

PLAYTEST

**C L A U
S T R O
P H O B
I A !**



By
Rodney Sloan



Copyrights

Copyright © Rodney Sloan 2012.

Credits

Conceived, written and produced by Rodney Sloan.
You can find out more about the author on www.risingphoenixgames.com or follow him on Twitter: RisingPhoenixGM.

Images, except for the Rising Phoenix Games logo are from various clip art sites on the web.

Thank You

This work is my entry into the 1KM1KT 24 Hour RPG Game Design Competition, 2012. I have to say a big thank you to

the guys on 1KM1KT for organizing, running and hosting this great little competition, particularly Mr Rob Lang. It's competitions like these that let guys like me prove ourselves to the community out there. Thanks 1KM1KT!

Also, a big thank you to both the fans of Rising Phoenix Games and role players everywhere, it's you who we write for and you who fuel us on to greater exploits of fantastical creation.

Contents

Copyrights	2	HMS Keeton	11
Credits	2	For the Doom Master and Mistress	12
Thank You	2	Monsters and NPC's	12
Contents.....	3	Cinder Worm.....	12
Introduction.....	4	Lava Worm.....	12
How To Play.....	5	Earth Elemental.....	13
You'll need	5	Human (Homosapien).....	13
Your Gnome.....	5	Gnome (Gardinia-Gnomus).....	13
The Three Spheres	5	Gnome Adventurer (Gardinia-Gnomus-Claustrophobus) ..	13
Sharing the Load	7	Gnome Thief (Gardinia-Gnomus-Libiratus)	14
Combat	8	Challenges of the Deep	14
Healing	8	Take-Off.....	14
Gear in Combat	8	Cave-ins	15
The HMS Keeton in Combat.....	8	Lava Rapids	15
Gear.....	9	Gnome Way Stations	15
Claustrophobia!	10	Research and Further Reading	16

Introduction

"Captains Log, 19 May 2012. The time now is 9:00 am, we're approaching the Upper Mantle... things are about to get hot in here boys!"

Famous last transmission from the HMS Keeton I before it burst into flames.

Welcome to **Claustrophobia!**, the game about crazy gnome explorers on board the doomed Nuclear Subterriner*, the sentient vessel HMS Keeton. When standing around in the garden becomes too much, colonies of gnomes turn to a life of adventuring or crime, the later being the preferred, less hazardous change of occupation. For those adventurous gnomes there is but one choice, take up their shovel, wheel barrow or fishing rod and tackle the greatest quest any gnome can undertake: a journey to the center of the Earth. Prepare to face hardship, danger, and more than likely extreme cases of **Claustrophobia!** in this exciting role playing game.

You have been warned.



* A subterranean submarine, usually constructed by gnomes out of surplus garden supplies and powered by a homemade and somewhat dangerous nuclear power plant.

How To Play

You'll need

- 20 six sided die (d6) per player. You may not need to roll all 20 at once, but you do need to know how many of the 20 dice you have left in your dice pool.
- A sense of humor. A sense of impending doom is a great substitute.
- Between two and five friends. One of you lot becomes the DM, or Doom Master. He's the one who sets the scene. Lesser games featuring gnomes often refer to a GM or Game Master, but the DM is an all the more vaunted position to be in: he (or she, in which case referred to as the Doom Mistress) is responsible for all the fun of gnomish insanity and gnomicide this game offers.
- Paper and pencils to keep notes, render exquisite maps or doodle on when your gnome isn't in the spotlight.
- Gnome figures straight out of the garden can make

a fun addition to play. In fact, a gnome from the garden is pretty much the closest you'll get in this game to having a character sheet.

Your Gnome

Each player starts the game with twenty (20) d6s, kept in a pile in front of them. These dice represent life in the game, and particularly the amount of oxygen you have remaining and the corresponding level of sanity you're at. You are, after all, on a scratch built submarine heading into the Earth's core and liable to freak out and asphyxiate in the near future. Throughout the game you will get to roll dice, but beware, each time you roll a 1 you lose that die from your pool, coming closer to insanity and death.

The Three Spheres

A gnome, and every other living thing, has three spheres that describe their innate ability: physical, mental and social.

Physical: how fast your stubby gnome legs run, how many cement apples you can carry on your back and how hard

you can whack another gnome all fall under the physical sphere of your gnome.

Mental: how accurately you can determine the number of parsecs in a Kessel run, how well you can remember the National Anthem of the Gnomish Free Peoples and how talented you are at chess all fall under the mental sphere.

Social: how easily you broker peace between Collectable Card Gamers and Role-Players, how many gnomish ladies you can get to fawn over you and how much money you can make singing Elvis classics in public places all fall under the social sphere.

The kicker is that you don't have any stats in any of these spheres, at least not as a gnome, you decide generally how many dice you want to roll when a sphere is tested.

Example: *Greg plays Dopey, a silly gnome who everyone likes but who couldn't spell his own name, let alone pilot HMS Keeton with any skill. When rolling a test in the mental sphere, Greg will roll fewer dice to keep in character. There*

may come times when Dopey will have an unusual brain wave and Greg will play this out by rolling more dice than usual.

Testing for a task is done in one of two ways. Usually you only need to get one success, a roll of 4, 5 or 6 on a dice. Sometimes you roll an opposing roll, in which case you need to get more successes than the other guy, whoever he may be (a monster, another gnome or some task set by the Doom Master).

You must always roll one die when the DM asks you to, and if you only roll one die any result of a 1 is simply ignored, you don't lose any dice.

Generally speaking one die rolled is the equivalent of a low ability, two dice is the equivalent of a medium ability and three or more is equivalent to a high ability. If you are rolling 5 or more dice then think of the scene as something out of an epic animé fight scene: arcs of energy course over your body, your hair goes wild and a cyclone starts somewhere off the coast of China, you get the picture.

Gnomes can totally do stuff like this; they're magical creatures who love big explosions almost as much as the DM.

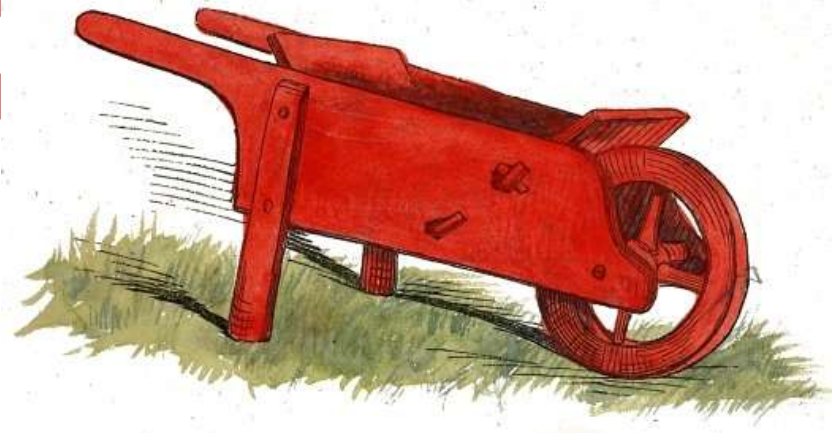
Sharing the Load

Because gnomes are largely gregarious by nature, you may pass dice to another player, but only if he or she asks nicely and says thank you afterwards. Also, you can only pass dice to another player if it averages out the dice in the group. This is to stop bullies from creating super gnomes by forcing other players to sacrifice their own gnomes in mass suicides. Only the DM should ever be able to encourage mass gnome suicides.

Any dice shared can be later shared back. You can also share dice from the ship, effectively cannibalizing parts of the ship to, for example, construct life saving apparatus such as re-breathers or radiation suits (the HMS Keeton is constructed with dangerously high amounts of lead sheeting).

Example: *John has three dice in his pool, while Brent has*

one. John gives Brent one of his dice to average out the dice pools and keep Brent's gnome in the game. John could role play this scene by having his gnome perform dangerous emergency surgery on Brent's gnome with a rusty scalpel.



Combat

Combat is simple: You and your opponent each roll to hit each other. Compare your total successes with that of your opponent and the highest amount of successes scores a hit. You then roll to wound by rolling another opposing roll. If you are successful you remove one die from your enemies dice pool for every success over that of your targets successes. Monsters have a dice pool too, which is the sum of their stats. Any damage done to a monster or NPC is divided randomly between those stats that have values in them above 0.

Example: *Narfumble is fighting a Lava Worm. He rolls two dice to hit against the Lava Worm's pool of three dice. He rolls a 5 and 6. The Lava Worm rolls a 1 and a 6. Narfumble has scored a hit and the Lava Worm is down one die. Narfumble decides to go for the kill and rolls 3 dice to wound against the Worms 1 die. The Worm rolls a 4, one success, and Narfumble rolls a 2, 4 and 5. Two successes*

are more than enough for Narfumble to dispatch the Lava Worm. Victory for the gnomes!

If more combatants are involved in a fight, simply pool all dice into teams and spread damage equally between team members.

Healing

Gnomes regain 1 dice for every hour of rest they take while the HMS Keeton is docked and if they are taking complete rest, which is to say you can't heal while playing video games.

Gear in Combat

Gear can be used in combat, giving a +1 to a single die roll as appropriate. See the Gear chapter, which follows.

The HMS Keeton in Combat

For combat using the HMS Keeton see the chapter by the same name.

Gear

You may have heard about the legendary *+1 Shovel*. The term was coined for this game about thirty or so year ago, before *Claustrophobia!* was written, right around the time the awesomeness of gnome-centric adventures were starting to capture the human imagination.



Any gear your gnome carries can be used to give yourself a +1 on one die roll. This can help you retain dice (changing a 1 to a 2) or to make a failure a success (change a 3 to a 4). You can only gain this bonus if you can give a good reason why your character's item should give you a bonus. For example, if I use a wheel barrow to do first aid, I could possibly argue that I can move my injured comrade to safety quickly (a stretcher on wheels). DM's shouldn't be

overly restrictive with this and reward creative thinking.

You may sacrifice your item on one roll to change any dice rolls of 1's to 2's. You must declare this before you make the roll. The item is then lost, destroyed and irreparable.

Example: *Duke Nurble is played by Mike, he has a nice garden gnome figure sporting a fishing rod and authentic dirt. The DM rules that dirt may not be used in play, but the fishing rod is a legal item. In a fight with a Lava Worm that has stuck its head through the shell of the HMS Keeton, Duke Nurble throws his fishing rod into the beast's mouth, attempting to keep its jaws from crushing down on him and his mates. He decides to sacrifice the pole and rolls 5 of his ten dice to hit the beast. He rolls 1, 1, 3, 4 and 6. Because of the sacrifice he retains all his dice and can use them again to do damage if he wishes. The Lava Worm only gets one success so Duke Nurble tosses the fishing rod head over tail into the blazing maw of the beast where it sticks fast. In this case clever DM's may give the player the victory without requiring a damage roll, Duke Nurble earned it.*

Claustrophobia!

This may be the key chapter here, after all, it's the name of the game. When you run out of dice your gnome runs out of life and oxygen and bids his or her final good bye to the cruel world. Your gnome's death grants you the ultimate power of Claustrophobia! You must play Claustrophobia immediately, and only other players with Claustrophobia may do anything while Claustrophobia is active. Other players may only support you if you specifically want them to. Claustrophobia gives you the chance to have every player at the table admire your raw acting talent as you act out the final scene in the life of your gnome.

Under Claustrophobia you must act out the death of your character complete with any insanity that you think is appropriate. You should use the cause of your death as inspiration for this scene, but like the scene from a bad movie you have some time before you are dead and gone. Your sequence should be no less than 2 minutes and

probably no longer than 15 minutes, but the main thing is creativity. Claustrophobia is all about the opportunity to watch gnomes breath their last in entertaining and comedic ways.

HMS Keeton

"Look Narfumble, I can see you're really upset about this. I honestly think you ought to sit down calmly, take a stress pill, and think things over."

Words from the Keeton AI to Narfumble, captain of the HMS Keeton XIII before Narfumble disengaged the pressure locks with two pencils up his nose and underwear over his head.

The HMS Keeton is really comprised of many parts; there is the main structure, comprised of tin cans, old dustbins, broom handles and other junk from the garden shed. There is the scratch built nuclear power centre, held together with tape and hot glue, and then there is the Artificial Intelligence (AI), Keeton. Every gnome vessel is called HMS Keeton and a number, in roman numerals, is appended to the end of the name. The HMS Keeton XIII was so unlucky that they even made a movie about it, which was mostly conjecture, since there were no survivors to tell the real

story.

HMS Keeton is represented by another pool of 20 dice, which the players can tap to complete tasks, particularly ones that require a subterranean vessel, such as outrunning lava worms, harvesting core crystals or running down earth elementals. The HMS Keeton loses dice in the same way as gnomes do, except that dice represent the ship's integrity. Once it is destroyed the ship enters the throws of insanity as only an AI can.

"I know I've made some very poor decisions recently, but I can give you my complete assurance that my work will be back to normal. I've still got the greatest enthusiasm and confidence in the mission. And I really want to help you."

Words from a particularly sarcastic Keeton AI.

The Keeton AI is played by the Doom Master in whose hands it is usually employed as a plot device for death dealing, hidden under a guise of helpfulness and an extremely annoying attitude.

For the Doom Master and Mistress

This section is strictly for the DM. Players keep out!

There are a number of deadly creatures and terrifying situations to pit against the players. This reference provides you with a simple guide from which to exact doom on the player's characters. Feel free to modify or make your own too.

Monsters and NPC's

Below the Earth's crust you'll find all sorts of creatures bent on destruction. All monsters listed here are given stats according to the three spheres and they lose dice from those stats just like gnomes do. Effectively the total of their stats is their dice pool. A stat of 0 is always allowed a dice roll, but at a -1 penalty.

Cinder Worm

Cinder worms vary in length, usually between the length of your forearm and that of your leg, whichever seems scarier

to the DM at the time. Otherwise these creatures resemble fiery red earthworms with rows of sharp fangs. They have an affinity for fire.

Physical: 1

Mental: 1

Social: 0

Gear: None, but a cinder worm's cocoon is resistant to fire and can be used to make fire resistant clothing.

Special: Cinder Worms can live in fire, and don't lose dice that come up as a 1 while in fire. Cinder Worms take additional damage from water, double the damage done from water attacks.

Lava Worm

Lava Worms are enormous creatures that swim through the molten Earth's core. They vary in size and can be particularly dangerous to subterrines, which they perceive as tinned food.

Physical: 4 (small), 7 (large), 10 (gigantic)

Mental: 2

Social: 0

Gear: None, but a lava worm's hide is resistant to fire and

can, once doused of flame, be used to make fire resistant covering for the HMS Keeton, but not clothing, for which it is unworkable.

Special: Lava Worms gain a +1 bonus on dice rolls while in lava. They can move through rock but need to return to the lava to regain lost heat. Lava Worms take additional damage from water, double the damage done from water attacks.

Earth Elemental

Earth Elementals are intelligent beings who live within the Earth's crust, often as protectors of the rock. Elementals don't take kindly to gnomes drilling through to the Earth's core, it's just not on.

Physical: 3

Mental: 2

Social: 2

Gear: Elementals usually have no gear.

Special: Elementals gain a +1 bonus to rolls while in or on soil or rock. They are thus able to exist without oxygen if connected to the land.

Human (Homo sapien)

Creatures known to enslave gnomes on site, but usually not violent. Humans can usually be avoided by keeping still.

Physical: 2

Mental: 2

Social: 2

Gear: Cell phone, clothing, possibly a garden implement if met in the wild.

Gnome (Gardinia-Gnomus)

A typical garden gnome is content with a life of garden living, which invariably requires standing still and getting pooped on by pigeons.

Physical: 1

Mental: 3

Social: 2

Gear: One implement, usually a spade, wheelbarrow, lantern, fishing pole or basket.

Gnome Adventurer

(Gardinia-Gnomus-Claustrophobus)

Unlike a typical garden gnome, the gnomish adventurer

wants to get out, jump in a rickety subterranean and throw his life away on a worthless cause. Good luck old chap.

Physical: 2

Mental: 3

Social: 2

Gear: One implement, usually a spade, wheelbarrow, lantern, fishing pole or basket.

Gnome Thief (Gardinia-Gnomus-Libiratus)

These "bad eggs" usually want nothing to do with regular gnomes or adventurous gnomes, and live instead for loot.

Physical: 2

Mental: 3

Social: 2

Gear: Balaclava, grappling hook, automatic pistol and 7-12 (1d6+6) rounds of ammunition.

Challenges of the Deep

The following are some challenges you can throw at the adventuring gnomes, or convert to make your own. Generally speaking things get harder the deeper players go, but even an infestation of fire worms becomes life

threatening when dice pools are running low. Gnomes must pool their dice, in some cases along with those from the ship, to overcome the challenge. Gnomes will test against different spheres depending on the role they play onboard the ship, such as the captain may test his social sphere while a navigator might test his mental sphere and someone working the rudder might use their physical sphere.

Take-Off

The events leading up to a journey can make for an interesting adventure in and of itself, however, play usually starts once all the gnomes are onboard the HMS Keeton. The first task is to get going, burrowing from the shed where the vessel was built into the Earth's crust. Doing so without arousing the attention of nearby humans should be a challenge of around 6 dice, representing a group of around 4 families in the nearby area. Failing this challenge usually brings two to four humans after the craft, and they may even follow the gnomes into the ground after the "thieves". Of course, no gnome adventurer would ever stand for being called a thief, but anyway, fighting often

ensues.

Cave-ins

Cave-ins usually occur while travelling through the Earth's crust and can sometimes be overcome by simply outrunning the pull of gravity, easy really. A small cave-in might be two or three dice, while a large one may be as many as 10 dice.

Lava Rapids

Generally the HMS Keeton is a ship built to withstand intense pressure and the heat of super heated rock, also known as lava. That said, there exist places within the earth where lava flows like an underground river, forming rapids that could easily crush a lesser vessel. Rapids should be around 3 to 4 dice, up to around 7 for longer rapids.

Gnome Way Stations

There is hope, slim hope maybe, but hope none the less, for our crew of intrepid explorers. Some talented gnomes managed to establish outposts on the route down, places

where stores are cached for future expeditions. The challenges a Way Station offers are twofold. One, there is the challenge of docking, which depends on the conditions surrounding the station. Then, if the crew is even allowed aboard the station the crew must deal with the resident gnomes who are seldom keen to freely give up their carefully hoarded supplies. Use the stats for the Gnome Adventurer, but add two or three dice as these fellows are usually seasoned veterans. There is a slim chance for the crew of the HMS Keeton to catch a short rest before continuing on their way.

Research and Further Reading

By no means should your adventures stop with this book. In compiling this work I referred to the following websites and I encourage you to do the same:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claustrophobia>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crust_\(geology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crust_(geology))

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mantle_\(geology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mantle_(geology))

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HAL_9000

PLAYTEST