

The Daily Grind

Version 1.0

At certain times, certain doors don't lead to where one might expect. They lead... somewhere else. They lead to places of danger, and wonder, and opportunity.

The threats in these massive, unnatural places might range from mobile and aggressive staplers, to being stuck in a loop of time or space, or a van-sized armoured computer-squid-thing with lasers and force-fields.

Not all dungeon life is hostile, though. It's possible to communicate – even befriend! – some of the beings that live within these spaces. And there is beauty to be found, in the giant cable trees and water-tank caverns.

If one is brave (or stupid) enough to cross the threshold, there are treasures to be won. Material wealth, in the form of cash, and strangely-named snacks.

Scavenging will reveal not just valuable commodities to sell, but objects that don't follow the laws of nature – sunglasses that let a person see heat, gravity-negating potted plants, reams of fax paper that cannot be pierced.

And then there are the orbs: the rewards attained by killing enemies and disarming traps. Orbs can grant (extremely specific and random) skills, supernaturally improve a location (in strange ways), grant odd abilities, alter a person's body or personality, solve legal problems, or grant credentials.

As an adult (18+2d8), dude or gal (your choice), these hidden worlds can be your oyster, full of pearls for you to claim. But to get started, take this:

+1000 CP

Perks

Sense of Adventure (100)

When an opportunity for something amazing comes along, you recognize it. You'll keep that wonder and drive to explore, make a difference, and grow.

Analyst (100)

You're always coming up with new plans, even when most people would panic. Sure, it looks like certain death, but that's no reason to stop thinking.

Punisher (100)

You can always come up with a witty, fitting, and catchy names for things that will have others groaning. It's not your fault they can't appreciate wordplay.

Wise Beyond Your Years (100)

Keeping logs of everything, considering strange use cases of mysterious orbs, and loot accounting comes naturally. Applies to other things too, probably.

Fort Kickass (100)

Fortifying with whatever is at hand is an important skill to have in the dungeons. You're the best at making defensible positions using ordinary stuff around you.

Critical Hit (100)

You've got a good eye for spotting weak points to hit, or coming up with super-effective techniques that, if they hit, might cause massive damage.

Sleep Schedule (100)

The effects of time dilation won't effect your performance. You may feel a bit tired, but jet lag (or seven hours in a dungeon) won't make you feel like dying.

Morning Person (100)

When you get up, you do immediately. You can just go from dead asleep to awake and ready for action, without any grogginess, grumping, or coffee.

Denizen Tamer (200)

You're aware that the things living here aren't monsters, and not all are hostile. You're good at discerning the intent of the creatures in dungeons, opening dialogues, and making friends. Start your own office supply petting zoo!

Internal Map (200)

You can remember how you got where you're at, even when it involves making five right turns to get out of a non-euclidean hallway. Note this won't help you escape a trap that leaves you stranded or actively warps space.

That's Not Suspicious (200)

For some reason, everybody will either believe the stupid excuses you make, or drop the topic. It's not a 100% guarantee, but it'll keep the chemistry students from bothering you while you make thermite in the college lab. Or is that normal?

Sense of Danger (200)

Sometimes, right before something bad happens, you get this sense of unease. It's not 100% effective or reliable, but it can prevent you from sticking your hand into a mimic's maw, or tell you when it's time to run instead of investigate.

Men In Black (300)

When the weird happens, you can convince the uninitiated to listen to you, assuming you know what's going on. Thankfully, this also works on authority figures and policy-makers.

I Know You (300)

Those that don't return from dungeons are forgotten by the rest of the world... but not by you. Your memory is sacrosanct, and attempts to edit or suppress your knowledge, emotions, or personality are doomed to fail.

Weird Detector (300)

You have an uncanny ability for telling when somebody is involved in activities like extracurricular dungeon delving in secret. You can do the same for places, and can tell if items are otherworldly, by handling them for a few seconds.

Orb Creation (400)

By concentrating and sacrificing some effort, you can coalesce some of your experience or essence into an orb. These can grant a fraction of your power to others, but you're limited in how effective they are.

Drops (400)

Even outside of a dungeon, killing enemies and breaking magical items can result in orbs appearing. It's not a guarantee like it is for dungeon-spawned things, but happens more often for more powerful opponents, items, or traps.

Items

Shitty Job (Free, 100 to keep)

A filled-out application you can turn in at any place that you'd rather not work, for guaranteed employment. It's an entry-level, no-skills-needed job that you'd have to really fuck up to lose. It's not much, barely enough to live on.

Weird Brand Vending Machine (100)

This vending machine takes just about any currency, and dispenses all the strangely named candy bars and sodas you could ever want. Even Baby Things!

Tame iLipede (200)

This millipede-like phone that comes with some interesting apps, one of which identifies items. You could just adopt some normally, but this one gives slightly more comprehensible scans, and works on things from other settings, too.

Ethernet Port (200)

You have an extra hole in your head. One that you can slip a cable into, and interface with a network. After this jump, the port adapts to other types of connectors. You also gain an aversion to conference rooms and powerpoint.

Mission Briefcase (200)

This black briefcase contains roughly \$100,000. If only you could get inside... Unfortunately, it's locked until you complete some sort of mission, the details of which are on a cryptic yellow post-it stuck to the top. Once you figure out the mission and complete it, you'll get another briefcase.

Dungeon Warehouse (300)

Greatly expands the warehouse, and generates a self-contained ecosystem that acts as an intruder defence system based on its contents. Unlike a real dungeon, orbs and strange items won't appear, nor will it experience time dilation.

Dungeon Key (400)

A major draw of dungeon delving is the wonder of exploration and discovery. Now you can have that, without the stress of sneaking into places you shouldn't, or managing your sleep schedule. This key opens up rarely used doors in buildings that might have dungeons, even in other worlds.

Companions

Friend (100)

Import or create up to four companions to be fellow delvers. They could take the place of a co-worker, room-mate, fellow student, romantic interest... or even a more mundane version of yourself – with 600 CP to spend on perks and items.

Awoken Item (100/400)

People can get attached to objects, but it's rare for that emotional investment to be returned. For 100 CP, you can awaken a small-to-medium sized item, like a quad drone. For 400 CP, the item is larger, or may grow past what it started as.

Meme (600)

There's a living idea that is friendly towards you. They can act as an active defence against harmful mental influences, other conceptual beings, and temporarily manifest in the physical world to bite off arms and stuff.

Drawbacks

There is a 600 CP drawback limit.

Coward (+100)

Delving isn't for everybody. It's dangerous, often painful, and there's a very real risk of death and/or dismemberment. The rewards are cool, but it's hard to enjoy a dungeon's wonder when the sight of a solitary stapler makes you freeze in fear.

Delver Addiction (+100)

It doesn't matter that you got hurt, might have died, and are currently suffering from mind control. This is fucking awesome, and you never want to stop.

REALLY Shitty Job (+100)

You have a job, and it sucks. It's tedious, unpleasant, stressful, and if you don't work hard, you'll be fired and lose access to the extra-dimensional dungeon. You don't even need the income any more, but you can't quit.

Terrible Sense of Direction (+100)

You could get hopelessly lost inside a regular building. Just... don't wander off in the mysterious dungeon, okay?

Outside Dungeon Context Problems (+200)

Even outside the dungeon, you won't be able to pass by a potted plant without a second thought, and your warehouse contains hostile mimics, waiting to strike.

Why Aren't There Puzzles? (+200)

There are now puzzles. This is not a good thing. They are all annoying, tedious, or subtle obstacles to your progress inside the dungeon.

Lost Inside (+200)

The door was closed when the time ran out, and now you're trapped. You're going to have to survive in one of these dungeons for the entire jump.

Mental Compulsions (+200)

You can't tell others about the dungeon. You must wear business casual or professional attire inside the dungeon. No firearms, tobacco, or alcohol are allowed on company premises. Damaging company property is not allowed.

Claimed (+100 Each)

One or more of your companions is trapped inside, and waiting to be rescued. And you don't even know they exist. Your only clues are subtle holes in your life, shaped like a person you don't know.

Gauntlet Scenario

Conditions:

-1000 CP

You lose access to anything that isn't from this jump document.

Dying won't end your chain.

Reward:

If you survive ten years with noteworthy achievements, like freeing people claimed by a rogue sub-program, killing a hostile dungeon, or completely "clearing" and mapping a dungeon, at the end of the jump you'll gain the ability to create and modify dungeons of your own.

Notes

Blah

Changelog

0.0	7/19/19	0.0 Released.
0.1	7/25/19	Added Sleep Schedule, Morning Person, and clarified the warehouse won't benefit from time dilation.
1.0	10/13/24	Changed prices slightly, added Men In Black, I Know You, and Mission Briefcase. Updated Appendix: Orbs.

Appendix: Example Dungeons

A good dungeon candidate has the following qualities:

- People can get lost in it.
- Items of various sizes and types.
- Creepy when totally empty.
- An infrequently used door.

1. Cubical Farm

If you've read the web novel, you should be familiar with this type of dungeon, as well as the threats within. If you haven't, you should. It can be found [here](#).

2. University Dorms

Endless hallways of strangely arranged rooms. Scuttling textbooks and red solo cup traps litter the common areas, and RAs prowls for uninvited guests.

3. Museum of Unnatural History

Watch out for tour guides, and stay out of the dinosaur exhibits. Visit the gift store to pick up a refreshing treat or neat doodad. Ignore the bloody plushies.

4. Not-So-Public Library

Some of these books will give you more than a headache or a papercut when they unexpectedly shoot out of the shelves. Besides the books of gibberish and aggressive copiers, staplers, and computer, librarians are drawn by noise. Shh.

5. All-Mart

You'd be hard-pressed to beat their prices or selection. This is not a good thing. It just means a higher variety and number of threats. Hiding in the clothes racks will work sometimes, but not for the security-camera snakes hiding in the rafters.

6. Mall of Generica

Self-contained regions along vast hallways, and foodcourts patrolled by faceless mall cops. If you can get from one store sub-dungeon to the next, you'll have to adapt new strategies as the dangers vary within each. Watch out for mall rats.

7. School of Hard Knocks

Some schools are worse than others. Some are places of malice and torment, where no place is safe. Others are dungeons. Besides the textbooks and pencils, flapping binder-birds, and scuttling calculators, watch out for the students.

8. Bewarehouse/Pain Factory

An industrial labyrinth of pallets on huge shelves, with drop-boxes. Clanging machinery in the distance covers the sound of approaching unsafety equipment, welders casting flickering shadows revealing lurking OSHA officers.

Appendix: Orbs

Orbs can vary in size (indicative of strength) and color (type).

Orbs can be Broken, Imbued, Absorbed (with the correct mindset), or utilized as Nodes/Totems (through instinct, or dangerous trial-and-error).

Yellow

Break: Gain a skill of varying specificity.

Imbue: Grants life to an object. Killing the resulting creature returns the orb.

Absorb: Satisfies all bodily needs, for a time.

Node: Unknown.

Green

Break: Improves the local area.

Imbue: Unknown, may relate to “puppets”.

Absorb: Unknown.

Node: Protects an area from a physical or non-physical threats.

Blue

Break: Solves a problem. Somehow. Somewhat random and unpredictable.

Imbue: Changes a mundane item into one with anomalous properties.

Absorb: Grants a flexible and potentially potent ability with a set number of uses.

Node: Said to create tools when used as a node.

Red

Break: Increases an emotional resonance, reducing apathy or sociopathy.

Imbue: Can be used to create traps.

Absorb: Answers questions relating to specific quality of the red orb.

Node: Everyone in the defined area knows a very specific piece of information.

Orange

Break: Receive legal credentials, but not the associated skills or knowledge.

Imbue: Unknown.

Absorb: Grants a repeatable quest with a reward of varying usefulness.

Node: Warps space-time in the area.

Purple

Break: Improves the physical body’s capabilities or resilience.

Imbue: Changes an idea into a memetic effect.

Absorb: Unknown.

Node: Unknown.