



DUNGEON WORLD  
**planarch  
codex**

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THE CALVINO CYCLE  
OR, IF ON A  
WINTRY PLANE  
A FREEBOOTER

**walton**  
AND FRIENDS

## [1]

You are about to begin playing Jonathan Walton's new *Dungeon World* module, *If on a wintry plane a freebooter*. Best to find a space and time all to yourselves. Text your other friends right away, "No, I can't go see a movie. Sorry!" Use more exclamation marks; they may not be convinced otherwise. "We're playing an RPG!!! One with pencils and dice!!!" Now hopefully they'll leave you alone.

This module was conceived on the information superhighway, a marvel of modern convenience that has, nevertheless, recreated nearly all the failings of the previous ways of doing things. While it is, in essence, a long string of zeros and ones—running staccato like a Philip Glass opera through the innards of computers—you (or the publisher) likely still felt the need to print it out in preparation for giving it life through your words and actions. Hence the module will be reincarnated twice: transferred from electronic bits to the flesh of dead trees and then to your own fleshy selves, which—according to the Gnostics—are merely prisons for the divine spark within you. But hardly anyone believes that anymore, so you feel confident that by instantiating the module in your flesh you are not imprisoning it, but rather setting it free and perhaps also, likewise, yourselves.

However, you are of course aware that this is merely one drop from the infinite stream of dungeon-themed games that has flowed incessantly since RPGs first emerged like Venus from the ocean of wargaming. Your expectations must be kept in check. While this Jonathan Walton person has been known to exhibit a taste for the experimental, this is still *Dungeon World*. You might prefer to be playing something a bit more provocative, such as Matteo Turini's *Novanta minuti* or Julia Bond Ellingboe's *Steal Away Jordan*, but your fellow players may exhibit undue caution about straying too far from things that are tried and true. They love adventures but only so long as they are not particularly adventurous. This new *Dungeon World* module may seem a bit odd—it doesn't really begin as you'd expected it would—but surely it will soon proceed with the delving and freebooting and clashes with monsters. Should you discover that the module becomes unnerving, causing you to question previously held beliefs about games that you'd rather not be dissuaded from, you and your friends can always play *Munchkin* or *Mario Kart* instead.

Indeed, it's a wonder you find the time to play games at all and, even more, that you have chosen this particular module. In doing so, you have managed to survive unscathed—or perhaps only been lightly

wounded—on your way through the increasingly dense forest of games: Games You Have Always Wanted to Play, Games Others Have Repeatedly Insisted You Must Play, Games That You Often Pretend to Have Played That You Should Probably Really Play at Some Point, Games That Everyone Else Has Already Played So You Better Play Them Soon, Games You've Discussed So Much That It's As If You've Already Played Them, Games Your Friends Have Made That You Feel Obligated to Play, Games That Are Increasingly Crucial to the Current Understanding of RPGs, Games Made by Up-and-Coming Designers Whose Names are Already Whispered in Semi-Reverent Tones, Games That Could Help You Understand Other Games Better, Games That Are More Fun or More Important Than This Game, and so forth.

But here you are now, having created a new set of characters—or pulled existing ones out of your stylish messenger bags—ready to embark on a journey into the unknown. Pre-planned modules for *Dungeon World*, or any other sandbox game, are peculiar things! How will the author invoke a set of colorful and exciting circumstances and yet allow the players sufficient leeway to follow their own whims and caprices? You suppose it's time to find out.

## IF ON A WINTRY PLANE A FREEBOOTER

The module begins in a railway station. A locomotive coughs to life, steam and smoke obscuring the view. Crowds of people mill about, railway workers hauling goods and travelers wrapped in heavy coats against the cold. Behind you, the station windows are webbed with a network of icy lines that intersect.

This is Sultana's Crossing, a major junction on the borderlands between the city of Dis and Svernaria, the great plane of winter. Your crew is here on a job involving Esmerela Lucca L'Apostata, a defrocked nun of the Eternal Order of the Gathering Dark. The person who found this job chooses which of these they don't want the job to be, and rolls+Wis:

- to ensure that Esmerela arrives safely at the Most Distant Monastery in far Svernaria
- to throw Esmerela from the train, deep in the unforgiving tundra
- to discover the identity and motives of those pursuing Esmerela
- to uncover the crimes for which Esmerela was banished from the Eternal Order

On a 10+, it's not that one; choose which of the others it is. On a 7-9, not that one, but the GM picks.

On a 6-, it's the one you chose. Your client is Momus—formerly Lorenzo Lucca, Esmerela's brother—who became a Road Warden after he was killed by the Eternal Order. He has promised you 100 silver to bring him clear evidence that the job is done, but Esmerela is to know nothing of his involvement.

Esmerela is important to a number of interests. The GM should pick 1-2 of the jobs that you didn't get assigned and concoct rival freebooters or other groups (including, perhaps, Road Wardens) that are pursuing goals in cross-purposes with your own.

Esmerela is in possession of one or more of these:

- an unborn child of power and prophecy
- a monstrous text the Eternal Order assumes has been destroyed
- knowledge of the true secrets that lie beneath the Most Distant Monastery
- a signed contract of conspiracy, listing those involved in her brother's death
- something else of the GM's devising

The whistle blows. “All aboard!” calls the conductor. You watch as Esmerela slips quickly from the station to one of the passenger trains and climbs on board, navigating the surging crowd. What do you do?

## [2]

You have now played for a few hours and are becoming caught up in the story. Having paused at a suitable cliffhanger, you turn the pages eagerly to the next section, wanting to know how the stakes are raised and how complications are introduced.

However, you find that the next section is identical to the previous one, opening with the train station, the engine coughing, and the lacy pattern of ice on the windows. Perhaps you are meant to play through these scenes again? What is the name the Nordic folks give to that technique? “Try it another way?”

But no! Looking at the page numbers you see they are repeated. Flipping through the rest of the module you find nothing new but rather the same opening section over and over, as if you were frozen at the edge of Svernaria like Bill Murray in *Groundhog Day*.

While the author may be a bit experimental, this is far too much; surely it is not intentional but a mistake, perhaps a printer’s error or a glitch in exporting the file from InDesign! These things happen from time to time, especially when the author is still running OSX Lion on an ancient MacBook, as he has repeatedly complained about on G+.

Thinking quickly, you email a friend and ask if they know of a more recent version of the module. You're in luck! Your comrade in gaming forwards you a file that they claim is the updated adventure: a document called "Walton\_module-new.pdf"

Elated, you turn back to the other players and signal that you are ready to continue. Though as you glance through the new document, you quickly discover that it is not a continuation of the paused module, but an entirely new adventure.



## OUTSIDE THE DUNGEON OF MALBOR

Your crew emerges from the dread caves of Malbor, blinking, gasping, groaning, bleeding, retching, husks of the people you were weeks ago.

Malbor was an ancient kingdom of ant-folk whose subterranean citadels and libraries were ransacked by an invasion of their descendents, corrupted by an alien god in the far future and sent into the past to undo their own existence. The burrows of Malbor are now filled with dangerous fragments of what once was—and what will now never come to be.

Erase half of your equipment, representing the gear that has been destroyed, lost, or left behind on your journey. What does each of you carry now, as spoils from Malbor? Have each survivor roll 3d6, reading the result of each die as follows:

**1. Wounds:** Say what wounded you and roll damage as appropriate. Work with the GM to describe how you received the wound. If you are now dead, set your HP to 1. You are hanging on by a thread.

**2. Treasures:** Roll on a random treasure table (any one you like) and tell the GM the result. The GM will add extra description to make it a strange and dangerous treasure, a fitting relic of Malbor.

**3. Secrets:** Tell the GM what kind of secrets you hoped to find in the caves. The GM will describe an appropriate situation and tell you to roll Spout Lore or Discern Realities, whichever you prefer.

**4. Love:** Roll randomly to select a crewmember; ask them what horrible or wondrous experience brought you together in the darkness, and then each write a new Bond inspired by it. Decide if the love you feel is true friendship, respect and trust, besotted infatuation, and/or raw lust.

**5. Hate:** Roll randomly to select a crewmember; ask them how you abandoned or mistreated each other in a time of urgent need, vulnerability, or chaos, and then each write a new Bond inspired by these experiences. Decide if the hate you feel is one that calls for humiliation, pain, payback, and/or murder.

**6. Corruption:** You carried something out of the darkness. Tell the GM what it is, and they will help describe how you acquired it and what it feels like. The corruption will soon destroy you; start a countdown and ask the GM what it's called.

You gaze at each other in the late afternoon light that now fills the cave entrance. Night will be falling soon and you are a long way from the nearest village. What do you do?

### [3]

Things are going swimmingly. *Outside the dungeon of Malbor* may not be related to *If on a wintry plane a freebooter*—indeed the premises are completely different—but the drama feels more personal, being built on a quickly concocted set of memories and histories that bind the characters together.

But what is this! You turn a page only to find that the next one is blank. There are no descriptions of the areas surrounding the cave mouth of ancient Malbor, no mentions of the dangers that are surely lurking there, and no details on the briefly mentioned village that might serve as a refuge for your weary spelunkers. Your friend has given you a document just as incomplete as the last.

But glancing around at the other players, you see drooping eyelids and wandering attentions, so you decide to call it a night, promising that you will do your best to track down the missing portions of *If on a wintry plane a freebooter* and *Outside the dungeon of Malbor*. Perhaps you can finish playing these modules on alternating weeks? It wouldn't do to let too much time pass before continuing with either one, and you very much want to know how they turn out.

The next day, you post about your experiences on the online forum Gente Che Gioca, to see if anyone has encountered such issues. One user, Havana23, writes:

*Surely what has happened is that your friend sent you the wrong file. It must have slipped their mind that the module might be by RACHEL Walton rather than JONATHAN Walton. People often get them confused, you see, since one is the designer of The Long Orbit and the other designed Geiger Counter, both of which are unfinished space horror games. Even now I myself am unsure which designer wrote which game! Perhaps if you played another adventure by one of the two Waltons—who are completely unrelated, as I recall—you could compare its stylistic characteristics with the other two modules and at least narrow down the author whose adventure you are looking for.*

This seems like completely sensible advice! You thank Havana23 very much for her (or his?) help and begin scouring the internet. Just when you begin to lose hope, you stumble across a discussion of *Bleeding from a dire wound*, a module submitted by “Walton” for RPGGeek’s annual One-Page Dungeon contest.

You call up your fellow players and explain. They are as baffled as you, but are willing to try another adventure by one of the designers of the first two.

## BLEEDING FROM A DIRE WOUND

It was supposed to be an easy job. Break into a relatively nondescript building in Ditchwater Parish and abscond with a book of financial records. They didn't tell you that the building was the headquarters of the tri-parish thieves guild known as the Ghost Friars, or that your crew was a diversion while more seasoned professionals set about the real business.

Things fell apart quickly. Esger took a crossbow bolt through the eye and was done. Everybody else take 2d4 damage right now from traps and scuffles with a pack of trained killers. Count yourselves lucky that most of these assassins are used to taking their prey silently in the dark, not through brawls and swordfighting.

Then pick the character that is the heart and soul of the crew, maybe not the obvious one, but the person whom—if something happened to them—there's no way this crew would stay together. Made your choice? Okay now, unfortunately, they've taken a barbed arrow through the side of the neck.

Surprisingly, you didn't totally fall apart right then. You handled the situation properly, cutting the barb off, pulling the shaft out, and then wrapping the wound tight. But the bleeding won't stop, not even

with magical attention. Probably nicked an artery with that cursed wormwood barb; it's not fully severed—because then they'd be dead by now—but enough that they're going to bleed out over the next hour unless you can get them serious help. And there's no such help to be had in Ditchwater, especially not with the Ghost Friars in pursuit.

Tell the wounded crewmember to start a countdown with six boxes. After every 30 minutes of real time have passed, tell them to mark one of the boxes. Also tell them to mark a box if they do something physically strenuous—such as running full speed, fighting, climbing, etc.—or if they take additional harm. If they run out of boxes to mark, then that's it, they're not going to make it. They may not die right away, but they're approaching Death's Door.

Your crew has just broken out from the Ghost Friars' headquarters into a random alleyway in Ditchwater, full of the local flotsam and jetsam. Probably one or two of you are helping your wounded crewmember to move as quickly as possible without risking further injury. Who's doing that? In a few moments, more of the Ghost Friars will surely be right on top of you.

What do you do?

## [4]

Just when the group is taking a break, your phone rings. It's an unfamiliar number but, for some reason—intuition perhaps?—you answer it anyway.

“It's me,” says the caller, “Havana23!” How did they get your number? The caller explains that they're a friend of a friend, someone you actually met at a local game convention one time, now that you think of it. You can picture them in your mind, recalling that you found them striking in both form and demeanor, the kind of person that, given the excuse to spend time in each other's company, you'd get along with quite famously. While you didn't play any games together, you could sense at the time that they had a deep personality with many layers, but also a strong sense of fun and an exciting hint of mischief.

“Look,” the caller continues, sounding more urgent than mischievous, “I'm sorry to bother you like this, but I've discovered something interesting, a possible solution to your mystery!” Dare you hope that they have found what you seek?

“I'm down here at Scaramuccia, the hip game store that just opened in the center of town, along with a group of friends. On the used game shelf here, we

discovered an anthology of adventure seeds where the characters begin in unfortunate circumstances. The cover's been torn off, so it doesn't have proper title information, but the anthology includes *Outside the dungeon of Malbor!* And we just finished playing through a remarkable adventure seed called *Fearing neither pain nor death...*”

That sounds fascinating, you say. What if you and your fellow players come down to Scaramuccia right now to take a look? Perhaps you can even swap a few players, to mix things up a bit, and explore a couple more of these adventure seeds?

Soon, you have found your way down to the store and met Havana<sup>23</sup> and the rest. The members of Havana's group are too tired to continue playing but leave your crew the book with the torn-off cover and plan to join you in a nearby restaurant later.

Havana and the other players can't stop talking about the adventure they just finished, sparked by the seed called *Fearing neither pain nor death*. In the end, your group decides that you might as well play that one too, so that the two groups can exchange experiences later.



## FEARING NEITHER PAIN NOR DEATH

The Aurelia are a parasitic people who mingle their identities with those of their hosts. Each Aurelian is composed of all the beings they have ever been, with their original identity lost amid the rest. However, the strain of carrying these souls is brutal, decreasing the lifespan of an Aurelian host to mere months. The Aurelia, then, are always looking for new hosts.

Hence the Butterfly Revels, a bacchanalia of epic proportions hosted regularly by the local Aurelia with the distinct purpose of meeting, evaluating, and acquiring new hosts. The Aurelia can only transfer their consciousnesses to willing souls. Consequently, they desire to claim hosts that are striking, sensual, or enthralling, those that will enable them to acquire a new and attractive host in just a few short months.

There are many who would gladly accept what the Aurelia offer: an immortality of indulgent pleasures, even as part of a joint consciousness. That is in fact why you are here. The strikingly beautiful Celestus, son of a noble and wealthy elven house, has run off to join the revels. His family is certain that he will abandon his immensely long elven life to become a host. "He's a foolish boy," his father explains, "just turned 119 years old, and throwing his life away!"

If Celestus can be safely recovered, his family has offered you an heirloom: an orb that can restore broken or ruined objects to their original state. The elven house has also provided you with clothing in the latest fashions, to allow you to blend in.

This year, the revels will take place on the spire-filled rooftop of the Cathedral Planetarium, a research center for celestial studies. You emerge from a spiral staircase into the open air, lights from the cosmic planes shining down on the revelers, and are stunned by the size of the crowd. What do you do?

**When you move through the assembled revelers,** name your target and roll+Dex or +Cha, depending on whether you are using grace or tact; you may try other methods, but violence will not be tolerated. On a 10+, you close the distance to your target; roll on the table below to see what obstacle you successfully navigated. On a 7-9, you close the distance but your target is currently blocked by an obstacle:

1. Someone seeking pleasure, maybe from you.
2. Someone you know, perhaps from a job.
3. Individuals engaged in distracting behavior.
4. Servants offering you food, drink, drugs, etc.
5. An ominous threat to you or someone else.
6. The personal attentions of an Aurelian.

## [5]

At the restaurant, you remark to Havana23 that it was interesting how *Fearing neither pain nor death* attempted to replicate being disoriented in a large crowd, where it's easy to lose track of people. It is a reminder, you say, of how even in the midst of a raucous party, one can sometimes feel very alone.

“That’s certainly true,” they reply, “but I found it to be optimistic. At first, for each ‘random party encounter’ rolled, we described the variety of sights, sounds, and experiences on display, no two alike. But then, as the players rolled the same numbers or one random result was connected to another through the fiction, things began to reappear. For example, there was this one serving girl who wouldn’t leave Kirai alone, so we began to suspect she had ulterior motives. In that way, it reminded me that—while we all start out as strangers—even seemingly random or serendipitous meetings can lead to deeper relationships.”

Yes, just like what’s happening here, you say, all thanks to a faulty InDesign export! In the dim light of the restaurant, it’s hard to tell, but it appears that Havana reddens slightly.

“That reminds me... there’s another adventure I want to show you, one that hasn’t been published yet. It’s a

2-player scenario called *Looks down at the gathering dark*, and it's fairly experimental. We should grab it from my apartment as we're walking back..."

Oh ho! What is afoot here? Does this *Looks down at the gathering dark* actually exist or does Havana23 have a different sort of 2-player scenario in mind? Gazing into your companion's stunning eyes, you decide that you don't particularly mind one way or the other. You're in the mood to find out what happens in this particular adventure.

Later, as you prepare to leave the restaurant, your friends humor the explanation for why you are walking back to Havana's apartment. "Don't get consumed by an Aurelian!" one shouts as they head off grinning into the night like Cheshire cats.

It turns out to be a small place, a few rooms filled with brightly colored rugs and furniture, and bearing several abstract paintings on the walls. Your host goes immediately to a shelf, pulls out a few pages, and hands them sheepishly to you. The top of the first page reads: "*Looks down at the gathering dark*, a game for 2 players, by Havana23."

You take your coat off and begin to play.

## LOOKS DOWN AT THE GATHERING DARK

You knew it was dangerous to loot the borderlands. There were plenty of valuables to be scrounged, since most people wisely departed before the city of Dis advanced and began consuming their homes and livelihoods. But there was no telling when the landscape might shift and trap you in a newly fashioned oubliette or crush you to pieces. Luckily for you and your partner, you have only suffered the former fate and hope to still avoid the latter.

Arrange the play area—a single room, perhaps, or a few small adjoined rooms—to resemble the inescapable oubliette in which you are trapped. Close doors, block exits, and obstruct or extinguish light sources as needed.

Every 15-20 minutes, roll on the following table to determine how your prison changes and readjust the play area appropriately:

1. It contracts slightly.
2. It contracts significantly.
3. It rearranges things.
4. It connects to a new area.
5. It manifests a new feature.
6. Roll twice on this table.

Say or act out what your character says, thinks, feels, or does, making moves as necessary, with the other player serving as MC when needed. Explore your surroundings and treat them as aspects of the fiction. Perhaps the bookshelf is a temple wall covered in runes. Perhaps the bathtub is a sarcophagus.

How will you spend these last moments, as the walls close in? Can you find a way out? Can you say the things that need to be said? Your torches are beginning to flicker. What do you do?

## [6]

By the time you finish playing *Looks down at the gathering darkness*, you are both exhausted, kept awake mostly by a combination of adrenalin and the hormones inspired by your mutual attraction. You are telling Havana how much you enjoyed the game, punctuated by a few yawns, some tired, some provoked by nervousness.

“So... I’ll be honest with you,” your companion says. “I invited you over with half a mind to seduce you, but I haven’t finished breaking up with someone else. I mean, it’s over between us, but they don’t necessarily know that. And it’s too late to call them now, especially for this. I apologize for not making things clear; I thought it would be okay, but now I feel like I need to end it before starting something new. Does that make any sense?”

You completely understand, you say, trying to hide your disappointment.

“But I won’t kick you out! You’re welcome to sleep on the couch or even in the bed if you behave yourself.”

You grin and say you’d better take the couch. Later, collapsed amid the blankets and cushions that once imprisoned you in Dis, a game fills your dreams.

## ON A CARPET OF BONES ILLUMINATED BY THE MOON

Your dreams recreate a morality play performed during the *Festa della Concezione di Città*, one that tells of the Sultana's suitors and explores the mystery of *Dis Pater*, the unknown father of Dis.

One player portrays the Sultana herself, the only survivor of the destruction of a previous universe. She makes her dwelling in a field of bones, the ruins of the past, with the glistening skull of the moon—itsself once robed in flesh—shining down.

The other players portray the Sultana's suitors. With the universe extinguished, they have come to offer themselves to the Sultana so that new things might be born to fill the emptiness. These suitors include:

- the Outer Darkness, wishing to know light;
- Chaos, wishing to known form;
- one or more ghosts, wishing to know life;
- the skeletal Moon, with its own purposes.

The Sultana chooses whose children she will bear, though she may be intimate with whom she pleases. The Sultana frames scenes with suitors in different combinations. Once each suitor has been in three scenes, the game ends, even if the mystery remains.



Just as you begin to wake, the full shape of the pattern finally becomes clear...

**SE SU UN PIANO INVERNALE  
UN FILIBUSTIERE**

**[1]**

If on a wintry plane a freebooter

**[2]**

Outside the dungeon of Malbor

**[3]**

Bleeding from a dire wound

**[4]**

Fearing neither pain nor death

**[5]**

Looks down at the gathering dark

**[6]**

On a carpet of bones illuminated by the moon

**[7]**

Around the ancient tomb

**[8]**

What events await our discovery?

**[9]**

## [7]

You rouse the next morning to find yourself alone in Havana23's apartment. You move groggily through the now familiar space. Indeed, it's astounding how comfortable these rooms feel after carefully exploring them in *Looks down at the gathering dark*.

Your host has at least left you a note, which makes your abandonment seem cute and heartwarming rather than awkward and sad. It reads:

*Good morning! There is bread in the cabinet above the toaster, along with butter and jam. Please help yourself! I hope you slept okay on the couch. As for myself, I had the strangest dreams: must have been the conflicted feelings from last night.*

*Sorry to leave you alone, but my absence is truly with your best interests in mind. I am off to break-up with my ex. Please do not feel any guilt or pressure about this! As I said, I should have done this a long time ago, and I am not assuming anything about your feelings one way or another. This just frees me to find out what happens next.*

*P.S. Since I wasn't sleeping well, I spent half the night furiously developing a campaign concept. I've left a draft on my desk if you are interested...*

## AROUND THE ANCIENT TOMB

The dungeon-sized space sarcophagus of the death god Abaddon (see *Dark Heart*, p. 32) is slowly being consumed by the city of Dis, though the process has been quite a struggle, particularly because Abaddon awoke before Dis was finished absorbing the god's undead corpse. Now the remnants of his tomb have become the Noble Parish of Abaddon, a gerrymandered district drawn around the macabre chunks of the death god and his sarcophagus that were strewn about the city during the struggle. Nearly all contain dark magics, death traps, and necromantic auras.

No one was willing to stand for election to the new parish council—a thankless and highly dangerous job, given the circumstances—but some of your enemies and rivals conspired to get your name on the list, along with a handful of other ne'er-do-wells and rascallions. The Sultana has blessed the election's results, and so here you are: councillor of a patchwork assortment of ancient weapons of mass destruction, scattered about the urban landscape of Dis. What do you do?

In the interest of getting your councillorship off to a great start, here are some of your responsibilities:

**Mapping Your Parish:** Take a map of the city of Dis and flick some drops of coffee or wine on it. These are the borders of your parish. Some portions may be enclaves of other parishes, requiring extensive negotiation with those ruling the neighboring parish.

**Deadly Puzzlebox:** A set of alleyways has been transformed into a constantly shifting ebon maze that gruesomely maims all who pass through. The Road Wardens are planning to intervene and secure safe passage for travelers. They seek your assistance.

**The Dreamer's Revenge:** In one fragment of your parish, where one of Abaddon's rings fell, young people can't stop dreaming of a lovely figure in a crimson robe that beckons them to follow.

**No Exit:** Your parish is being rapidly depopulated, and it's not just the deathtraps. When people enter structures that were once part of Abaddon's tomb, they soon find themselves lost in these buildings, no matter which exit they take.

**Unwelcome Intruder:** The voice of Abaddon talks to you on occasion, suggesting what he would do in your situation. If you follow his advice, mark XP. Each move or trait you buy using this XP is touched by the ghost of the death god. Ask the GM how.

## [8]

Havana23 returns just as you finish reading *Around the ancient tomb*. You apologize for getting jam on the campaign draft, but your host laughs and says “You’ve just followed the directions and drawn the parish map!” The laugh is forced and full of emotion. Though Havana insists that the break-up wasn’t a big deal, it was clearly painful and awkward.

You try to provide a welcome distraction by talking about *Around the ancient tomb*, but it’s soon clear that your host isn’t in the mood for death traps. After a little while, Havana says: “That concept is about responsibilities, being trapped in something you don’t want, and ghosts of the past. That’s what I was feeling last night when I couldn’t sleep, but now I don’t need to feel that way anymore. Maybe I will come back to that campaign idea later, but now I want to play something about adventure... about life, love, and standing up for your ideals!”

You smile sympathetically and glance around at the bookshelves. You spot Calvino, of course, and Primo Levi, and P. Craig Russell’s opera comics, and *Elias: The Cursed* by Sylviane Corgiat and Corrado Mastantuono, and the first two volumes of *Saga* by Brian K. Vaughan and Fiona Staples.

Then the idea sets in, starting as a vague hint of something, but growing until you're certain. You reach out and pull a few books down, setting them on the table. Together, the two of you begin working on something new, something that is exactly what your new friend needs right now.

You've been working on it a while when Havana catches your eye, grins, and then says: "It's a bit ironic to be working on a game concept so strongly focused on relationships and parenthood, especially with you, considering the circumstances. But it doesn't feel weird; in fact, it feels totally normal. Still, we've just gotten to know each other and are spending all day working on games together! What will our friends say when they see this module?"

You joke that the other players already assume there's much more mischief going on between the two of you than there is.

"Hmm," your collaborator says, "in that case, why aren't we getting up to more mischief?"

The project is quickly abandoned as the two of you find other creative pursuits, but the breeze coming through the open window gently rustles the jotted notes for *What events await our discovery?*

## WHAT EVENTS AWAIT OUR DISCOVERY?

Some jobs aren't tasks that you perform and then are done with. Take, for example, parenthood. By some means—whether your own doing, the schemes of others, or a happenstance of fate—you have come into possession of a (the?) child of destiny. Or, really, they have come into possession of you.

**Their Destiny Awaits:** Create a countdown! For a one-shot it should have three boxes. For a campaign or long arc it might have five or six. Whenever the child demonstrates their specialness, fulfills some minor prophecy, or manifests strange powers, mark a box. When all the boxes are full, their true destiny manifests, in whole or in part. If you continue to play afterwards, keep creating new countdowns until the child's destiny has fully come into being. Maybe the child also ages 1 year every time they complete a countdown? See if that makes sense in your fiction, but they should slowly grow up. Or consider occasionally skipping ahead a few years.

**I Won't Allow That to Happen:** Anyone—you, other members of your crew, total strangers, enemies—can, at any time, no matter the situation, choose to place themselves in protection of the child. In such an instance, say what harm or circumstances you

want to prevent the child from suffering, and the GM will make a move against you or those around you instead. Consequently, while the child may bring misfortune and difficulties, it is rarely in any true danger. Such simple suffering is not the fate that destiny has in store for it.

**The Child is the Key:** There are many forces after the child that wish to use or manipulate it for their own purposes. Heck, maybe you should be counted among them. To determine the others, the GM can just roll jobs as normal, but always have the child be the target. Unlike normal jobs, the GM doesn't have to ask if you accept the forces arrayed against you. You've essentially accepted a load of trouble when you became involved with the child of destiny. From now on, you don't have to go looking for trouble; trouble will find you. Good luck!

*Since this campaign concept involves babies or young children, it's possible that some NPCs or factions—whether opposition or allies—will make you feel squeamish or uncomfortable. If that's the case, the GM should just roll up some different ones, since that's very easy to do.*



## [9]

And that's how we leave you and Havana23, at the beginning of something new and exciting. What will it turn out to be? No one knows. For now, it is fun and invigorating and freeing and beautiful and that's all that really matters. The future will be what it will be, and you'll figure that out as it comes.

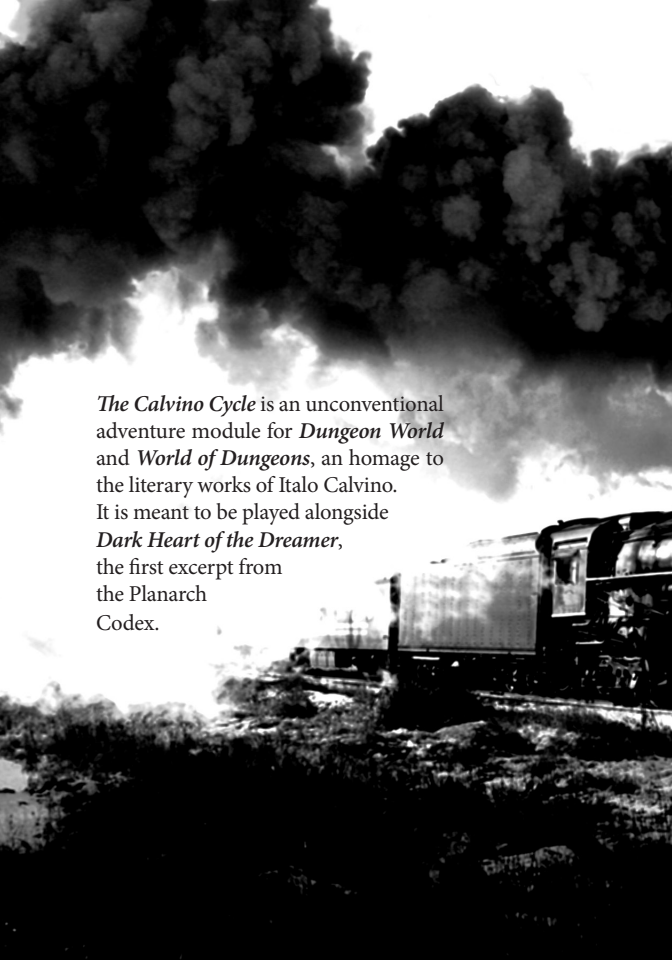
The only way to find out what happens is to play it out and experience it for yourselves.

What do you do?

*Dedicated to William Weaver (1923–2013),  
the great translator of modern Italian fiction,  
who passed away while this was being written.*

### CREDITS & THANKS

J. Walton (designer), Lillian Cohen-Moore (editing), elan7t50/*istockphoto.com* (original cover photo), Claudia Cangini, Italo Calvino, & William Weaver (inspiration), Paolo Bosi, Fiona Staples, & Brian K. Vaughan (additional inspiration), Sage LaTorra & Adam Koebel (*Dungeon World*).



*The Calvino Cycle* is an unconventional  
adventure module for *Dungeon World*  
and *World of Dungeons*, an homage to  
the literary works of Italo Calvino.  
It is meant to be played alongside  
*Dark Heart of the Dreamer*,  
the first excerpt from  
the Planarch  
Codex.