned their current lesson. (Remember that for longer play, each character will need a lesson as defined on page 42.) Their learning is then put up to a vote. Each other player should make sure they have at least one red and one black card in their hand (grabbing an extra from the deck if necessary). Then they should place one card face-down in front of the player who thinks they learned their lesson. Place a black card if you think the player learned their lesson, or a red card if you think they did not.

The player who thinks they learned their lesson should take the cards, shuffle them (to anonymize the vote), and then look at their colors. If a majority of cards are black, then they have successfully learned their lesson. They should first cross out that lesson on their character sheet. Next, they will need to create a new lesson. Having matured in one respect, what is the next step for their kitten to grow up into an awesome cat? Finally, the player should raise one of their grades by one point on the scale. Ideally, this should be a class that relates in some way to the lesson that was learned. Feel free to be creative in making this connection!

If a majority of the lesson vote is red, then the kitten did not learn their lesson. The player must now lower one of their grades one point on the grading scale. If there is a tie, the outcome is uncertain and the player does not learn their lesson fully, but does not take a penalty. In these situations, the existing lesson remains active on the player's character sheet.

9. LONGER PLAY

CHANGING GRADES

At the beginning of the first session of the game, Smörgåskatt had these grades:

Political Science:	A
Geometry:	B
Film Studies:	C
Computer Science:	B
Music:	A

After the adventures of the first session, Smörgåskatt has found that Geometry seems to be a lot more useful (e.g., for jumping up on things) than Music. So she decides to study Geometry more and Music less, changing her grades to:

Political Science:	A
Geometry:	A
Film Studies:	C
Computer Science:	B
Music:	B

After the second session, Smörgåskatt feels like that shift in studying practices was a good one, so she would like to continue in that direction. She has also learned one of her lessons, so she gets an additional point. She decides to add this additional point to her Computer Science score:

Political Science:	A
Geometry:	A+
Film Studies:	C
Computer Science:	A
Music:	C





Kitties can get all tired out from their adventures!

10. EXAMPLE OF PLAY

The following is a shortened transcript of part of a hypothetical game of *Laser Kittens*. It is designed to give you an idea of the kind of things that could happen in a game, and how the mechanics fit into the story.

Amar invited four of his friends to come over to play *Laser Kittens*. After going through setup, they have come up with their player characters. The group decided to name their kittens after famous singers, but with cat puns.

Bing Clawsby, played by Amar. Bing is a black and white kitten with a dangerously insatiable curiosity. His laser is Clue Clue Clue.

Aretha Felinekin, played by Deb. Aretha is a tabby kitten who is very worried about getting into trouble or upsetting the humans. Her laser is New New New.

Mewciano Pavarotti, played by Zoe. Mewciano is a tiny orange kitten with a very loud voice who rarely shuts up. His laser is Zoo Zoo Zoo.

Freddie Mercukitty, played by Rich. Freddie is a goofball who doesn't take professors' lessons seriously. He is a tabby who looks just like Aretha. His laser is Two Two Two.

Celia Clawz, played by Teri. Celia is a gray kitten who is always quick to take charge, but she doesn't always know what's going on. Her laser is Shoo Shoo Shoo.

AMAR: Wow, these look like great characters. I'm excited to see what happens in our story. I guess since it's my house, I'll start the first bid for Class Captain. I think in the first scene, Professor Monks should give us an introduction to our geography class by

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explaining the locations of important things like Outside, The Vet, and Russia.

TERI: Well, I think what should happen is that Professor Monks is supposed to be there to give us our lesson, but he doesn't show up. So we have to figure out what to do.

RICH: Ooh, I like that one. I'm not bidding because I want Teri to win.

ZOE: Yeah, I'm happy with those two options.

DEB: Me too. Flip them over!

AMAR: OK, looks like Teri bid a black 5 and I only had a black 2, so Teri, you're our first Class Captain. Take it away!

TERI: Awesome. Who wants to be in this scene? ...Looks like everyone has flipped a card, so we're all in it. OK, so we've only just come to Knoll Street School for Wayward Kittens a couple days ago. The humans have us shut up in the kitten room – here, I'll draw it on the house sheet. It's right here on the second floor. But we have seen an adult cat around, and he talked to us through the gap under the door yesterday and said he was named Monks and he was going to come back today to give us our first lesson.

AMAR: Bing says "Oh boy! I can't wait to find out all about this world!"

TERI: But he hasn't come back! We've been waiting all day, and we haven't seen him.

RICH: Freddie says "Pssshht. Those professors. You never can trust them! I say we make up our own geography lesson."

TERI: Celia waves all of the kittens over. "OK, we need a plan. Something terrible might have happened to him! I think the first thing we need to do is to get out of this room so we can search."

AMAR: I want to jump up and see if I can open the door handle! I bet if I get up on the bed I can reach it!

TERI: OK, let's make that a conflict. Pick your bid, and I'll take these three from the deck and make a bid against you. Hmmm... OK, ready? Flip them over!

AMAR: Dang!

TERI: Sorry, I got all good cards! That's a red 2 against my black 7, so you fail. I'm going to say you take a flying leap, but you miss

10. EXAMPLE OF PLAY



Laser Kittens: a game about cats, for people

the door to the room and sail into the closet, where you land on a pile of old files.

AMAR: Oof! Well, I'll remember these for later. Maybe there's something useful – if only we could read!

TERI: Celia says "OK, now that Bing has got that out of his system, does anyone else have any ideas?"

ZOE: Mewciano says – or really, shouts – "I know! I can meow really loud and the humans will come and open the door, then everyone can rush out."

TERI: Celia thinks that sounds like a good idea. What does everyone else think?

DEB: Aretha is all for it. She goes and hides beside the door so she's ready to rush out.

ZOE: Let's do this! "MEOW MEOW MEOW MEOW!"

TERI: Rather than do a conflict for this, I'm just going to decree that you do get a human's attention. The door opens and we see Rae standing there. "What is going on, kitty?" she says.

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DEB: I rush out!

AMAR: Me too!

TERI: OK, this sounds like a multiplayer conflict. Everyone except Zoe – that includes me, because Celia also wants to get out – put down your bid. Now let me select my bid as Class Captain... OK, ready? Aha! So I bid a red 2, to try to make it easy. Rich and I both beat that, as did Amar. But it looks like Deb had a red 3, so she doesn't make it.

RICH: Freddie zooms past Rae's feet and ducks into the linen closet by the top of the stairs. Let me add that to the house sheet...

AMAR: Bing follows him.

TERI: Celia does as well. Now, Mewciano was staying in the room as a distraction, and Aretha failed to escape. I'm going to say she tried to run, but she bonked into Rae's shoe and fell on the floor. So now Rae is looking into the room and she sees just two kittens, Mewciano and Aretha. What will she do next? I think that's a good time to end the scene.

AMAR: Sounds good. How did we do on our lessons?

TERI: Well, let's see. Bing made that ridiculous leap and fell into the closet – that doesn't seem very mature. And Freddie didn't care that our professor had gone missing.

RICH: Aww, man.

TERI: Yep, sorry. Mewciano did well, though. I would say Aretha was mostly following along in this scene, so I wouldn't rate her as mature or immature.

DEB: That's fair. What about Celia?

TERI: Well, that's up to you all to decide. What do you think?

RICH: She took charge, but it all worked out, so I would count that as mature enough.

TERI: Everyone else agree? OK, that's two good cards to hand out and two bad ones. Let me flip over the top five from the deck here... Let's see, I'll give this black 8 to Mewciano, and take the black 4 for myself. And here's a couple red 6s for Freddie and Bing. Aretha just stays as-is. Now, everyone who got a card, you have to swap it for one of the cards already in your laser, either face-up or face-down.

10. EXAMPLE OF PLAY

RICH: I've got a black 3 showing, so I'm going to swap this in for one of the face-down ones and hope for the best... Dang, that would have been a black 5. I guess I'm learning my lesson here!

TERI: Yep! OK, so that's it for scene one. I can't be Class Captain again, so who wants to bid for it?

ZOE: I think the next scene should deal with the three who got out of the room. They made it out, but they ran straight into the dog, Jackson.

AMAR: Well, I want to do a scene with the kittens who stay in the room. Rae heard all the screaming and she thinks the kittens are sick. So it's time for – dun dun dunnn! – medicine!

RICH: I'm cool with either of those ideas.

DEB: Me too.

AMAR: OK, let's flip them – Aha! My red 5 beats your red 9!

ZOE: Yeah, I was just trying to dump that card from my hand.

AMAR: Well, it worked. So, I'm Class Captain now. Bing is out of the room, so he's obviously not in this scene. Are Mewciano and Aretha both good?

ZOE: Yep! Let me just flip this next card in my laser...

DEB: Same here.

AMAR: OK. So you just saw your three littermates skedaddle out the door. Rae is looking very flustered. She says "Oh no, poor kitty! Has your eye infection come back?"

ZOE: Wait, do I understand what she's saying?

AMAR: No, you don't speak People, but you have heard this phrase "eye infection" before, and it usually means bad news! The last time she said that, you got these awful drops squirted right in your eye.

ZOE: Oh no! I think I'm going to scoot into the closet.

AMAR: Sounds like a conflict. Place your bid, and let me get mine... Aha, your black 3 beats my red 3.

ZOE: Great. Mewciano scoots way back into the closet, where Rae can't reach him.

AMAR: Yep, Rae stumbles into the closet, and she's knocking over clothes and those piles of papers, but she can't reach Mewciano back in the corner.

LASER KITTENS

DEB: But Aretha can't see that! "Oh no, Mewciano, you're going to get medicine! I'm going to use my laser to try to send Rae back downstairs – New New New!"

AMAR: Awesome, our first laser of the game. What's the score?

DEB: Oh dear. Black 3, red 8, black ace, red ace, red 5. That's negative 10. I guess it goes badly for me.

AMAR: Oh you bet. Let's see. Your laser returns things to their original state, like returning Rae to where she was downstairs. But since you got a negative result, it doesn't do that. Here's what happens instead. Your laser goes off, but it hits the clothes in the closet. A bunch of them are wool, so they return to being wool on actual sheep. Now the closet is full of sheep!

ZOE: Well, my laser says it controls other creatures, so this sounds like a perfect time to use it. "Zoo Zoo Zoo!" Here we go – black 7, black 7, red ace, black 6, red 5. A major success!

AMAR: Yep, that's a positive 14. What does your laser do?

ZOE: Well, I think the sheep understand what was done to them, and they're not happy. It's not just the whole shearing thing, it's also that Rae had terrible fashion taste. Imagine someone not only taking your fur, but they're making ugly clothes out of it. The sheep surround Rae, and they pick her up and take her out of the room to face sheep justice for her crimes.

AMAR: Sounds good! Well, that is probably a good spot to end the scene. We only had two player characters in this one, so the maturity thing is pretty easy. I'm sorry, but Aretha using that laser was pretty misguided.

DEB: Yeah it was, I just wanted to see what would happen!

AMAR: What's going to happen is you're going to get a bad card! Let me flip over a couple here... OK, once you refill your laser, you'll need to swap one of them for this red 8. And Mewciano, you did pretty well, so you get this black 4. And that's it. Who wants to be the next Class Captain?

ZOE: I still want to do that scene where they run into the dog outside the room.

DEB: Yeah, it should be an outside scene, but let's say they were hiding until the sheep came running by. Since we got that whole

10. EXAMPLE OF PLAY

wild sheep thing happening in the last scene!

RICH: Dogs and sheep – well, to continue the theme, I think they run into some rats instead.

TERI: I'm good. Dogs, sheep, or rats – flip them and let's see. Black 9, red 6, black 8. Looks like Zoe has this one.

ZOE: Perfect. OK, are Freddie, Celia, and Bing all in on this scene?

AMAR: Yep.

RICH: Of course.

TERI: Let's do this.

ZOE: OK. So, you got outside. We established that there's a linen closet that you hid in. Outside the closet, you can hear a bunch of sniffing.

RICH: Freddie says "Let me handle this!" He goes out to see what it is.

ZOE: It's Jackson, the house dog. Jackson is a corgi, so he's not a very big dog, but from a kitten's point of view he's huge. And he sees you.

RICH: Freddie says "Hey there mate, what's going on? Have you seen Professor Monks?"

ZOE: Well, he's a dog, so he doesn't speak Cat. Everything you're saying just sounds like "meow meow meow" to him. He barks back something in Dog, but you don't understand it.

AMAR: But what if he's telling us something important? There might be a clue in what he's saying. So I'm going to use my laser – Clue Clue Clue!

ZOE: Lots of lasers here! OK, what does yours add up to?

AMAR: Ummmm, not good. Red 6, red 4, red 10, red 7, red 2. Ouch.

ZOE: Ouch is right. OK, you wanted a clue, and you're going to get one. So, your vision goes a bit blurry, and you can see Jackson's head looming toward you. And his barks start to turn into language you can understand. He's saying "Monks went Outside. He had to fight the Russians. But they have captured him. Poor Monks, a captive of the Russians." Then it fades, and Jackson goes back to just barking.

AMAR: Wow – did you hear that?

TERI: Hear what? Jackson making all that racket barking?

AMAR: No, he gave us a clue about Monks! He said Monks went Outside, and got captured by the Russians!

LASER KITTENS

RICH: Are you sure?

AMAR: When has my laser ever failed me before?

RICH: Point. OK, what do we do? We don't know how to get to Russia – that was what Monks was going to teach us.

AMAR: I don't know...

ZOE: Just then, you hear a bunch of bleating, and a laser that sounds like “Zoo Zoo Zoo!” The door to the kitten room bursts open, and a dozen sheep run by, with Rae on their backs.

AMAR: Well that's odd.

RICH: I'm going along with them! They might be going to Russia – Russia has sheep, right?

ZOE: Um, I guess. A kitten wouldn't know any better. So how are you going along?

RICH: I'm going to jump up and grab their wool.

ZOE: OK, that's a conflict. Make your bid... Oh, a red 6. Lucky for you I bid a red 9.

RICH: “Lucky” – I was trying to just dump that card!

ZOE: Well, I wanted to see what happens if you go along. So, you succeeded – tell us how it works.

RICH: OK. Well, I jump and grab the wool of one of the sheep, and claw my way up onto its back. It hardly notices, because it's so busy carrying Rae away.

TERI: I think we should go rendezvous with Mewciano and Aretha to strategize with this new information. What do you think, Bing?

AMAR: Sounds good to me. The door is wide open.

ZOE: In that case, let's end the scene there. Freddie, that was a pretty poor life choice you made there, so I rate you immature. Bing, your laser was a massive fail – but you were trying to do the right thing, so I count that mature. Celia didn't do much this scene, so I think it's a wash for her. Let's see, I've got a black 9 for Bing, and a red 3 for Freddie. And that's scene three!

Where did Professor Monks really go? How will Freddie get away from those sheep (and do they need to rescue Rae)? The only way to find out is to play *Laser Kittens*!

II. CHARACTER AND SETUP SHEETS

The following pages contain the sheets and charts you'll need to set up a game of *Laser Kittens*.

At minimum, you'll need one house sheet, plus one character sheet per player. This book includes two character sheets on facing pages, so that you can photocopy them together and cut the page in half to make two character sheets.

You may find it helpful to also photocopy the other setup sheets, so that more people can look at them at the same time.

You can also download copies of these materials from our website, for ease of printing.

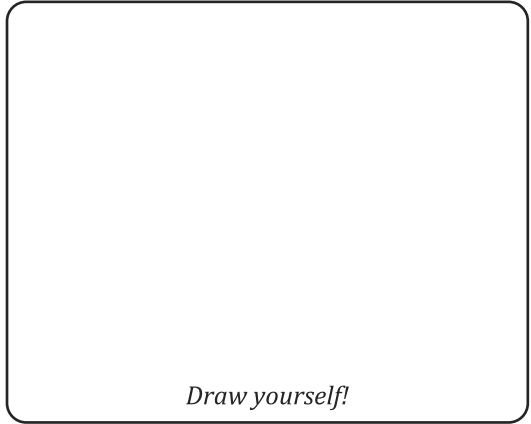
LASER KITTENS

Character Sheet

NAME _____

Laser: _____

Laser Description:



Draw yourself!

CLASSES

Name

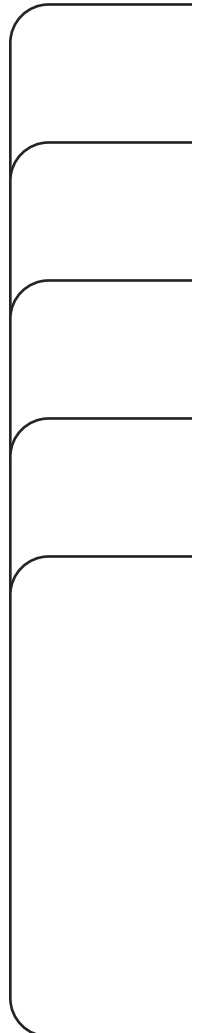
Grade

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
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LESSONS

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LASER CARDS



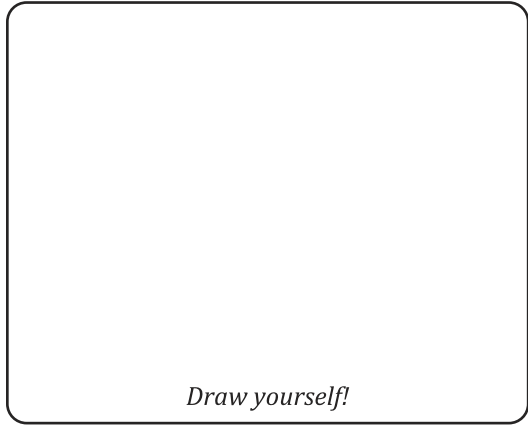
LASER KITTENS

Character Sheet

NAME _____

Laser: _____

Laser Description:



Draw yourself!

CLASSES

Name

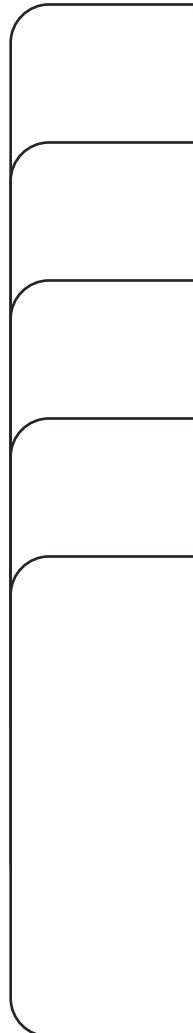
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LESSONS

_____	[]
_____	[]
_____	[]
_____	[]

LASER CARDS



LASERS

- Black 10** **Achoo Achoo Achoo!** It's not very fun when little kitties get sick – but now you also control the kitty medicines.
- Black 9** **Chew Chew Chew!** What kitties want more than anything is food, and you can give it to them. Just hope it's a tasty kind.
- Black 8** **Clue Clue Clue!** Important information becomes known to those who want it bad enough.
- Black 7** **Coo Coo Coo!** You have the ability to use your adorable ways to soothe even the biggest tantrum.
- Black 6** **Crew Crew Crew!** You are always the leader of your kitten posse.
- Black 5** **Dew Dew Dew!** Water, water, everywhere, whether it just gets you a little damp or causes buckets to pour.
- Black 4** **Drew Drew Drew!** Humans make all these funny little pictures on papers. Maybe instead of just sitting on them, you can figure out what they mean, or even make your own.
- Black 3** **Eww Eww Eww!** Sometimes kittens make a mess. If you have a poopy butt or gravy on your head, surely you can use this to your advantage.
- Black 2** **Few Few Few!** Plenty becomes scarcity. Things disappear. The many have become one.
- Black 1** **Hew Hew Hew!** Pounce! Grab! Break all the things!

LASERS

- Red 10** **Loo Loo Loo!** Grants control over the litter box, the most important of kitten appliances.
- Red 9** **Mew Mew Mew!** You are a siren amongst cats.
- Red 8** **New New New!** Returns things to their original state. This might fix them if they're broken, but if they're not broken...
- Red 7** **Shoo Shoo Shoo!** You can make them go away. Far, far away.
- Red 6** **Sue Sue Sue!** Somebody's going to get in big trouble, whether it's a swat from one of the professors or being locked up in Kitty Jail.
- Red 5** **True True True!** A kitten lie detector. Just make sure you really want to hear the truth.
- Red 4** **Two Two Two!** Seeing double, indistinguishable twins, multiplying fishes and loaves, permanent doppelgangers...
- Red 3** **View View View!** You have the ability to see better than any other kitten.
- Red 2** **Woo Woo Woo!** Excitement! Mass panic! Rioting in the streets!
- Red 1** **Zoo Zoo Zoo!** Non-felines of the world appear – at the window, on TV, or in your home.

SITUATIONS

- Black 10** The litter boxes are always full.
- Black 9** There is an elaborate climbing post that looks like it's about to fall down.
- Black 8** Big dogs and loud birds live here too.
- Black 7** There are secret passages behind the walls leading to strange and mysterious lands.
- Black 6** Nothing to eat but that gross dry food.
- Black 5** There is one cardboard box that you fit *perfectly* in.
- Black 4** The humans are doing something very, very interesting in the bathroom.
- Black 3** Something important is inside the refrigerator.
- Black 2** A door or window is open, leading to Outside.
- Black 1** The automatic food dispenser and water fountain are broken!
- Red 10** The humans have piles of interesting papers laying around.
- Red 9** The door at the end of the hall has never been opened by any kitty.
- Red 8** Kitties are sick, and the humans are talking about taking you to the vet.
- Red 7** Someone is on the comfy couch where you like to sleep.
- Red 6** Strange visitors have come to the house.

SITUATIONS

- Red 5** That nice warm sunshine has gone away!
- Red 4** There is a secret stash of toys under the couch or behind the fridge.
- Red 3** Uh oh, it's kitten bath time!
- Red 2** The humans have left a pile of clean, warm clothes fresh out of the dryer.
- Red 1** What is all that white stuff on the ground Outside?

CLASSES

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Black 10 | Physics | Red 10 | Gymnastics |
| Black 9 | Geometry | Red 9 | Film Studies |
| Black 8 | Zoology | Red 8 | Literature |
| Black 7 | Chemistry | Red 7 | Philosophy |
| Black 6 | Astronomy | Red 6 | Paleontology |
| Black 5 | Political Science | Red 5 | Interior Design |
| Black 4 | History | Red 4 | Electrical Engineering |
| Black 3 | Geography | Red 3 | Painting |
| Black 2 | Music | Red 2 | First Aid |
| Black 1 | Computer Science | Red 1 | Culinary Arts |

NPCS: PROFESSORS

- Black 10** **Professor Candy:** A battle-hardened loner with a notch in his ear and a missing tooth.
- Black 9** **Professor Sesame:** She sings for her food all day, and wants to be friends with everyone, human and cat alike.
- Black 8** **Professor Pooka:** He is an expert at getting into places that cats should not be (page 53).
- Black 7** **Professor Gizmo:** A sweet old cat who can always be found laying on a keyboard or other electronic device (page 30).
- Black 6** **Professor Charcoal:** She is always wide-eyed with amazement at the world around her, and she has surprising insight into the canine mind (page 21).
- Black 5** **Professor Annie:** The ghost of a former KSSWK resident who still appears to the kittens. A gruff exterior but a big softie inside.
- Black 4** **Professor Yolanda:** She thinks she wants to explore, but panics as soon as she is in unfamiliar territory.
- Black 3** **Professor Gabe:** A cat who loves to strut his stuff, though in reality he's a klutz who trips over himself all the time.
- Black 2** **Professor Artemis:** She can offer the kittens both sage advice and biting sarcasm — often at the same time (page 68).
- Black 1** **Professor Brigadier Fuzzykins:** Nobody is quite sure what is going on under all that fluff (page 22).

NPCS: PROFESSORS

- Red 10** **Professor Julius:** He's seen some stuff in his life on the streets, but now he just wants to cuddle.
- Red 9** **Professor Dennis:** He is very serious in everything he does, but when he thinks the kittens aren't watching, he indulges his playful side (page 61).
- Red 8** **Professor P-Chan:** She an expert in security and territory, who is often standoffish and condescending toward her students (page 18).
- Red 7** **Professor Tenshi:** A slinky, cougar-like cat who is aloof until he gets to know you, then he's your constant friend.
- Red 6** **Professor Leonard:** He is constantly shot down in his romantic endeavors, but that hasn't stopped him from trying.
- Red 5** **Professor Dryer Vent Kitty:** She will try to lure you outside with promises of forbidden knowledge.
- Red 4** **Professor Monks:** He has a mouse, and it is HIS mouse.
- Red 3** **Professor Harry:** He is always watching what you are up to. It's kind of creepy (page 11).
- Red 2** **Professor Drummer:** He is an expert in naps and tripping humans when he flops on the floor (page 46).
- Red 1** **Professor Spooky:** She has sadly contracted a terrible kitty disease and needs lots of medical attention.

NPCS: OTHERS

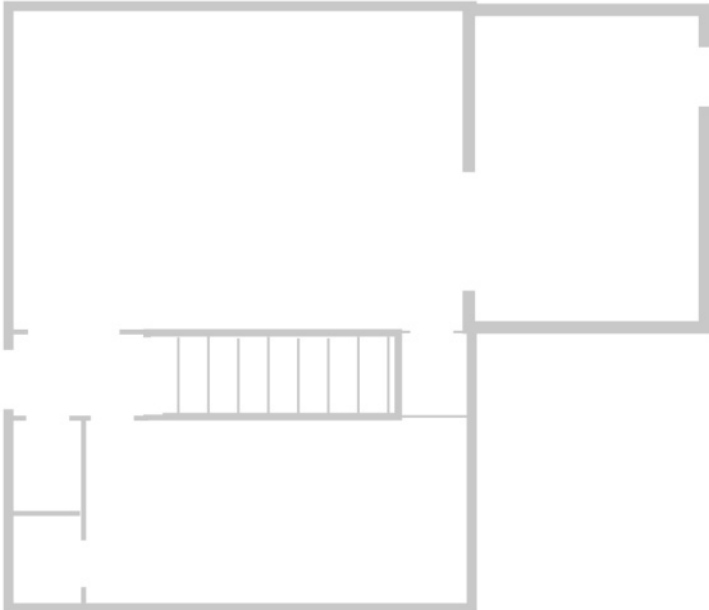
- Black 10** **Dog: Jackson:** He wants to go outside RIGHT NOW ARE WE GOING OUTSIDE HEY HERE'S MY LEASH LET'S GO OUTSIDE!
- Black 9** **Dog: Persephone:** Wise, old matriarch who runs the place.
- Black 8** **Dog: Kirby:** Annoying, snorting, not much bigger than you.
- Black 7** **Dog: Shania:** She bit the janitor at the school next door, so now she has to stay inside.
- Black 6** **Dog: Atlas:** He is so old that nothing bothers him anymore.
- Black 5** **Dog: Nel:** She has a tendency to have "accidents" in the house.
- Black 4** **Rabbit: Liza:** She went Outside once and came back battle-scarred.
- Black 3** **Rabbit: Fred:** She's a hyperactive little poofball.
- Black 2** **Rabbit: Raspberry:** He thinks he's a cat, and won't accept any arguments to the contrary.
- Black 1** **Rabbit: Tan Bunny:** He is pretty sure he's the best at everything ever.

NPCS: OTHERS

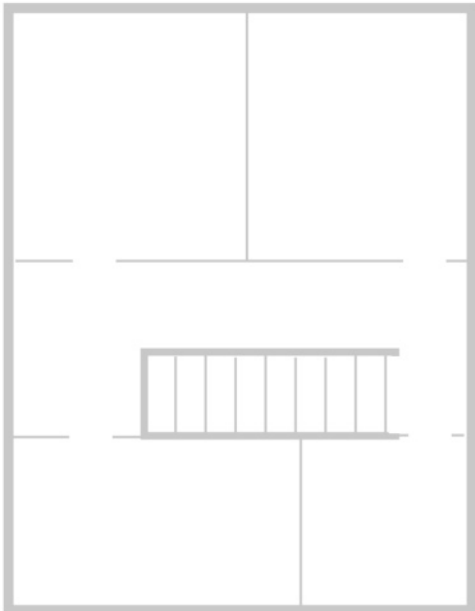
- Red 10** **Human: Rae:** She forces you to submit to belly rubs.
- Red 9** **Human: Christina:** She is always worried that something is wrong.
- Red 8** **Human: Maisha:** A visitor who is oh so very allergic to cats.
- Red 7** **Human: Carol:** She will not put down that black thing that flashes VERY brightly.
- Red 6** **Human: Matt:** The person who always smells like dogs.
- Red 5** **Human: Elijah:** He is completely indifferent to you and that makes him FASCINATING.
- Red 4** **Human: Ben:** Very sweet human. The desire to lick his hair overcomes you every time he's near.
- Red 3** **Human: Jake:** He does not like cats. At all.
- Red 2** **Human: Padma:** She is so excited to get to take care of kittens.
- Red 1** **Human: Ricardo:** He wants to wear you like a hat, for some reason.

KNOLL STREET SCHOOL FOR WAYWARD KITTENS

DOWNSTAIRS



UPSTAIRS



SITUATIONS

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Professor: _____

Human: _____

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ABOUT US

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Stentor is a geography professor, map-maker, and kitten wrangler. They are also The Worst because they have not given the kitties any wet foods since this morning! Find more of their work at mapsburgh.com

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Cheyenne has the heart of a kitten, the mind of a kitten, and the pizzazz of a kitten. She is an experienced roleplayer and cat snuggler.

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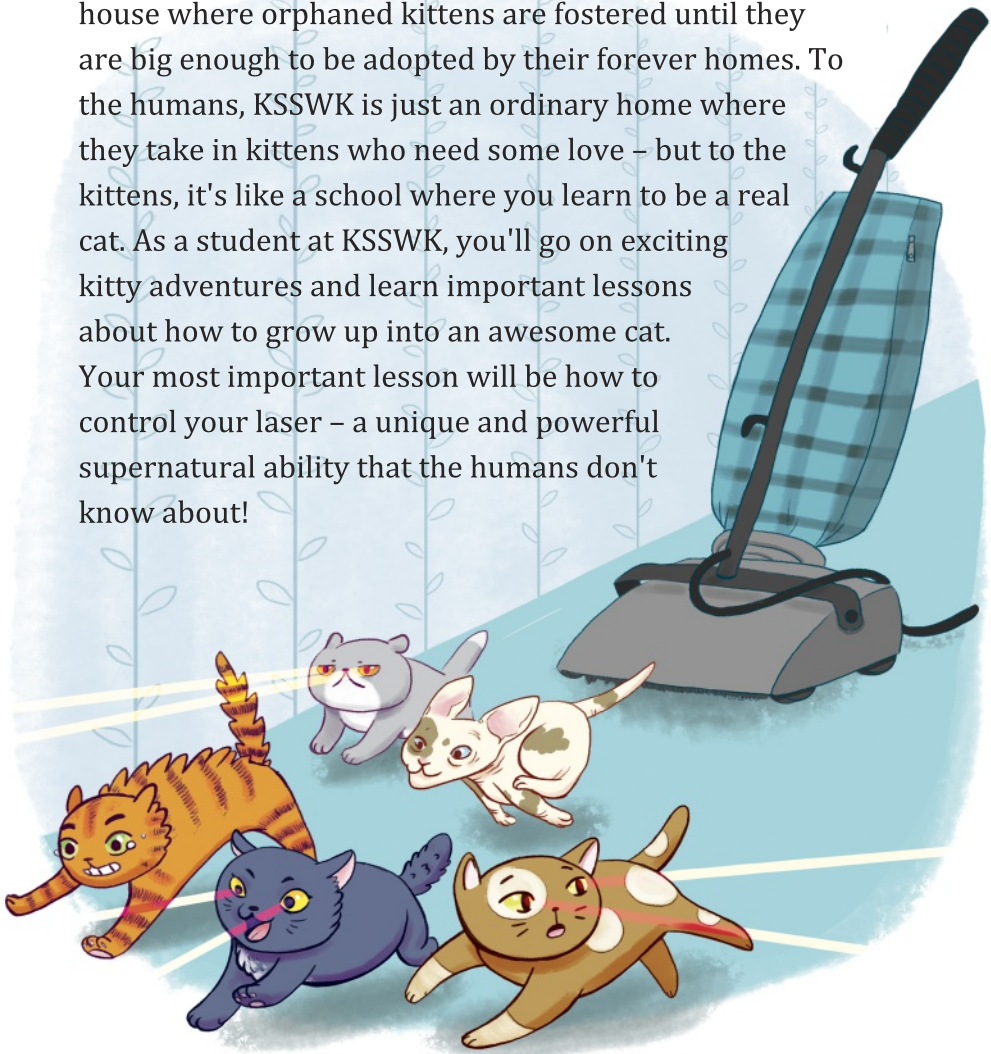
Glittercats Fine Amusements

Glittercats Fine Amusements is a Pittsburgh- and Cleveland-based game design studio. Our other games include *Bunny Money Gunny* and *The Fool's Journey*. Follow us on Twitter at [@PlayGlittercats](https://twitter.com/PlayGlittercats), or on Facebook at facebook.com/playglittercats



WELCOME TO THE KNOLL STREET SCHOOL FOR WAYWARD KITTENS!

The Knoll Street School for Wayward Kittens is a big house where orphaned kittens are fostered until they are big enough to be adopted by their forever homes. To the humans, KSSWK is just an ordinary home where they take in kittens who need some love – but to the kittens, it's like a school where you learn to be a real cat. As a student at KSSWK, you'll go on exciting kitty adventures and learn important lessons about how to grow up into an awesome cat. Your most important lesson will be how to control your laser – a unique and powerful supernatural ability that the humans don't know about!



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