By:

Brotherwise Games
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BEHIND THE SCENES

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You’ve bought yourself a nice little dungeon, put down some carpet, and picked out the wallpaper. You’re ready to set your traps, prod the monsters into a frenzy, open the front gates, and get down to business. The business of slaying heroes, that is.

Boss Monster: Master of the Dungeon is the stand-alone card game where you take the role of the big baddies from videogaming’s golden age: the Boss Monsters. Your goal is to build a dungeon that is as deadly as is it attractive, lure in hapless heroes from the nearby town, and stop them in their tracks with traps, monsters, and spells. But it’s not just you versus the adventurers. Your real competition will come from other Boss Monsters, all of whom are trying to steal those tasty heroes away from you.

Boss Monster is easy to learn, but challenging to master. The most accomplished Bosses will use every tool and strategy at their disposal to lure the most heroes into dungeons that are optimized to do the most damage possible to those heroes. This strategy guide will give you a head start in mastering those tools and tactics, and give you a leg up over your fellow Boss Monsters in winning the game.

In the pages that follow, you’ll get a sneak peek at the cards of Boss Monster so you can start planning your strategy now. You’ll also learn about flexible strategies for presenting the treasure types that lure in heroes, card combinations that will deliver devastating damage to intruders, spells and rooms that will disrupt your opponents’ strategies, and other ways to maximize your game play. This book is our gift to you for your early support of Boss Monster, and it’s our hope that you become the baddest Boss on your block.

So haul your scaly mass over to your sofa stuffed with Mage and Cleric scalps, kick up your clawed feet, grab a nice hot mug of spiced Fighter brains, and dive into this guide.

Monstrously Yours,
Brotherwise Games
December 2012
From Dr. Scarecr0w in Spokane, WA: “I was wondering if we could possibly seem some of the earlier versions of Boss Monster. Like what some of the hand-drawn cards looked like or maybe even before that when it was about high school. I think it would be interesting to see how the actual art design has changed from the beginning.”

Your wish is our command, good Doctor! Check out the “Brotherwise Classified” article in this guide, in which we take you behind the scenes and talk about the creation of Boss Monster from its earliest days as a hand-drawn prototype to its current incarnation. Along the way you'll see some of the earlier art and learn about the key design decisions that led Boss Monster to where it is today.

Marcus from Boulder, CO writes: “I’m a budding game designer with a dilemma: how do I stick one project to completion instead of jumping on to the next, promising idea?”

We hear you, Marcus! If we knew the answer to this one we’d be making millions writing self-help books instead of making games. The reality is, both Chris and Johnny have developed plenty of concepts that started off as great ideas, but for some reason never made it to completion. In some ways, we think these false starts are healthy. They teach you that great ideas aren’t enough; you have to have execution and determination to bring those ideas to fruition. Some practices that worked for us in getting Boss Monster to market:

1) Find a partner. There’s no denying that having someone to hold you accountable to your goals helps.

2) Think small; game designers love complexity, but the more complex your game is, the less likely you are to stay with it through those tortuous months of mechanics not working. Smaller, simple games can be just as fun and successful (think Carcassonne), and can be a great way to train yourself in the habits of good design, while getting in the habit of actually completing a game!

3) Playtest! As co-designers, we are always one another’s first playtesters. But we also have a network of “gourmet gamer” friends and acquaintances who are ready to playtest our concepts, and we used them extensively on Boss Monster. Even if you don’t have a big gaming group, there are hundreds of people on BoardGameGeek.com and related websites who are willing to provide you detailed feedback for nothing more than a PDF copy of your game. In terms of completing a project, putting a game in other people’s hands makes it “real” and almost forces you to keep pushing forward. It’s also addictive. Once you’ve had other people play your game, you want to get it into even more people’s hands!

Griffin sends this question all the way from Sheffield, UK: “In the 25-card Tools of Hero-Kind expansion coming next year, will it be 25 unique cards or are there repeats in that? I personally hope they’re unique!”

Great question, Griffin! In fact, all 25 cards of the Tools of Hero-Kind expansion will be unique. We like the variety and thematically it makes sense; these "Tools" represent items of power and legend from the land of Arcadia, and we can’t imagine these items as anything other than one of a kind. For players, the Tools of Hero-Kind will change the heroes of Boss Monster from mere resources to full-fledged threats in their own right.
Beige from Binghamton, NY asks "Hi guys. I am working on a card game myself, and would love to hear any advice you could offer. Congrats again on your success!"

Thanks for the congrats, Beige, and we look forward to be offering you that congrats right back some time soon! We're no experts, but we think good game design follows from a couple of basic principles.

First, don't get too attached to your ideas. As you'll see later in this guide, Boss Monster changed radically from conception to final product. Sometimes those changes were painful ones, but you've got to be brutal in cutting away the mechanics that are holding the game back.

Second, resist the creep towards complexity. In the wise words of Justin Gary, the brilliant lead designer of SolForge and Ascension: Chronicle of the Godslayer, "It's easy to add complexity to a game, and very difficult to take it back out."

This advice became our mantra in designing Boss Monster. Whenever possible, we chose mechanics and play styles that simplified play, knowing that we could always go back in and add in more layers if we needed to.

Lastly, don't be discouraged by failure. If you don't have a pile of failed game designs cluttering your desk, then you're not trying hard enough. Boss Monster is the descendent of at least three "failed" games that we weren't happy with. Each of those games contributed something to Boss Monster, and more importantly, they each represented a learning opportunity for us as game designers.

Good luck to you, Beige, and good luck to anyone reading this who wants to design games!

We love to see Boss Monster-inspired artwork! Check out these amazing creations from Boss Monster backers, and submit your own at www.facebook.com/BossMonsterGame

Real-life pixel art! The iconic King Croak sprite was re-created in Perler Beads by Bradley Heib. This makes us want to create our own bead art...

Pro artist Darren Calvert created this beautifully rendered King Croak. Any resemblance to the "Y U No??" meme guy is funny but unintended.
How did Brotherwise Games get started?

For years, Johnny and Chris had talked about working together on something creative and fun. Chris had experience as a writer of fiction and non-fiction, and Johnny had experience working in bringing “fun” products to market. After a number of failed forays into various side-projects (including one spectacularly bad movie script) they realized that they’d missed the thing they both had in common: a love of tabletop gaming.

In the summer of 2011, Chris challenged Johnny to a bet, the first brother to come up with a fully playable prototype of a tabletop game would win the game of his choice from the local hobby store, courtesy of the other brother. The race was on and both brothers set to work. Johnny cheated (as little brothers do) and revived a game he’d been working on for years. That game, Boss Monster, became a runaway success on Kickstarter, and with that, Brotherwise Games became a reality.

Who are the “brothers” of Brotherwise Games?

The brothers are Chris and Johnny O’Neal, two self-professed geeks with a love of sci-fi, fantasy, gaming, comics, and nerd-culture in general. Born in Texas and raised in Missouri, the brothers then spent their college years and young adulthood living in separate states. When their careers brought them both to southern California, they seized the opportunity to hang out as often as possible, which led to playing and then designing games.

Chris is the elder brother, and has thus been dubbed “Brother One.” He has his Ph.D. in Biology and works as a science teaching consultant for one of the University of California campuses. In addition to co-designing Boss Monster and serving as lead designer for two upcoming projects, Chris has played a crucial role in the management of Brotherwise as a business. He has also been active as a community manager, and is responsible for answering most of the questions that have been posted to the project’s Kickstarter page.

Johnny, Brother Two, has spent the past few years working in product development and marketing for major toy companies. In the process, he has had the chance to work on toy lines like Masters of the Universe, WWE, and How to Train Your Dragon. He is credited as lead designer on Boss Monster, and has also been responsible for most of the project’s graphic design needs. Look for him on BoardGameGeek.com and the upcoming Brotherwise forums, answering gameplay questions and soliciting feedback from playtesters.

In addition to their day jobs and work on Brotherwise projects, both brothers have families that keep them busy. Johnny has two little monsters at home, while Chris has one. Without the help of their two lovely wives, Boss Monster and Brotherwise Games in general would never have happened.
What kinds of games does Brotherwise want to make?

Without boxing ourselves into a certain “type” of game, we believe that there are some common characteristics to our games (including those currently being developed). Brotherwise Games tend to have an emotional hook that is as important in engaging players as the game mechanics are. The nostalgic retro look of Boss Monster is a good example of this.

Brotherwise Games also favor simplicity over complexity. While veteran gamers as group tend to love complexity in their games, Brotherwise Games eschew complex mechanics unless they are absolutely necessary. Our ideally designed game feels complex while playing simple.

Lastly, Brotherwise Games tend to be shorter and lower stakes than other hobby games. There are a lot of two to three hour games out there. We want to add games to the market that can be played multiple times in an hour and are accessible to novice players as well as veterans. Of course, like all game designers, we mainly just want to have fun making something that others will have fun playing.

What are Brotherwise’s plans for the future?

It’s hard to know what the future will hold in an industry as fickle as hobby gaming, but at BWG we’ve got a library of games in development that we expect to keep us busy for years to come. Three “in the works” expansions of Boss Monster, two other game lines, and even some mobile app versions of our tabletop games. The future for BWG and our fans looks, in a word, fun!
The Secret Origin of Boss Monster

For thousands of Kickstarter supporters, the key hook of Boss Monster was its videogame-inspired pixel art look. Many people assumed that this was the jumping-off point for the entire game design, and that its mechanics were designed to support its aesthetics. But the opposite is true, and the game's pixelated look almost didn't come to pass. Read on for a peek at the Boss Monster artwork that might have been...

The Beginning

Brotherwise Games grew from a mutual love of board and card games shared by Chris and Johnny O'Neal, two brothers who grew up with a wide range of geeky hobbies and pop culture interests. After spending years living in different states, both brothers married California girls and ended up moving to the LA area. Nearly every time the brothers got together, they would play games: *Heroclix*, *Ascension*, *Arkham Horror*, *Magic: the Gathering*, *War of the Ring*, *Descent*, and many others.

Like many hardcore tabletop gamers, they felt the next step was to design their own games. When Chris proposed that he and Johnny actually get serious about publishing a game, it was decided that each brother would be Lead Designer of one concept. Johnny chose to revive a game that he had designed years before while in business school: a card game called "Popularity," about rivalries between high school girls. Never passionate about that actual theme, he and Chris repositioned it as "Dungeon Boss," a game about rivalries between boss monsters.

If At First You Don't Succeed...

On its way to becoming Boss Monster, the game went through a lot of iterations. In some versions, only one player was a boss, and the other player controlled the adventurers. In other versions, it was a true trading card game. But the game's mechanical breakthrough was when the brothers realized that to a boss monster, heroes are simply resources to be harvested. For a while, the game even had a dice-based hero-luring mechanic that was more than a little inspired by *Settlers of Catan*.

The brothers playtested every version with each other, and shared more promising builds with fellow gamers. While Johnny was assigned as the Lead Designer, Chris was responsible for some of the most crucial insights in the development...
process. He argued against involving dice, he dissuaded Johnny from designing bulky square cards, and he was the lead playtester during months of revisions. But his most important call was about the game's visual direction: make it look like a video game. The pixel art look may seem obvious in retrospect, but Johnny’s original vision for a dungeon-building game was inspired by drawings he had made as a kid: crude dungeons and supervillain hideouts filled with deadly perils for the unfortunate stick figures who tried to invade them. For "Dungeon Boss," he imagined hand-drawing all the artwork himself, with crude, Napoleon Dynamite-esque pencil drawings for the cards' illustrations.

Chris pointed out that there is a fine line between art that looks intentionally bad to be clever and art that just looks bad. This concern remained intact during Johnny’s next and most inexplicable idea for art direction: that everyone should look like Peanuts characters.

That’s when Chris made an earth-shattering proposal. "If we’re going to make a game about building a side-scrolling dungeon, wouldn’t it make sense to have the whole thing look like a video game?" He sent Johnny a simple goblin sprite to prove his point.

Johnny loved the idea, but wanted to go a little higher-resolution. The result was a look that could be described as "Tokidoki meets MS Paint."

Zeroing In
After getting that out of his system, Johnny tried to color in his cartoons, but between limited artistic abilities and a decade-old copy of Photoshop, he wasn’t making much progress.
There was something appealing about these cute characters prancing happily to their deaths, but this look actually proved to be too high-res. On the scale of a card illustration, it didn’t really come across as pixel art. The brothers realized that it didn’t look like any sort of classic video game. There were too many pixels in all the characters, sprites didn’t tile or adhere to bounding-box dimensions, and there were no limitations on the color palette.

So Johnny spent some time on websites like Deviant-Art and PixelJoint and started learning the basics of actual pixel art. His goal was to emulate the look of his favorite 16-bit video games, but he learned that pixel art isn’t easy.

Reaching out to online pixel artist communities, they found talented artists like Katrina Guillermo, Kyle Merritt, Francisco Coda and David Nyari. The authentic, retro-inspired look was perfect!

Beyond the Brothers
To Johnny, the prospect of creating every card was daunting, and would delay the project’s schedule for the better part of a year. So he and Chris started digging into their own pockets, selling comic books and action figures to fund the costs of working with real pixel artists.
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Before and After

The previous page showed how “Goblin Mess Hall” became “Goblin Armory” with the art of Francisco Coda. “Gorgona, Queen of Medusia” became significantly more imposing with the art of Katrina Guillermo. Here are two more shots that show how far the game has come: “The Crushinator” (as reinterpreted by David Nyari, who also did all of the game’s background artwork) and “All-Seeing Eye” as enhanced by Francisco Coda.

You might notice a few nods to the game’s art development process in the final artwork -- the design of the kobolds, for example, or the presence of a certain Liger -- but Boss Monster has come a long way. And with decades of video game history to draw upon, Boss Monster should never run out of inspiration!
INTRODUCTORY STRATEGY

HOW TO WIN

As much fun as it is to build a dungeon and kill some adventurers, the object of Boss Monster is to win. There are multiple paths to victory, and your strategy can literally change with the hand you're dealt. Here are the most common approaches to victory.

ACQUIRING SOULS

The clearest path to success in Boss Monster is to acquire Souls more quickly than your opponents. That means you need to do two things: lure a lot of Heroes and make sure they don't survive your dungeon.

Killing Heroes is supposed to be the easy part. You can focus on rooms that increase your overall damage output -- usually Fighter and Cleric Rooms -- or rooms that give you access to "combat tricks." That could mean a Thief room that self-destructs to kill a Hero, or a Mage room that gives you access to Spells.

Luring Heroes is trickier, because you're competing with every other player at the table. In general, a Room with a higher Treasure value will have a low Damage value. So if you focus on making your dungeon purely attractive, you can find yourself receiving too many Wounds. At the same time, you have to outbid the other players, so it's best to err on the side of having lots of Treasure. Don't be afraid to take one or two Wounds in the early game; remember that every face-up Hero in your dungeon is a face-down Hero that's not in an opponent's dungeon.

The winning player is usually the one who finds a way to corner the market on at least two Hero types. Early in the game, if you can build up one Treasure value of three or higher, you're sending a signal that it's not worth competing with you for that Hero type. In a three- or four-player game, if you can manage to become the top bidder for two Hero types, it becomes very difficult for another player to beat you to 10 Souls.

In a two-player game, it's common for both players to stake their claim on a particular Hero type. One player ends up getting Fighters and Clerics, for example, while the other gets Mages and Thieves. The trick is then to break the emerging tie. The most reliable way to do this is by luring a Hero that would otherwise have gone to your opponent, with a card like Princess in Peril or Mimic Gallery. Like breaking an opponent's serve in a tennis match, this kind of move is the only way to take down a tough opponent.
INFLICTING WOUNDS

While it takes 10 Souls to win the game, it only takes 5 Wounds to lose. So if you can find a way to force opponents to take Wounds, you can change the dynamic of the game and take a shortcut to victory. Cards like Assassin can pump up the Heroes moving through an opponent’s dungeon, while cards like Freeze can tap out an opponent’s defenses. If you draw these cards during the middle of the game, don’t waste them on ordinary Heroes. Save them for the Epic Heroes, who can ruin a Boss’s day in a hurry.

In general, there are more cards in the game that allow you to gain Souls than cards that allow you to influence how many Wounds an opponent acquires. Actively pursuing this strategy may require playing Mage rooms in the hope of acquiring Spells that ruin an opponent’s Adventure Phase. But it is possible to Wound an opponent without Spells. Building up a certain treasure type, then covering up that treasure when a high-damage Hero comes into town, can often take an opponent by surprise.

If you find yourself on the receiving end of a Wound-oriented strategy, you need to change the way you play. If your dungeon is about to lure a Hero you can’t handle, you may need to cover up the Room that’s making you too attractive. Self-destruct rooms are a great option for covering up an unwanted Treasure type, since they give you the option to uncover the high-Treasure room in a later turn. Failing that, a card like Fear can buy you an extra turn to shore up your defenses. As you shift into survival mode, look for cards like Neanderthal Cave that increase your damage output, or cards like Bottomless Pit that can keep nasty Epic Heroes from reaching your Boss.

GAINING CARD ADVANTAGE

At the end of the day, a card game like Boss Monster is about using the available options to give yourself an advantage over opponents. Whether your strategy focuses on Souls, Wounds, or a delicate balance of the two, drawing more cards will give you more options. Cleric Rooms excel at this, whether they’re forcing opponents to discard or allowing you to pull choice cards from the discard pile. Rooms like Golem Factory, Brainsucker Hive and Dark Laboratory are also an excellent way to pull this off. There is no hand size limit in Boss Monster, so a player who finds a way to gain card advantage can end up with an array of enticing

Apply this advice wisely and you can crush your opponents, drive them before you, and hear the lamentations of their women. You might want to start working on your villainous laugh, because you’re on your way to becoming the ultimate Boss Monster!
There’s no denying that the superstars of Boss Monster are the Boss cards themselves. The Boss card is the first one you’ll play, its XP value determines who goes first, and its Level Up ability can have a major impact on the game. Keep in mind that a Boss is not a Room (so it isn’t affected by Spells or abilities that affect rooms).

King Croak is the quintessential Boss, the guy on the cover, the original master of the dungeon. His Level Up ability is equally classic: get whatever Advanced Monster Room you want. You can dig through the Room Deck or even pluck one from the discard pile. This will usually be a Fighter Room like Beast Menagerie or Monster’s Ballroom, but King Croak can also search for other class-luring rooms like Liger’s Den and Dracolich Lair.

Arcadian Lore: King Croak is the undisputed ruler of the sewers beneath Arcadia’s largest cities. Thus far, no hero has dared to plumb the depths of those tunnels to find and defeat him.

Robobo has the lowest XP of any Boss Monster in the base game, but he offsets that with a powerful ability. One of the few effects in the game that affects multiple opponents, his Level Up ability forces each opponent to choose and destroy one of their own Rooms. Even though opponents will invariably sacrifice their least favorite room to the effect, it slows them down by a turn. It’s a great example of the Fighter strategy of having bigger, stronger dungeon than opponents.

Arcadian Lore: Robobo is a clockwork construct, brought to life through a combination of magic and technology. His anger is legendary, and his ground-pounding punches create earthquakes that collapse tunnels and destroy dungeons.
A number of the game’s Cleric Rooms involve forcing opponents to discard cards, while other Cleric Rooms allow you to draw cards from the discard pile. Draculord skips a step by allowing you to precision-strike an opponent’s hand. This ability takes finesse to use, which is why Draculord also has a high XP value, but it can be quite effective. Keep an eye on your opponents, and try to time your Level Up for when one of them has drawn a Room card or searched the discard pile for a specific card. Denying them that card – and putting it in your own arsenal – can change the course of the game.

Arcadian Lore: Draculord is widely regarded as the most eligible bachelor among Arcadia’s boss monsters. In addition to his harem of vampire minions, he is the chosen consort of Seducia.

Draculord

Xyzax is the king of pulling cards from the discard pile, an ability that’s very powerful in a game that almost never allows you to search the Room and Spell decks. This can mean picking up the perfect Spells, the perfect Rooms, or a combination of the two. The key to using him effectively is to make sure that you hold off on building your fifth room until you’re sure there are some cards in the discard pile worth taking.

Seducia specializes in an ability that’s central to almost any strategy: luring Heroes. Her ability specifies a “Hero,” which can mean an ordinary or Epic Hero. If you’re ready to deal at least 11 damage (or you’re ready with an insta-kill combat trick), be sure to grab an Epic Hero. If you’re not ready for an Epic Hero, go for an ordinary Hero that would otherwise be destined for an opponent. If you can steal the victim from a Fighter-monopolizing Boss, for example, you’ve created a two-point swing in the game.

Arcadian Lore: The ravishing Seducia was once a mortal enchantress, but she has found the secret to eternal youth. Her siren call has lured many men – and women – into deadly dungeons.

Xyzax

Seducia
The Brothers Wise, only available to Kickstarter supporters at the PLAYER’S CHOICE level and above, is a special Mage-type Boss with an ability analogous to those of King Croak and Cleopatra. While the Brothers don’t match the volume of Spells you can get with Cerebel-lus or Xyzax, they’re ideal when what you really need is that one perfect Spell.

Tips From the Bros:
If you’re dealt the Brothers Wise, you might consider trying the “TPK strategy” for a game. This involves building a flexible dungeon that lures (and kills!) one of each Hero type. Then, when you Level Up the Brothers Wise, you can grab TPK, play it, and earn two automatic Souls!

Cleopatra is to Traps what King Croak is to Monsters. And while there are currently fewer Advanced Trap Rooms in the game than Advanced Monster Rooms, their synergies can be even stronger. Recycling Center, a killer combo with Boulder Ramp and/or The Crushinator, is an ideal target for Cleopatra’s ability.

Arcadian Lore: Little is known of Cleopatra, but she is believed to have been the wife or lover of a long-dead pharaoh. Her grave is guarded by the deadliest gauntlet of traps in all of Arcadia.

Level Up abilities don’t get much more straightforward than Gorgona’s insta-kill effect. But the subtlety of the card is in its timing. If you’re lucky enough to play as Gorgona, keep your dungeon small by playing Advanced Rooms and relying on self-destruct Traps. Try to avoid playing your fifth lengthwise room until there’s an Epic Hero in town, so you can earn two Souls when you Level Up!

Tips from the Bros:
If you’re in a two-player duel against Gorgona, it is possible – but difficult – to make her Level Up ability fizzle. You’ll need two of the following: a Princess in Peril played during the Bait phase, a Mimic Gallery played by a higher-XP Boss, or Seducia’s Level Up ability. And that assumes there are no Heroes in town when the turn begins! It’s tough to pull off, but delightfully devious if you can make it happen.
Kirax is not a Boss for beginners. With so much extra Treasure, it’s easy to get in over your head and die by Wounds. But if you can build a deadly dungeon worthy of the Golden Dragon, it’s an almost unstoppable advantage. In a multiplayer game, you may need to gang up against Kirax to bring her down. In a one-on-one duel, you’d better be prepared to deal some Wounds, because you can’t count on beating Kirax in the race to lure Heroes.

**Did you know?**

**One awesome Kickstarter supporter, Tremane Barclay, became THE DRAGON** by pledging at the highest level of support. As part of his reward, he gained naming rights to the Golden Dragon. The name is a draconic spin on Kira, Tremane’s nickname for his wife. As for “The Gatekeeper”? You’ll have to ask Tremane about that one…

**AND MORE:** Fearful townspeople whisper that still more boss monsters vie for control of the underworld. Who will become the most feared villain in all of Arcadia?
Adventuring fighters love straight up physical challenges that test their strength, bravery, and mettle. Any fighter looking to make his name in the world of Arcadia is going to seek out the dungeons that deliver the biggest monsters, the toughest room combos, and the mightiest of magical weapons as treasure. It’s no surprise then that fighter-luring rooms are characterized by high damage output and effects that depend on room arrangement and positioning.

Bosses looking to build dungeons that attract fighters will need to pay particular attention to how they construct their dungeons from turn one. Place that heavy-hitting room too early, and you may miss out on a more effective room combination later on. Patience is the watchword for the fighter-focused Boss.

Neanderthal Cave is the quintessential fighter room, with a magic weapon treasure type, high damage, and few other effects. But there’s a catch to that remarkably high damage. Once placed, you may not build an Advanced Room on top of it at any point in the game. If you ever want to upgrade it, you’ll have to build a normal room on top of it first.

Arcadian Lore: Minotaurs are vicious, clever, and sadistic. They’re also a favorite among Boss Monsters as they’ll work practically for free, requiring nothing more than some unused tunnels and the occasional lost hero to keep them satisfied.

Minotaur’s Maze is an oddity among fighter rooms; its damage is a pitiful zero. But don’t discount its utility in your Boss Monster tool belt. This room features an effect that can be particularly useful in Boss Monster: control of hero progress through your dungeon.

The first time a hero enters the Minotaur’s Maze, he is sent back to the previous room where he takes the previous room’s damage and activates that room’s effects one more time. Placed correctly, the Maze can devastate incoming heroes.

Arcadian Lore: A holdover from Arcadia’s ice age, neanderthals inhabit the caves and crags of the Ran’Somm Mountains. Fierce, brutal, and frankly, stupid, neanderthals rely on primitive technologies to get their painful point across.

DID YOU KNOW?
Many of the sprites in Boss Monster are inspired by characters from classic console games.
The Golem Factory provides you with a room that can serve a role in almost any dungeon. Two base damage is solid, and that mid-level damage increases the chance that a hero will die in this room, activating its special effect text: “If a hero dies in this Room, draw a Room card.” More rooms mean more flexibility in dungeon design, an advantage no wise Boss Monster turns down.

Arcadian Lore: Legend says that the first golems were heroes turned to stone by Gorgona and then animated by the artificers of Nys. Whether this is true or not, not one knows, but some wisemen have claimed that the Angry Golem Robobo was actually their first victim, and his rages are actually continued grief over the loss of his humanity.

Tips from the Bros:
Consider placing a “death effect” card like Golem Factory in front of the Minotaur’s Maze. Since the maze forces heroes to pass through that room twice, you’ve doubled the chances that they will die there and activate the death effect.

One of the rare “Power-Up Pack” of Kickstarter Exclusive cards that aren’t found in the retail version of the game, Shark Tank provides a nice option for a “first play” card to place at the end of your dungeon. Since the sharks in your tank are at their strongest and most frenzied when the heroes are bleeding a bit, you’ll want to make sure you’ve got some other damage-dealing rooms to the left of the tank to soften the heroes up.

Another Fighter room that relies heavily on positioning, the Goblin Armory powers up adjacent Monster rooms, giving them +1 to their damage. It also features an enticing double treasure score.

Arcadian Lore: Goblins have long served as the armorers of a dungeon’s monsters. They’re hard working, crafty, and best of all, you can pay them in gibbets of human flesh!
With an upgrade to the Monster’s Ballroom, your dungeon gets transformed into a damage dealing machine. That’s because the Ballroom deals damage equal to the number of Monster Rooms in your dungeon (note that that includes itself). That means that the Ballroom has the potential to deliver a five HP crushing to heroes wandering into a dungeon that’s been carefully crafted to consist of all Monster Rooms.

Arcadian Lore: The Ballroom is so deadly that adventurers use it to describe any situation that has gone from bad to worse. “How bad was it?” “You have no idea. Sir Poulstice opened the locked chest and then everything went nuts. Turned into a real Ballroom.” “Sorry to hear that.”

Tips from the Bros: Monster’s Ballroom is not an advanced room you should play just because you can. Its power comes from the number of Monster rooms in your dungeon, and if your dungeon is dominated by Trap rooms, chances are you can find a better Advanced Room to lay down.

Beast Menagerie is one of those cards whose room text is often overlooked in favor of its high base damage. The Menagerie’s damage is nothing to scoff at, but veteran boss monsters know that this room’s ability to feed extra room cards into your hand offers you the most powerful tool in your arsenal: flexibility. More rooms in your hand is more rooms to choose from. This will allow you to change your baiting strategy from turn to turn in response to the heroes that come out in town.
Room Roundup: Cleric Rooms

The questing clerics of Arcadia scour the land for lost holy relics to return to their holy sites. Driven by a sense of righteousness and a fervent belief in the power of their deity, clerics will delve into the deadliest dungeons with no thought for their own safety. Cleric-luring dungeon rooms tend to have effects that allow you to draw from the discard pile, heal yourself of wounds, or force opponents to discard cards.

Cleric Rooms offer unparalleled flexibility to your dungeon construction, as they give you the opportunity to pull from the known cards of the discard pile. But if the cards of the discard pile aren’t attractive to you, or your opponent is bleeding it dry of all the good cards, focusing on cleric rooms can leave you wishing you’d invested in rooms with more immediately useful effects.

Specter’s Sanctum is a card that can annoy your opponents to no end. Played when your opponent has a Spells in hand, the Sanctum will force them to discard one. Sanctum can be a nice room to keep in reserve if you notice your opponent holding on to a single Spell card. If you think it’s a Counterspell or Freeze card, play the Sanctum and watch him or her weep.

Even after that initial room effect is resolved, the Sanctum sports some decent killing power with two damage.

Tips from the Bros: Veteran Boss Monster players know that death effect cards are best played closest to your Boss, increasing the likelihood that heroes will die in the room because of damage taken in earlier rooms.

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Arcadian Lore: It’s said that the oldest of these dark rooms contain the souls of slain mages, still hungry for magics. Today’s mages avoid them like the plague, while Arcadian Clerics make their fame and fortune clearing these rooms of their dark spirits.
Demonstrating the other theme of Cleric rooms we have Succubus Spa, stealing opponent’s cards when a hero dies in this room. That effect only kicks in once per turn, but that’s all it takes to ruin your opponent’s day.

You get to decide whether to take a room or a spell, and that flexibility makes this room that much more powerful.

**Arcadian Lore:** The list of Arcadian heroes lured to their deaths by enticing Succubi is too long to mention even in passing. Needless to say, even if you make it out of their steamy lair alive, they’ll exact a price on your soul that you’ll not soon forget.

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**Ghoul Yard**

Another Kickstarter Exclusive, Ghoul Yard is most useful as a late game addition to your dungeon. Its ability to deal four damage (or more if modified) to Epic Heroes is unusual and often helpful.

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**Dark Altar**

Dark Altar is the Cleric-luring room par excellence. With two holy relics, it should immediately put you over the count on luring in Clerics, and once you’re done focusing on clerics, destroy it pull a room from the discard pile that serves your immediate needs better.

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**Arcadian Lore:** In the training grounds of Arcadia’s most holy orders, no other room is discussed with as much fervor as the fabled Dark Altar. Legend has it that a dark hero known as the Demigod was born of this altar by the sacrifice of a holy paladin by Xyzax, the Progenitor Lich. Made powerful beyond imagining by those dark magics, the Demigod escaped his dark lord and vowed revenge on all the masters of Arcadia’s dungeons. Or so the story goes...

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**Did You Know?**

**The Kickstarter Power-up Pack of Extra Cards Isn’t in the Retailer Version of the Game and Won’t Ever Be Printed Again!**

Another Kickstarter Exclusive, Ghoul Yard is most useful as a late game addition to your dungeon. Its ability to deal four damage (or more if modified) to Epic Heroes is unusual and often helpful.
There are few rooms in Boss Monster with the power to change the direction of the game as quickly as the Bordello can. Not only does it deliver that whopping three damage, but placed correctly, Vampire Bordello will suck the souls right out of those Heroes that have wounded you, restoring your health and getting you closer to your ten souls in the process.

Arcadian Lore: Calling it a bordello is really just a typical example of the sort of dark humor heroes are known to employ. The illusions cast by hungry vampires might seem inviting enough, but you won’t find pleasure between those sheets.

Tips from the Bros:
When playing healing rooms like Vampire Bordello, you can afford to be a lot more aggressive in luring heroes into your dungeon. Go ahead and take those Wounds, knowing that if you play your cards right, you can turn those Wounds into Souls and pull out a surprise win.

New Boss Monster players tend to pass up cards like Dracolich Lair because the two for one trade that it requires seems like a bum deal. Not so! Veteran players know that the option to pull the card of your choice from the discard pile is more than worth the cost. Add three base damage to that, and you’ve got a card that could have a spot in any dungeon.

Arcadian Lore: Dracoliches occupy that category of monster just under Bosses. Powerful beyond measure, the only thing keeping them in check is that their fascination with the dead only just surpasses their hunger for the living.
Your average thief has one thing on his mind: gold. Sure, they might enjoy the rush of cracking a tough trap or pulling some death-defying stunt to impress their friends, but bags of gold are what will bring thieves into your dungeon.

Thief-luring rooms are almost always trap rooms, and as a group they are characterized by “BOOM” effects that allow you to destroy a room to either deal more damage than you normally would, or to just kill a hero outright. The insta-kill potential of thief rooms is very aluring, but they come with a real cost: destroying rooms means that you’ll almost certainly fall behind in the size of your dungeon, and you may have a harder time luring in and killing other heroes later in the game.

The Jackpot Stash is the ultimate in hero-luring rooms. Just getting this room into play is going to go a long way towards catching all the thieves that come into town. And just when your opponent thinks they’re going to be drawing in that critical hero to put them over the top, Boom! You destroy Jackpot stash and double the treasure value of every other room in your dungeon, almost guaranteeing that you’ll be grabbing most of the heroes in town that turn. Remember, however, that your Boss is not a Room, so you won’t be doubling his or her treasure.

Sometimes the simplest approach is the best one. Sure, you could spend tons of gold and gems hiring out the best monsters and the land’s finest trap-crafters, or you could just dig a really deep pit, cover it with something innocuous (I’m partial to throw rugs), and just wait for the adventurers to stumble in. Bottomless Pit gives you that quick kill that Thief-luring rooms are known for, but don’t use it too early. It’s a one shot weapon, and then it’s gone, leaving you one room short and wishing you had more hero killing power at your disposal.

Did you know?
Jackpot Stash is the only card in the base game that can change the treasure value of other rooms.

Tips from the Bros:
One of the more powerful combos in the game involves Bottomless Pit and any card that will let you pull from the discard pile. Use the pit, kill a hero, resurrect the pit, use it again! It’s so easy a Neanderthal could do it.
What's that smell? Dizzygas! The Dizzygas Hallway is a room whose utility depends entirely on its placement. Poorly placed, the Hallway is a pretty mediocre card. Properly placed, in front of another trap room, the Hallway becomes a great way to boost your damage dealing while also attracting thieves. Don’t think that it has to be a Thief room behind it either; any trap room will do!

Arcadian Lore: Dizzygas was first concocted by Gorgona in her alchemical dungeons. Originally intended as a chemical that would turn heroes against one another, it merely left them disoriented, but more than a little unprepared for the whatever horrors awaited them in her next room.

Tips from the Bros:
New players can make the mistake of using the room-destroying effects of Thief rooms too early in the game. Pros save those rooms for more critical situations and are willing to take wounds early on knowing they can catch up in Soul versus Wound count later in the game.

The Boulder Ramp offers up some of the highest damage dealing potential in the game, with a cost. Destroying rooms shouldn’t be done without due consideration, but if that’s what it takes to destroy a hero who would otherwise kill you or put you too close to death for comfort, so be it. Keep in mind that the +5 damage it deals is to one Hero only, so if another Hero is marching through, you must destroy another room or go back to 1 measly damage.

Trash cards tend to have low base damage, but the Trash Compactor breaks that rule with a very high three damage. However, place the Compactor carefully, because if it doesn’t deliver the killing blow to the first hero to pass through it, it does no more damage for the rest of the turn.

Arcadian Lore: Trash Compactors aren’t so much built as grown. The deepest cesspits of Arcadian dungeons attract a deadly breed of beast that is only seen by the doomed.
The Crushinator. Just saying it feels good. Once you’ve got The Crushinator in play you’ll likely be set in terms of damage dealing for the rest of the game. Don’t forget though, as with other rooms that sacrifice other rooms for effect, you can quickly deplete your hero-luring power and your flexibility if you go too crazy with room destruction.

Arcadian Lore: Powered by steamworks and ancient magics, the crushing, grinding pistons of the Crushinator have claimed more than their fair share of heroes who were not nimble enough to pass through them, or not wise enough to avoid them.

The Recycling Center is the icing on your thief room cake. If you can get this card into play in your thief-luring dungeon, you’ll no longer have to think twice about destroying rooms. Destroy away, knowing that you’ll be able to get even more rooms into play to compensate for your losses. And with three damage to boot, the Recycling Center can’t be beat. And hey, it’s also great for the environment! What’s not to love?

DID YOU KNOW?
The Crushinator was one of the first rooms conceived of and drawn for Boss Monster and has gone through numerous iterations.
Arcadian Mages only leave their towers of study to seek out new knowledge. Like bloodhounds they can almost sniff out sources rich in magic and spellcraft. Besides being filled with ancient tomes of magic, Mage-luring dungeon rooms tend to be overflowing and latent magical energies, and they tend to have effects that generate spell cards for you, the Boss.

As any veteran Boss Monster player will tell you, heavy use of Spells represents one powerful strategy for winning the game. But Mage Rooms also tend to be low in damage, and focusing too much on a Mage-luring dungeon may make you regret it when you don’t have that key Spell in your hand at the right time.

Brainsucker Hive often serves as the engine that powers a Mage-driven dungeon. If you can place this room right, you’ll turn every hero that dies here into a spell. That alone can be the mechanic that wins you the game. Even if the special effect text only pays off once or twice, you’ll still benefit from the two damage, which is quite respectable for a mage room.

The Dark Laboratory is the Mage rooms’ dual treasure room. It also gives you some early options in your spell selection, and is therefore an attractive first play for any Boss planning on focusing on a spell-heavy strategy.

Arcadian Lore: Cerebellus, the Father Brain is not like other Boss Monsters. There are legends that he arrived in Arcadia from places unknown, and brought his dreaded Brainsuckers with him. Whether true or not, there’s no doubt that these foul creatures and their master are alien in effect, if not in origin.

DID YOU KNOW?

Boss Monster isn’t just inspired by video games. Some cards, like the Dark Laboratory are inspired by science fiction and fantasy stories as well.
A Power-Up Pack card, the Bone Crank is one of those cards where timing is everything. Played haphazardly, the Crank does little for your dungeon. Played at just the right time, the Bone Crank can temporarily take out that key room that your opponent needs to lure in or destroy a hero. Its impact is these instances is quick, but powerful.

Arcadian Lore: Situated at the deepest center of Sedicia’s dungeon, the Bone Crank sits in a cavern too cold for the living to survive. With a few turns of the frozen gears, the necromatic magic of the Crank reaches out, sending a deathly chill to the dungeons of her rivals.

Tips from the Bros: When playing against someone who is heavily invested in Mage Rooms, consider shifting toward more Cleric Rooms. Their discard forcing abilities can help to get spells out of your opponent’s hand.

Another mage room explicitly designed to get spells into your hand, the Haunted Library gives you the ultimate flexibility of choosing to draw a room or spell each turn. Don’t get too attached to drawing spells each turn though, as you’ll soon feel the deficit of rooms in your hand.

While the Haunted Library allows you to draw spell cards each turn, the Witch’s Kitchen allows you to convert cards in hand into spells if you so desire.

Arcadian Lore: Witches, warlocks, and other dark magicians are often more than happy to sell their services to the highest bidding Boss Monster. Besides using their powers to attack invading heroes, they also serve as field generals and even mini-bosses within the dungeons themselves.
Arcadian Lore: The creation of a secret cabal of good wizards, the All-Seeing Eye was lost to antiquity until appearing again in the dungeons of Cleopatra. Now corrupted by her dark magics, the Eye gives Cleopatra the ability to counter adventurers' actions before they even take them.

The All-Seeing Eye rewards a heavy investment in Spells. If you have enough Spell cards in hand, you can essentially shut down any opponent’s use of Spells. As with Counterspell, this “cancel” effect can negate even an active player’s spell. Even without its Spell-cancelling abilities, the Eye provides a healthy dose of damage dealing to your dungeon while maintaining your mage-luring abilities.

DID YOU KNOW?
The earliest versions of Boss Monster only had Fighters, Thieves, and Mages. Clerics were a later addition that was originally slated for an expansion.

Liger’s Den

The Liger’s Den is the ultimate room for a Spell-oriented player. With the Liger on your side, your first Spell every turn is immediately replaced. This constant stream of spellpower will leave your opponents cringing, and helps defend against those who try to limit your effectiveness with discard effects.

Arcadian Lore: Bred for its skills in magic, the Liger is pretty much the most powerful magical beast in all of Arcadia.
Room Roundup: Hybrid Rooms

Ahh, the beautiful, but deadly multi-colored room; is there anything that warms a Boss Monster’s cold heart more? Hybrid rooms, as their name implies, are characterized by more than one treasure type. A hybrid room still counts as every type of room with which it shares a treasure type, so a room with Fighter and Mage treasure is essentially a “Fighter/Mage Room.” Their effects are quite varied, but they all have the built-in benefit of being an ideal foundation for more than one type of Advanced Room.

Don’t be turned off by their typically low damage. Hybrid rooms have a place in any dungeon, and, of course, they look good too!

Centipede Tunnel is one of those rooms that everyone is happy to see in their hand. Playing the Tunnel gives you the opportunity to rearrange your own dungeon to build that combo you missed earlier on; it can also be used to disrupt your opponent’s combos, or to rearrange his rooms to reduce the likelihood of heroes dying in a particular room.

However you play it, Centipede Tunnel is extremely powerful. The potential to build an advanced fighter or mage room on top it is just icing on the cake.

Arcadian Lore: A Centipede in appearance only, this fearsome giant tunnels frenetically beneath Arcadia’s surface. Only the strongest Boss Monsters can bend them to their will, and the horrible grinding sound they make as they approach shakes even the sternest hero’s heart.
One of only two cards in the game with all four treasure types, the Hatchery is most notable for its use as a foundation for any Advanced Room. The timing of playing the Hatchery can be tricky, as it generally means momentarily having a very attractive dungeon that doesn’t have the hero-killing power to match.

**Arcadian Lore:** Kirax, the Great Golden Dragon, and oldest of Arcadia’s Boss Monsters made her lair atop the fabled Gate of Ancients. Heroes seeking the secrets of the gate must first pass through her and the hundreds of hatchlings that guard her dungeons.

Zombie Prison gives you the opportunity to rob a soul from an opponent’s scorekeeping area and turn it into a wound. Best played when you’ve got some other hero-buffering cards available (e.g. an Assassin spell), the Prison can quickly reverse an early lead taken by one of your opponents.

Like the Zombie Prison, Mimic Vault can be played as a real spoiler. Stealing a hero from town that was destined for someone else’s dungeon is a good play, being able to choose the lowest-Health hero in town so that you get a guaranteed Soul can be an even better one.

Torture Chamber can be an attractive early build because it limits your opponent’s options for play and puts him at a card disadvantage relative to you. This comes at a cost though; you’ve got to destroy the Chamber to trigger that effect, and that means giving up this room as a foundation for an Advanced Room.
Choose one Hero in town. Place it at the entrance of an opponent's dungeon.

Give one Trap Room +3 damage until end of the turn.

Choose a Hero in an opponent's dungeon. Give that Hero +3 health until end of the turn.

Destroy a room in your dungeon. Any Hero in that room is destroyed.

Choose a Spell card that has just been declared. Cancel the effects of that Spell card.

Deal X damage to one Hero where X is the number of Rooms in your dungeon.

Choose a Hero in any dungeon and put it back in town.

Deactivate target room.

Give one Monster Room +3 damage until end of turn.
JEOPARDY

All players immediately discard their hands, then draw one Spell card and two Room cards.

KOBOLED STRIKE

No Rooms can be built this turn. Any face-down Room is returned to its owner’s hand.

MOTIVATION

If you have fewer Rooms than an opponent, you may build an extra Room this turn.

PRINCESS IN PERIL

Choose one Hero in town. Place it at the entrance to your dungeon.

SOUL HARVEST

Choose a face-down Hero in your scorekeeping area and remove it from the game. Draw two Spell cards.

TELEPORTATION

Send a Hero in your dungeon back to the first room of your dungeon.

T.P.K.

Place this card in your scorekeeping area. If you also have at least one Fighter, one Mage, one Cleric and one Thief face-down in your scorekeeping area, this card is worth two extra Souls.

TREPIDATION

Choose a player with at least two more Souls than you. No Hero enters that player’s dungeon this turn.

ZOMBIE ATTACK

Choose a dead Hero in an opponent’s scorekeeping area. Send it back to the entrance of that player’s dungeon. It has +2 Health until end of turn.
While every card in Boss Monster can be effective in the hands of a skilled player, a few cards stand out from the crowd. These are cards that fit into almost every strategy, or cards that make you want to change your strategy to build around their unique effects. No card is the right play every time, but drawing these cards should always put a smile on your face.

**ROOMS**

1. **Brainsucker Hive**
   If you have a Brainsucker Hive in your opening hand, it’s hitting the table. Placed at the end of a dungeon, it’s your ticket to a steady stream of Spells for the rest of the game. It even has good damage for a Mage room – enough so there’s a decent chance you’ll be able to kill the unlucky Heroes who drop by.

2. **Jackpot Stash**
   In a game that’s ultimately about who can lure the most Heroes, a card that can double your dungeon’s Treasure value is mighty indeed. Best saved for a turn when multiple Heroes are in town, it’s the ultimate tiebreaker in the bidding war for adventurers.

3. **Zombie Prison**
   To a beginning player, Zombie Prison is a Cleric/Mage room with a weird ability. But this powerful room is actually an effective antidote to opponents who rely on combat tricks to kill their Heroes. When used on an Epic Hero, it can turn two Souls into two Wounds, reversing the course of the game.

4. **Minotaur’s Maze**
   The chance to effectively clone the best room in your dungeon is a great move for any Fighter-oriented player.

5. **Bottomless Pit**
   From the Fool to the Demigod, every Hero fears the simple Bottomless Pit. It can only work once, but it always gets the job done.
**SPELLS**

1. **FREEZE**
The most common Spell in the game is also everyone’s favorite, because it’s so darn versatile. Use it to let a Hero wound an opponent, to make an opponent lose a bidding war, or even to depress your own treasure values to keep a Hero out of your dungeon. There’s nothing it can’t do!

2. **PRINCESS IN PERIL**
This dams el in distress is the perfect bait, and a chance to break another player’s monopoly on a particular Hero type. Grab a Hero that would have gone to an opponent, and you’ve generated a two-point swing in the score!

3. **TELEPORTATION**
There are a few Room-buffing Spells in the game, but none is quite as powerful or as satisfying as Teleport. For one Hero, it doubles your dungeon’s damage output. Time it right and you can trigger powerful death effects!

4. **ASSASSIN**
When the Heroes in your opponent’s dungeon aren’t quite cutting it, Assassin is there to lend a helping hand.

5. **TPK**
An alternate win condition for the balanced player, TPK may often seem like junk. But used wisely, it’s a surprising game-winner.

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**ADVANCED ROOMS**

1. **VAMPIRE BORDELLO**
This Cleric room is currently the only card in the game that lets you heal Wounds, which can totally change the way you play the game. Even high-damage Heroes become potential Souls, as long as you can sequence your dungeon to make sure weaker Heroes die in this room.

2. **RECYCLING CENTER**
You know all your Thief rooms with self-destruct effects? With Recycling Center, any “destroy this room” cost goes from drawback to feature. And if you also have a Boulder Ramp in play, you’ll have a combo that will make your dungeon practically unbeatable.

3. **ALL-SEEING EYE**
When any Spell card in your hand is a potential Counterspell, your opponents will think twice about any move they make – and they won’t even bother to cast a Spell during your Adventure phase.

4. **BEAST MENAGERIE**
If you’re building a Fighter-oriented dungeon, this underground zoo will ensure that you never run out of Monster rooms.

5. **LIGER’S DEN**
It’s gr-r-reat! When you bring out the Liger, you’re in store for a nigh-endless supply of valuable Spell cards.
**BOSSES**

**KIRAX THE GATEKEEPER**
Also known as the Golden Dragon, this card is dangerous in the hands of an aggressive player. Once you’ve leveled up, you’re hard to beat when it comes to luring Heroes … so watch out for other players trying to send you Wounds!

**THE BROTHERS WISE**
Call it egomania, call it narcissism, but the Brothers immortalized themselves as a pretty powerful card. Being able to choose the perfect Spell helps you line up a variety of combos, and can net you even more than one extra Soul.

**GORGONA**
Simple and to the point, Gorgona is about killing dudes. She rewards a Thief-oriented player who maintains a lean dungeon in the early game, because her ability is best saved until the first Epic Heroes stroll into town.

**SEDCUCIA**
This sorceress is all about being attractive, and helps ensure that you get exactly the right sort of Hero entering your dungeon.

**ROBOBO**
Robobo smash! When this hulking golem levels up, he’s almost guaranteed to put you ahead in room count.

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So those are the Top 20 cards that you hope to see... but what about the cards you dread? While the majority of Heroes in the game are chewy and delicious, these three Epic Heroes are more than a mouthful. If you were a Kickstarter supporter, you can add them to your game. But don’t say we didn’t warn you...

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**PROMO HEROES**

**THE DEMIGOD**
The Epic counterpart to the Fool is fierce and powerful. Exclusively available to Kickstarter backers who pledged at the POWER-UP PACK level and above, the Demigod heads straight for the least-wounded Boss. Stop him if you can!

**THE MONSTER HUNTER**
Think your dungeon full of high-damage Fighter and Cleric rooms can wipe out any Hero? The whip-wielding Monster Hunter, available to PLAYER’S CHOICE Kickstarter supporters, isn’t impressed.

**THE TRAP MASTER**
This buxom beauty can leap Bottomless Pits and dodge Boulder Ramps with ease, turning your tricky Thief and Mage rooms into a cakewalk. Luckily, she’s only a threat to Kickstarter backers at or above the PLAYER’S CHOICE level.
Every game of *Boss Monster* begins with each player drawing five Room cards and two Spell cards, then discarding two cards of any type. This decision allows you to begin crafting your strategy right away, but it can raise some challenging questions.

One question new players often ask is, “is it better to discard Spell cards or Room cards at the beginning of the game?” Like every play in *Boss Monster*, the answer to that question will depend on your overall play preference, the specific cards you draw, and what you expect your opponents to do.

Spell cards are very powerful, and because the only way to get them during the game is to play Mage rooms, it’s generally good to hang on to the ones you draw. On the other hand, keeping more Rooms in your hand during the opening draw and discard provides you with more flexibility in the early phases of the game. Sometimes, you’ll want to keep four Rooms.

Advanced Rooms can be an easier choice. If you don’t have a matching ordinary Room to upgrade, it’s often better to discard the Advanced Room in favor of immediately playable cards. In the example below, The Crushinator is easy to reject because the player has no Thief Rooms.

A couple of Room types deserve priority during the opening draw. Rooms with death effects (“if a Hero dies in this room…”) should be placed as close as possible to the right end of your dungeon. Heroes tend to die right before they reach your Boss, so play those Golem Factories and Open Graves first. Rooms that allow you to draw cards (or retrieve them from the discard pile) are also valuable.

Finally, during the opening draw you’re also faced with the question of whether to specialize in one or two Room types, or to try and generalize across Room types. Remember that attracting just one type of Hero isn’t likely to win you the game, but some specializing can be advantageous. If you believe you can “corner the market” on a couple of treasure types, it’s a good idea to do so. Your decisions during the opening draw can have a lasting impact, so choose wisely!
The Heroes of Arcadia come in all shapes, sizes, and strengths, but most fit into the four basic classes: Mage, Thief, Cleric, and Fighter. The number of heroes in each game of *Boss Monster* depends on the number of players, but the number of heroes of each class is always equal. In a two-player game there are three Mages, three Thieves, three Clerics, and three Fighters. Three and four player game see the addition of more Heroes to the mix, but always in that equal ratio.

Those equal ratios are important, because they mean your investment in a particular treasure type will be rewarded. If you’ve built an awesome Thief-luring dungeon but none have appeared yet, get ready for a plentiful harvest. Conversely, if all the Heroes of a particular type are already dead, it’s time to switch treasures.

Heroes vary primarily by Health, with each class having ordinary heroes with 4, 6, and 8 Health. This variation in Health represents the different levels of skill that Heroes might have and adds an element of surprise to the game. Your dungeon might be capable of handling a 4-Health Mage, but what if an 8-Health one shows up first?

Epic Heroes show up in town after you’ve run through the entirety of the standard hero deck. Epics are a whole new ball of wax, providing two Souls if you kill them, but also dealing two Wounds if they survive your dungeon.

Adding to that extra deadliness is their increased stamina. Epic heroes come with either 11 or 13 Health!

A few special Heroes are available, primarily as promo cards. The Fool is in the base game, and serves as an equalizer, giving players who have fallen behind an easy Soul. The Kickstarter-exclusive Demigod is similar, but focuses on Wounds. The Monster Hunter and Trap Master are “Hybrid” Heroes drawn to multiple Treasure types, and are especially tough to kill.

The Demigod and other promo cards are optional, but they’re a great way to spice up the game once you’ve played a few hands. For more Hero-related excitement, check out the *Tools of Hero-Kind* expansion in 2013!
ROOM PAIRINGS

One of the overlooked strategies in *Boss Monster* is the way in which different room types complement one another. We’re not talking about Monster versus Trap Rooms here; instead, we’re referring to the way different Treasure Rooms work together.

Consider Mage Rooms. They’re fantastic for generating Spells to power up your ability to mess with your opponents’ strategies, but they often lack enough damage to kill incoming Heroes. Mage Rooms work well in any dungeon, but they work especially well when balanced with higher-firepower Fighter Rooms.

Likewise, Thief Rooms are known for their “Destroy this Room” effects, which force you to self-destruct a Room to instantly kill a Hero or pump up the attributes of your other Rooms. This is a great tactic for taking out Heroes of any strength, but it can quickly deplete your dungeon of Rooms. Cleric Rooms provide the perfect complement to this, with their ability to “resurrect” destroyed rooms from the discard pile and get them back into your hand.

Of course, there are synergies in every combination: Cleric/Fighter, Cleric/Mage, Fighter/Thief and Mage/Thief. Try them all to determine your preferred play style, but be ready to shift your tactics based on the hand you’re dealt!
BOSSES, XP AND TIMING

Bosses get a lot of attention in this game, for obvious reasons. Your Boss is the lynchpin of your dungeon, and its Level Up ability can help to change the game in your favor or lock in a win. New players are less likely to think about the Experience Point (XP) value of their Boss card, but that’s a mistake. In this section we'll re-examine how XP affects game play, and offer some hints for how you can maximize your own play when playing a higher- or lower-XP Boss.

Experience serves as Boss Monster's central timing mechanic. In almost every situation in the game, the Boss with the higher XP value goes first. What does this look like in play?

- At the beginning of the game, XP determines who goes first (and in a multiplayer game, who goes second, third and fourth).
- Each turn, players should draw cards in XP order and place Room cards in XP order.
- After all Rooms are revealed simultaneously, any build effects (“when you build this room...“) are resolved in XP order.
- During the Adventure phase, the highest XP player “processes” all of his Heroes at once, then lower XP players take turns doing the same.

In these situations, having a higher XP value can be an advantage. When does your XP matter less? When playing Spells and activating Room abilities.

Each player is the “active" player when it's his or her turn to place a Room (choosing a Room card to play and deciding where to play it) during the Build Phase, and when processing Heroes during the Adventure Phase. While the order in which you are the active player is determined by your Boss’s XP, while you are the Active Player, your Spells and effects will resolve first, no matter what.

Let's look at four examples from the same game that illustrate the various times when XP matters and when it doesn't matter.

In our first game, Player One is playing Gorgona, while Player Two is playing Robobo. Gorgona, at 500 XP, has the higher XP value. So, during the Build Phase, Player One is the first to select a room from her hand and place it face down in her dungeon; while she is doing this, she is the active player. After Gorgona indicates that she is done with her portion of the Build Phase, Robobo now becomes the active Boss. Player Two choose a Room from his hand and places it face down in his dungeon. After he has placed his Room, while he is still the active player, he decides to use a Princess in Peril to lure a Hero to his dungeon. Even if Gorgona has her own copy of Princess in Peril, she can’t play it on the same Hero because Robobo now takes priority.

The lesson here? For most Spells that affect Heroes or your own dungeon, it’s best to play them while you are the active player. If you don’t, a higher-XP player may be able to trump your effect.
Later that turn, in the Adventure phase, Robobo is about to kill his newly-acquired Hero. However, Gorgona isn’t going to make it easy for Croak. She waits until the Hero enters the last room of Croak’s dungeon, then plays Assassin to give the Hero enough Health to survive and deal a Wound.

Just remember that if you see a Spell card waiting in an opponent’s hand, playing an offensive Spell during an opponent’s turn can be risky. In this example, if Player Two has a Cave-In, he can play it to destroy the pumped-up Hero.

Of course, there is one Spell that ignores the “active player” rule. Counterspell (and its Room-based equivalent, All-Seeing Eye) can “cancel” a Spell that was just played. This sends the card to the discard pile, regardless of who is the active player. If you want to prevent a Spell that someone just announced, Counterspell will always work. Just keep in mind that if someone Counterspells your Counterspell, the original Spell will still take effect!

During the next Build Phase, Robobo has a Jackpot Stash that Gorgona senses he is going to use to double his Treasure values and lure a critical Hero. Fortunately for her, Gorgona has a Freeze spell which she use to deactivate the Jackpot Stash and make its Room ability unusable. If Gorgona plays her Freeze spell while she is the active player, she's in the clear. The Jackpot Stash will be deactivated with little that Robobo can do about it. However, if Gorgona slips up and tries to cast the spell during Robobo’s turn as the active player, he will be able to resolve the Room ability first, "before" her spell is cast. This would destroy the Room, doubling the Treasure values of all his other Rooms. Because Robobo has removed the Spell’s target, it is canceled and sent to the discard pile. Once a Spell has been declared, a player may not “take it back” or change its target. If an active player (or a higher-XP player) takes an action that renders the Spell moot, that Spell “fizzes” and is sent to the discard pile without producing an effect.

As complex as it can seem to explain all this, the rules of timing can be summed up simply:

- If you use a Spell or ability while you are the active player, only a “cancel” effect like Counterspell can interrupt you.
- If you play a Spell or ability while an opponent is the active player, he or she can react with a Spell or activated ability before your card resolves.
- During the end of the Build phase, as “when you build this room” effects and Level Up effects are triggered, resolve those effects in XP order. There is no active player, and no Spells or activated abilities may be played.
- When in doubt and there is no clear active player, resolve effects in XP order.

Understanding these rules will help you play your cards at times that will maximize the chances of your Spells and abilities resolving. Just remember, a clever opponent – or anyone with a Counterspell – can ruin the best-laid plans!
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