

Heart of the Dungeon

A game for 4-5 humans in 45-60 minutes by Kitty Stoholski

Our Keeper's booming voice echoes across the dungeon's loudspeaker - "S...s...so someone is on their way to our dungeon and...and...IT'S LEGENDARY HERO! Um um please don't mess this up and please clean up no wait make everything filthy no wait we need lava no...what? No it's not like I like them or anything!!"

Synopsis: Oh gosh, our Dungeon Keeper likes LEGENDARY HERO and is really nervous about it. As their hired monsters, Dungeon Keeper has tasked us to set up a dungeon for LEGENDARY HERO! A dungeon that's powerful, a challenge which will entice, but not too powerful as to wound them. A dungeon that's flirty, and gets Dungeon Keeper's feelings across, but not too flirty as to weird them out? We don't know; this is hard! We don't know LEGENDARY HERO, though there are some helpful songs about their legend we all misremember...

Setup: Let's supply some paper and writing utensils for everyone.

Safety: This game features competing ideas of flirting and trying to set up your nervous overlord with their crush. Please work with other players to build characters and flirting styles and respect any boundaries that players may present. Obtain consensus during planning to make sure everyone is in agreement with the progression of the game. Remember, we are all more important than this silly game!

Part 1 - Character Selection

MONSTER (All but 1 player) - Most players act as the Dungeon Keeper's MONSTERS, creatures trying to organize rooms of a dungeon to be appealing to LEGENDARY HERO. MONSTERS work together to plan a series of scenes and then will individually act through one of them. But how do MONSTERS know what LEGENDARY HERO wants?

HISTORIAN/LEGENDARY HERO (1 player) - First, this player acts as HISTORIAN, the collector of tales and stories, who will provide renditions of the legend of LEGENDARY HERO to MONSTERS in any desired form: song, rhyming couplet, poetry, lecture, however oral history gets passed in our world! Second, once the dungeon has been created, HISTORIAN becomes LEGENDARY HERO themselves! LEGENDARY HERO will act through short scenes with MONSTERS and determine the heroic outcome! This role is solely performative and should be taken by someone who is comfortable creating brief stories for everyone.

Part 2 - Character Description

MONSTER - Each MONSTER chooses what kind of MONSTER to be and how that MONSTER thinks flirting works. All MONSTERS should seek consent from all other players to make sure everyone is comfortable with the MONSTERS chosen and their flirting style.

Here are some example MONSTERS to use or build from; they don't need to be deep:

- Dragon: So Fierce! flirts by sharing some of their hoard
- Minotaur: Strong and tired, shows affection by feats of strength
- Ghost: Loyal, flirts by possessing a meaningful object
- Gelatinous Cube: Kind of a mess, flirts by wiggling

HISTORIAN/LEGENDARY HERO - HISTORIAN silently considers who the LEGENDARY HERO is and how the stories told about them differ from who they really are. Why do they adventure? How do they feel about being LEGENDARY? What do they like in a dungeon? Have they dealt with flirty dungeons before? You may keep this hidden and present the legends and character as the game progresses!

Part 3 - Dungeon Planning

The Dungeon is made up of a number of rooms equal to the number of MONSTERS. LEGENDARY HERO must pass through these rooms before reaching the Dungeon Keeper's Heart Chamber. Each MONSTER, one at a time, leads the design of a single room and must work with other MONSTERS to create a room that will appeal to LEGENDARY HERO's sense of legendary adventure and express Dungeon Keeper's crush. In setting up rooms, MONSTERS act as their characters!

Beginning with the first room and first MONSTER to volunteer as Lead, MONSTERS do the following:

- Describe the Physical Layout - Draw the shape and size of the room. What function does the room serve in the dungeon? What draws your attention when entering? How is the room decorated?
- Describe the Plan - Will there be any other creatures in the room? How will they act? What about traps or other dungeon tricks? What do MONSTERS want to happen when LEGENDARY HERO enters the room and, based on the legends, how do MONSTERS expect LEGENDARY HERO will react?

During planning, MONSTERS may ask HISTORIAN questions about the legend of LEGENDARY HERO. Are they nimble? Merciful? Do they have a magic companion? HISTORIAN's answers may be as helpful or cryptic or inaccurate as the legends themselves. HISTORIAN may also volunteer pieces of the legend!

Once MONSTERS formed a consensus on the plan for the first room, MONSTERS choose a new Lead MONSTER and plan the next room. Once all rooms are planned, one per MONSTER, MONSTERS provide an order the rooms will be encountered by LEGENDARY HERO.

Part 4 - The Arrival of the LEGENDARY HERO

LEGENDARY HERO has arrived at the dungeon! LEGENDARY HERO describes how they appear entering the dungeon- maybe an imposing figure decorated in gems or a desperate mercenary hunting for their rival or even another MONSTER?

Beginning with the first room, LEGENDARY HERO initiates a short scene, under a minute, with that room's Lead MONSTER. Lead MONSTER acts out their room's plan and LEGENDARY HERO decides how to react and how the events unfold. During a scene, LEGENDARY HERO expresses their true self, not what the legends say! Are they excited by the room? Enraged? Scared? Other MONSTERS should take note of LEGENDARY HERO's reaction and adapt their room plan accordingly!

Once the scene has been finished, possibly by LEGENDARY HERO defeating Lead MONSTER or sneaking past a trap or fleeing in terror, then LEGENDARY HERO progresses to the next room and performs a scene with that room's Lead MONSTER. If LEGENDARY HERO feels bored or maybe pressured by this weird flirt dungeon, they may choose to leave and that's okay. If LEGENDARY HERO leaves the dungeon or arrives at the Dungeon Keeper's Heart Chamber, the game is over!

Wait, but what about your Dungeon Keeper? Are their feelings respected and returned? Well, that's not for employed MONSTERS to know and the whole story might be too embarrassing to ever make it to HISTORIAN. Please take satisfaction in everyone trying their best!