

A DESIGNER'S DIARY · HOW THE GAME WAS TESTED

# THE PROVING

DISPATCHES FROM THE PLAYTEST TABLE

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STILLPOINT

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*Every rule in this game has been thrown at a wall to see what cracks. Some cracked. This is the story of how — the parties that froze, the wave that fell, the clockwork knight that nearly ended a campaign on one lucky die — and what we changed because of it.*

— FROM THE BACK OF THE TICKWARDEN'S CASE

## ***HOW STILLPOINT WAS TESTED***

Two ways, both with **honest dice**. First, a **Monte Carlo simulation** ran thousands of 1st-level fights to check the raw math. Then **teams of AI playtesters** each built a real party, rolled real 3d6 stats, and played a whole adventure end to end — rolling **every** die for real and refusing to fudge a single result. If a character died, they died. If the party wiped, the party wiped. Two rounds of this — first the core rules and the starter adventure, then the entire level 1–10 campaign — produced the fixes you'll read below.



ROUND ONE

## THE CRUCIBLE

*Four parties walked into Under the Standing Wave — the starter adventure, a drowned district frozen beneath a tidal wave caught mid-crash. Four parties walked four very different roads. One of them did not walk back out.*

THE CAUTIOUS 6/10

THE GREEDY 6/10

THE RULES-LAWYER 6.5/10

THE MURDERHOBOS 7/10

### THE PARTY THAT WON BY FEELING NOTHING

The **cautious party** played it perfectly — read the Tempo, rationed their Quick, talked an Echo-wraith to rest with a dead girl's name, bathed the dying Holt in the Wellspring, and carried his frozen daughter home. They finished the adventure with **zero damage, zero Hush, and zero Quick spent**. And that was the problem: the game's three signature systems — the death-clock, the time-currency, the world's growing menace — *never fired*. Played safe, the game had no teeth. We learned that caution was winning too easily, and the doom needed to lean in.

### THE PARTY THAT DROWNED

The **greedy party** stripped the drowned district bare — and found, to everyone's surprise, that greed cost them *nothing*. The thief's Plucking almost never failed; the doom clock barely moved. The only thing that ever punished them was the GM manually spending menace tokens. Then the Tickhounds came for their hoard, the Echo named Vesh stiffened to a halt as

the cold took her, and the falling wave finally, finally fell.

**Total party kill.** An honest, spectacular disaster — and a clear verdict: *greed has to punish itself, by the rules.*

## THE DUEL THAT HUNG ON ONE DIE

The **combat party** dared the Regulator — the clockwork enforcer the book begs you not to fight. It Felled the Warden, Pinned the Marcher, and very nearly ended them. They won on a single natural 1: a double-strike Perfect Beat that happened to land for maximum harm. The testers' note was blunt: "*6 of 10 kills in this session were critical hits.*" Combat wasn't tuned — it was a dice-storm. We'd defined what a Perfect Beat *does*, but never reined in how swingy it made every fight.



THE LURCHING: THEY DON'T KILL YOU. THEY  
COOL YOU.

### ***THE BUG THAT BROKE THE THIEF***

Every roll in STILLPOINT is *roll low* — except, it turned out, the Picker's signature move. **Plucking from the Still** ran *roll-high*, backwards from the entire rest of the game. Three of four testers flagged it within the first hour. It's the single clearest example of why you actually play the thing: it read fine on the page, and fell apart at the table.



## ROUND TWO

# THE LONG ROAD

**W**ith the core rules patched, four more parties took on the whole campaign — the five-delve arc of *The Book of Delves*, one party each at levels 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9. They carried the game from its first frozen ruin all the way to the last candle of the world.

### THE CAMPAIGN SCOREBOARD

DELVE	LEVEL	SCORE	THE HEADLINE
I • The Salt Road	1–2	4/10	Too lethal, and the "save the boy" ending had nowhere to do it.
II • The Feast That Never Ends	2–4	7/10	The best mechanic in the book — and a murder mystery with no printed culprit.
III • The Pleating's Heart	4–6	6/10	A genuine moral fork... with no rules attached to any of the three choices.
IV • Below the Gasp	6–8	7/10	Thrilling dread — but the boss had no stats in the adventure and stealth was impossible.
V • The Last Candle	8–10	5/10	A gorgeous finale that, mechanically, wasn't finished.

# THE FEAST, AND THE MURDER WITH NO MURDERER

Delve II's **Plucking-and-greed engine** was, in the testers' words, "*the best thing in the book*" — a target-rich frozen banquet where every grab tightened the noose, and one party hit *three different endings at once* through sheer emergent chaos. But the central whodunit — a frozen singer endlessly mouthing the poisoner's name — had a fatal flaw: **the name was never written down anywhere**. A mystery with a clue and no answer. (It's *Steward Merrow* now. It says so, in ink.)



THE REGULATOR: A FAIR, TERRIFYING WALL —  
ONCE WE PRINTED ITS STATS WHERE YOU'D  
ACTUALLY LOOK.

## THE RECURRING GHOST: MISSING STAT BLOCKS

Across four delves, the same complaint echoed: the people you were meant to face — the cultists, the rival crew, the two champions of the *finale* — had no numbers at all. The capstone confrontation of the entire campaign asked the GM to invent both final bosses on the spot. That one was inexcusable, and it's the fix we're proudest of: a whole new **Appendix of Antagonists**, every named foe and friend statted and ready.

## THE FINALE THAT ENDED IN ONE ROUND

The climax scored lowest, and honestly. A tester replayed the ending two ways — and one of them *resolved on the first round*, because the world-deciding choice was a single

narrated check with nothing standing in its way. Winning the boss fight and making the choice were entirely unrelated events. A climax should make the choice *be* the hard, contested thing. So now it is: each ending is a clock you race to fill while the bosses try to stop you and the candle gutters overhead.



***R**oughly thirty fixes came out of the two rounds. Here are the ones that mattered most — the difference between a game that reads well and one that plays.*

## VI.1 — FIXING THE ENGINE

THE TABLE FOUND...	SO WE...
Plucking ran roll-high in a roll-low game	Flipped it to roll-under, with greed that compounds on every grab.
Half the spells needed a "monster saving throw" that didn't exist	Gave every creature a save number (8 + its Hit Dice).
Level-1 parties had ~5 total hit points and died to a stiff breeze	Granted maximum Grit at 1st level.
Critical hits decided 60% of kills by sheer luck	Made a Perfect Beat one extra die, not an instant max-damage spike.
One warm lantern switched off the entire "keep moving or freeze" tension	Scoped the Everflame so the slow cold always still creeps in.
A clever player could take infinite actions with the Echo	Capped it — once per round, no bottomless loop.

## VI.2 — FIXING THE CAMPAIGN

THE TABLE FOUND...	SO WE...
Named foes and both finale bosses had no stats	Wrote a full <b>Antagonists &amp; Allies</b> appendix.
The big moral choices were pure narration	Turned them into contested clocks you race to fill under fire.
The Feast's mystery had no solution	Printed the culprit, the framing, and the trail of clues.
Skill-walls punished the exact classes the campaign assumes	Added Vigor/Wits alternatives and a "the thief leads" group-stealth rule.
The chaos-zone said "roll a random Tempo" with no table to roll	Printed the Tumult table — including a violent "Shatter" result.
A caster's mind-stat did nothing	Made high Wits/Will actively harder to resist.

### *MEMORABLE LAST WORDS*

- *Quell the Heretics*, Felled in round one of two separate fights, saved both times by a single point of spent time.
- *Fast the Fish*, who stiffened to a statue mid-flight and was left behind by her own greedy crew.
- *The cautious party*, who beat the whole adventure and felt nothing — the most damning death of all.
- *In entire final*, won in a single round, that taught us a climax must be *made*, not declared.

THE HONEST FOOTNOTE

## STILL UNPROVEN

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*S*imulations and tireless agents can find broken math, missing numbers, and rules that fight themselves — and they found a great many. But they cannot tell you whether a table of friends will laugh at the right moment, hold their breath as the wave begins to fall, or argue for an hour over whether to let the world wake. That test still belongs to you.

STILLPOINT has been thrown at the wall, hard, and patched where it cracked. The rest of the proving happens at your table, with your dice, in the cold and the quiet. Keep moving.



*For the full, unromantic list of every change — every number, every section — see the errata in PLAYTEST\_NOTES. This was the story. That is the receipt.*

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STILLPOINT · THE PROVING · TESTED IN THE COLD