GameLab[2010]

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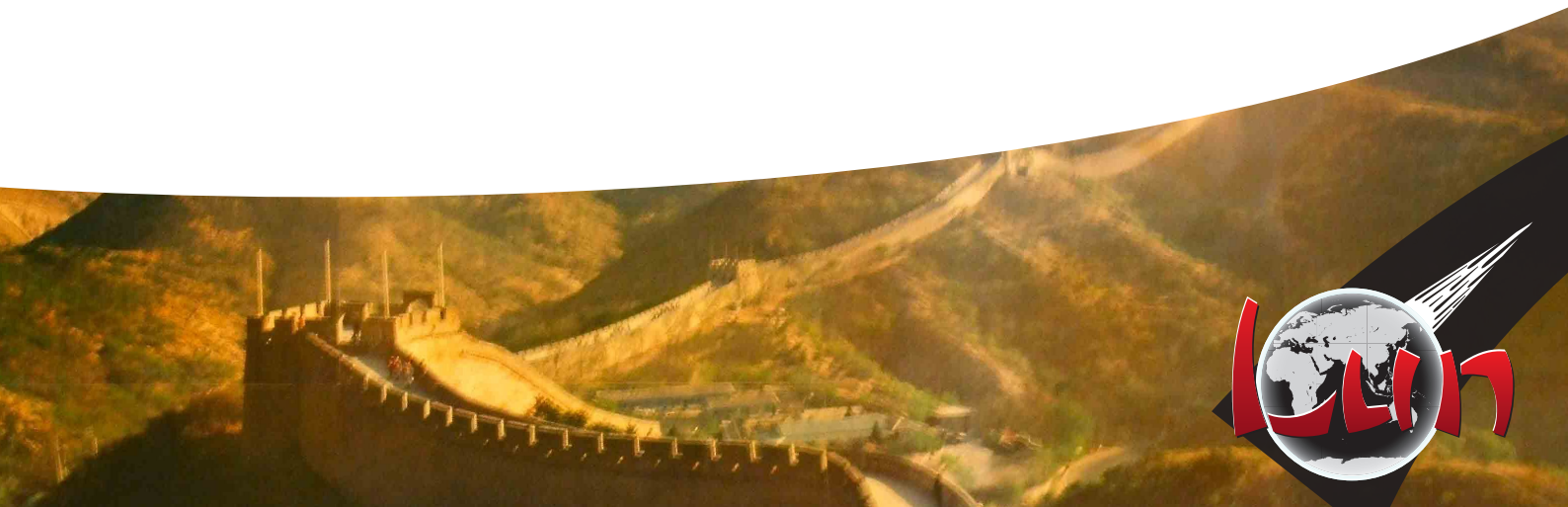
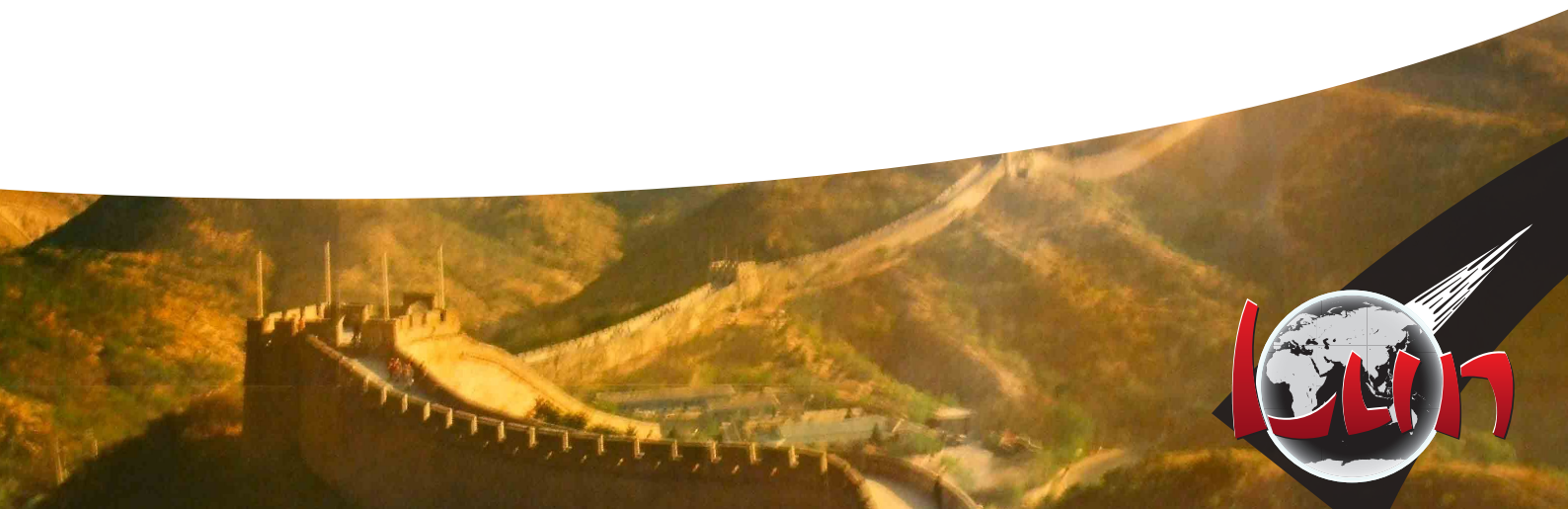


Lun as a main course

4 Servings

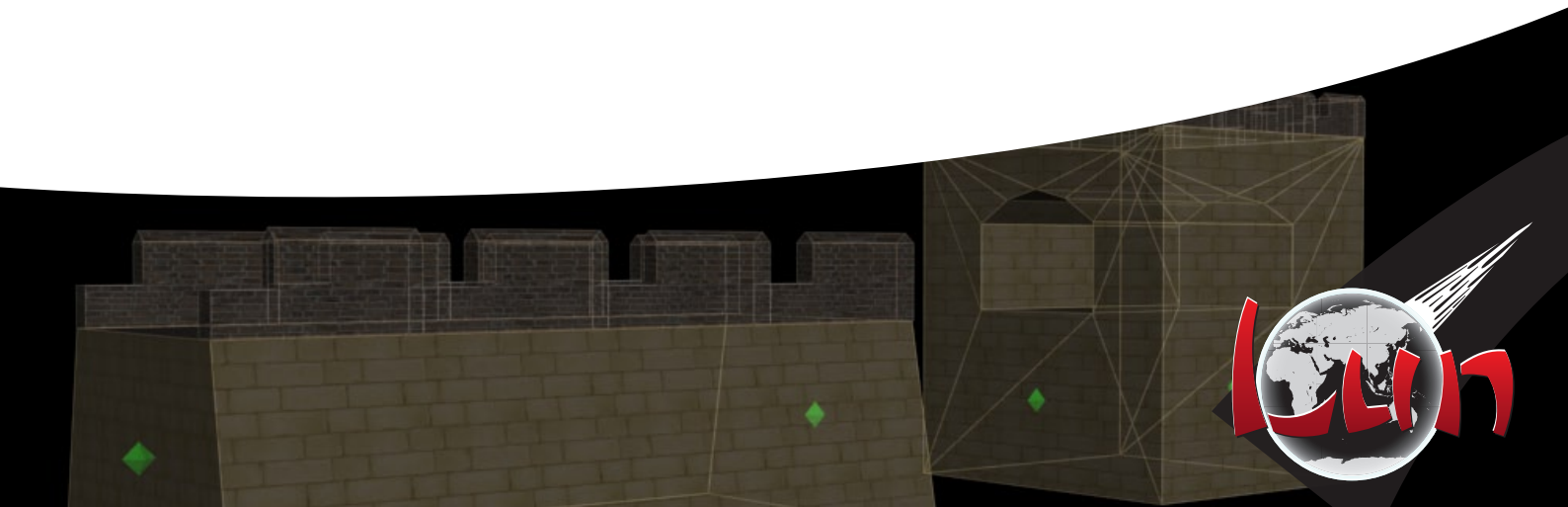
This game works best if served with a huge portion of joy. As starters we would recommend a funny day with the best of your friends. The game goes best with some beers or even a good red wine.

If you feel like more in the end, we would suggest another round of Lun!



Ingredients

- 7.5m of lath
- Lot's of cardboard
- Printout Texture (12-13 pages A4)
- Index cards
- 2 Dice
- 4 Token
- 1 Doom
- A stack of cards with coin descriptions.
- Blackboard and chalk



Getting ready

Approx. 2 days

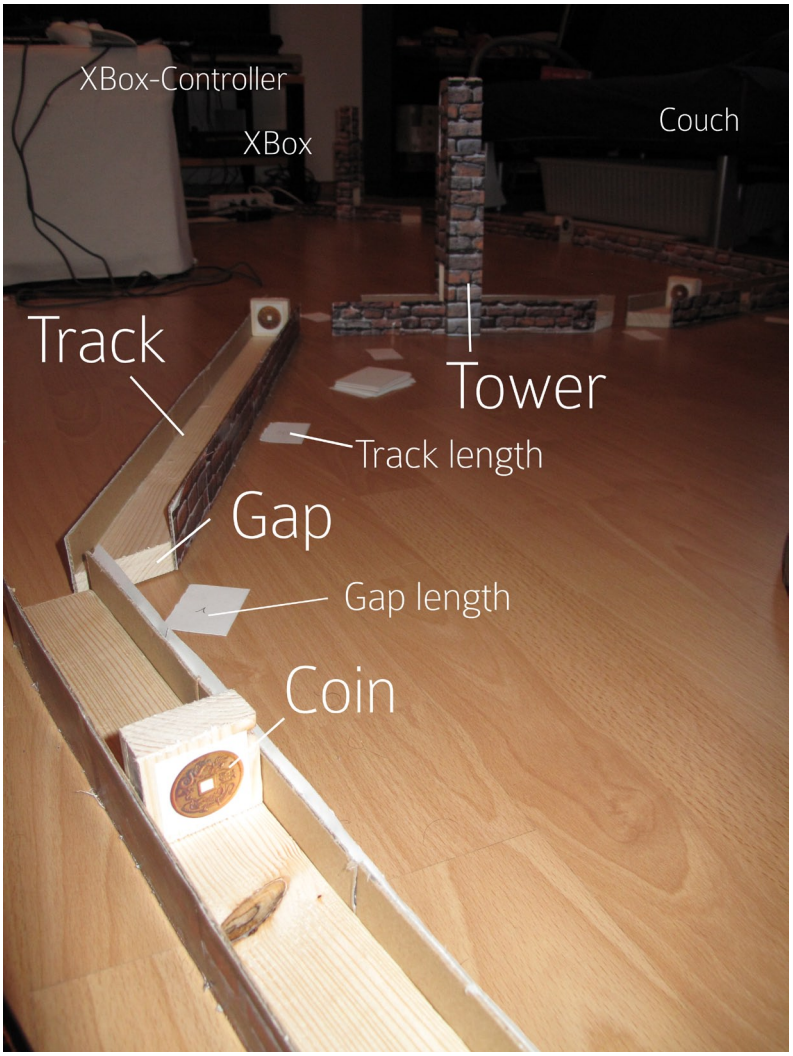
First thing to do, is chopping two of the laths in appropriate gaming length. So therefore we would recommend you to chop one lath after the other in approximately 40-50cm long pieces. Feel free to use a good saw and a miter. Every angle between -45 and 45° would do its job. This part is the most muscle intensive, whenever you have reached the point finishing that, you will quickly see through and looking forward to an end.

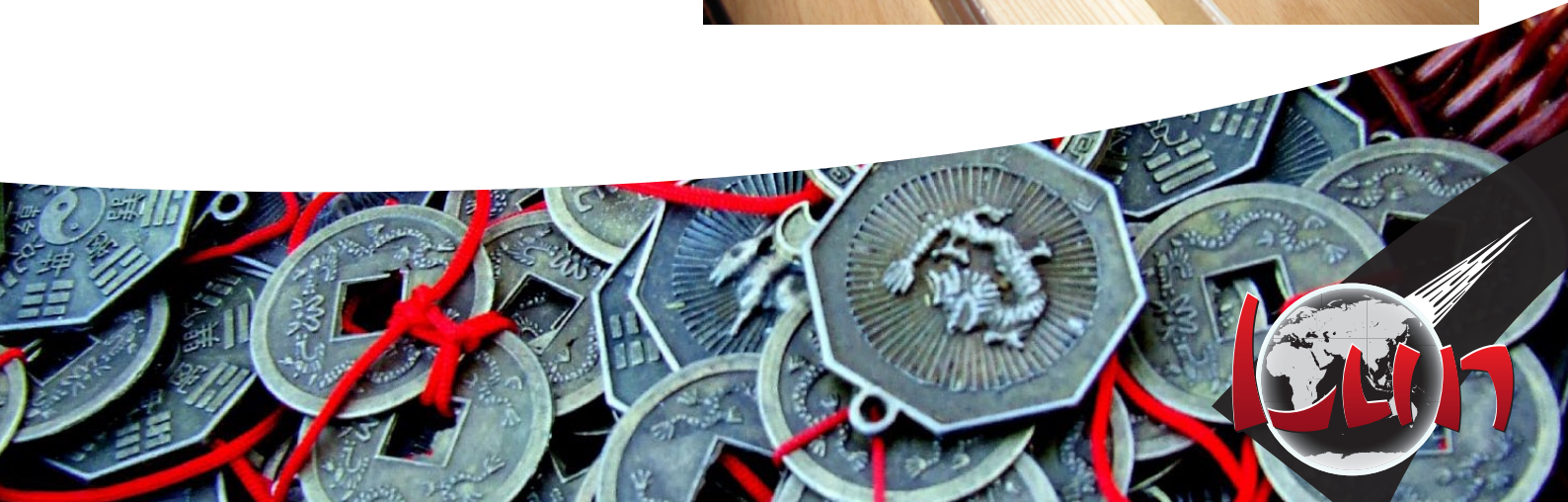
The last lath will be spared to work out the towers.

Next step is chopping the cardboard into the same lengths as the wood pieces. To make the cardboard and the lath look as one piece you can use whatever you want, we used a stapler and staples, to fix the cardboard and the sides of the woods.

One side of the cardboard fixed to the wood pieces looks still a bit unappetizing. As you know there is a saying "the eye must be pleased (as well)". The last step in finishing the great wall is to glue the printed out textures on the far side of the cardboard. When you cut the paper in the same size as the cardboard you will get the best looking effect.

As you'll probably have noticed we have another lath which is unused until now. The best looking towers you will get if you cut your lath in 8 equal parts. These parts can be nailed together to make the construct really strong. If you have a look at the our photos, you will see we also tried to build special track parts which have little gaps in the wall to make the towers fit on the track.

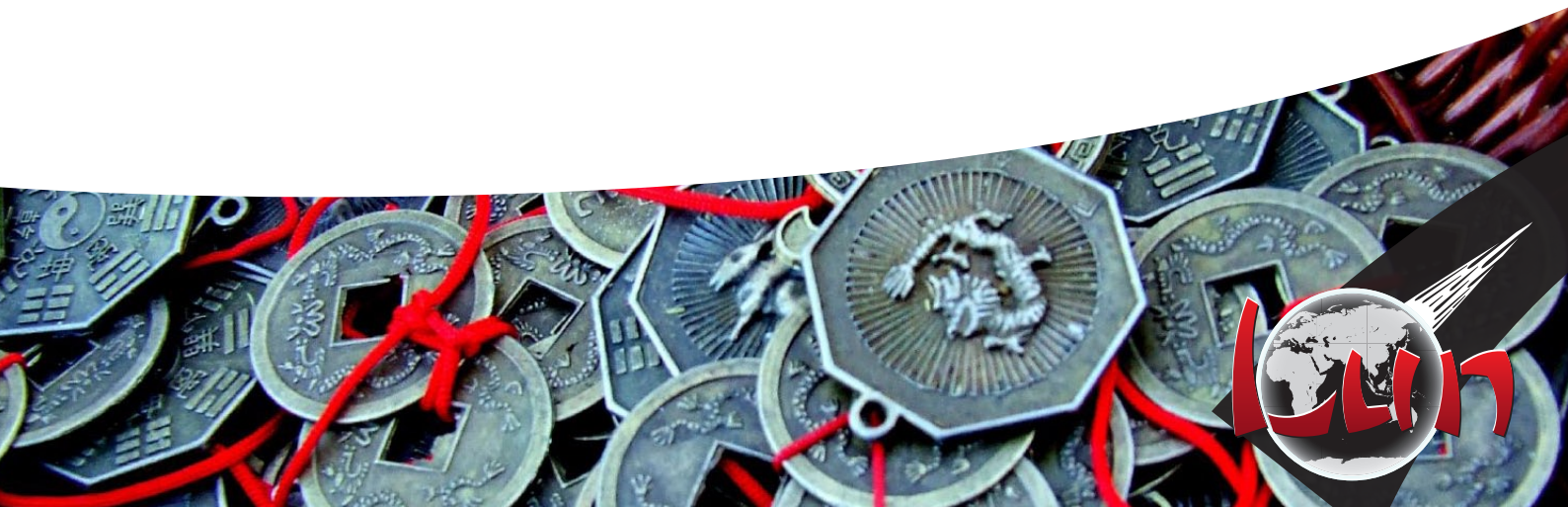




That is about it! Last step to finish the preposition of the game is writing all coin-names on a separate index card. So you can randomly give away power-ups. On these index card you should also add a little remark on how the cards will affect the game-play. The information you need for this is given by:

Mirror	Reflect all Power-ups for 2 turns
Looking Back	You move with half of your speed
Teleport	Teleport two steps ahead first player
Jump	Gaps will have length zero
Strobe	Gaps will be stretch in length by 2 units
Blurred Drunk	Your speed is multiplied by 0.5
Inverse Steering	Multiply the eyes of the cubes by one half
Minidoom	You will be 1.5 times faster and you can throw all other players off the track when surpassing them.
Speed	Multiply your Speed by a factor of 2
Blinded	You need twice as long for every step
Monsterball	All gaps will have length one for you and no-one can overtake you this round

Now you can put your game in the storage room (or if it fits and you like playing cool, in the refrigerator). Shortly before you need it, it can be brought to the table and you can start playing.

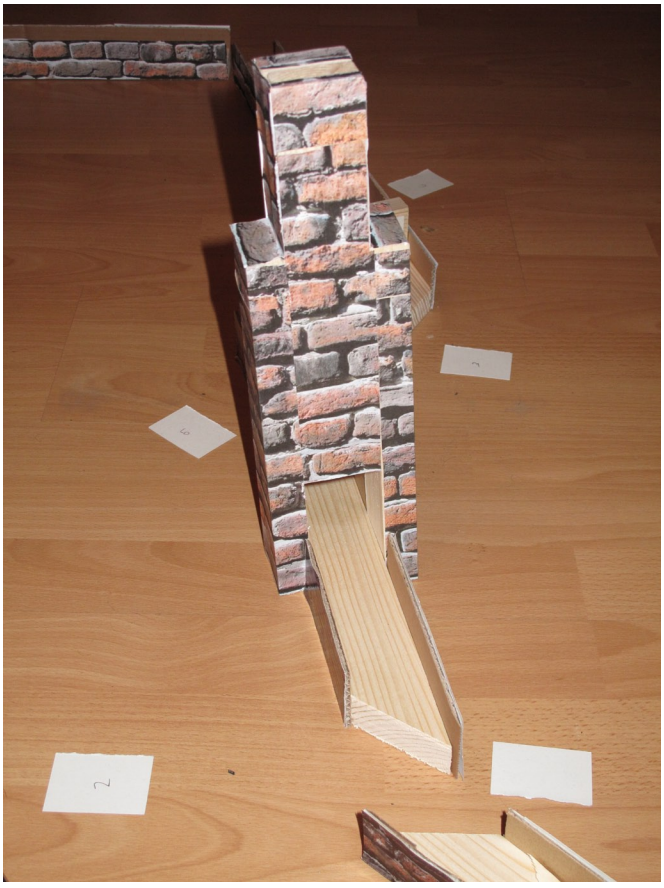


Preposition

The preposition of the game is a rather short thing to do. First you have to lay all track pieces on the floor so that they more or less fit together and you can imagine seeing pieces of the Chinese wall. Do not forget to place the towers on your track. We would suggest to place one approximately in the middle of your track and the other at the end.

Now you should name the length of the pieces and the gaps in between. We came up with the idea that a gap is somewhat between 1 and 3 units long, a piece of wall is much longer than the gap, so we thought of 5-12 units. Write these numbers on little file cards and place them beside the according gap respectively wall part.

Further we added a few special track parts, as a piece of wall which is longer for the first player than for all followers, or that underneath the towers the first player has to break through a wall, and thus the tower piece is effectively one unit longer for the first player.



Enjoy the meal

For the sake of playability you just think of the game as round based. Every round starts with all the players throwing their dices. You should use two dices, so the range of probable moves reaches from two units to twelve. As you know how long a piece of wall or a gap is, you now can move forward with your token. The more pips you throw the further you get.

At the end of every turn all players can decide if they want to use their power-ups or not. If someone uses his, it will affect himself if it is something good (Speed, Monsterball, Minidoom, Jump, Teleport, Mirror) or all the ovthers (Looking Back, Strobe, Blurred Drunk, Inverse Steering, Blinded). Every coin will be active for the next turn, save the mirror which will be active for the next two rounds.

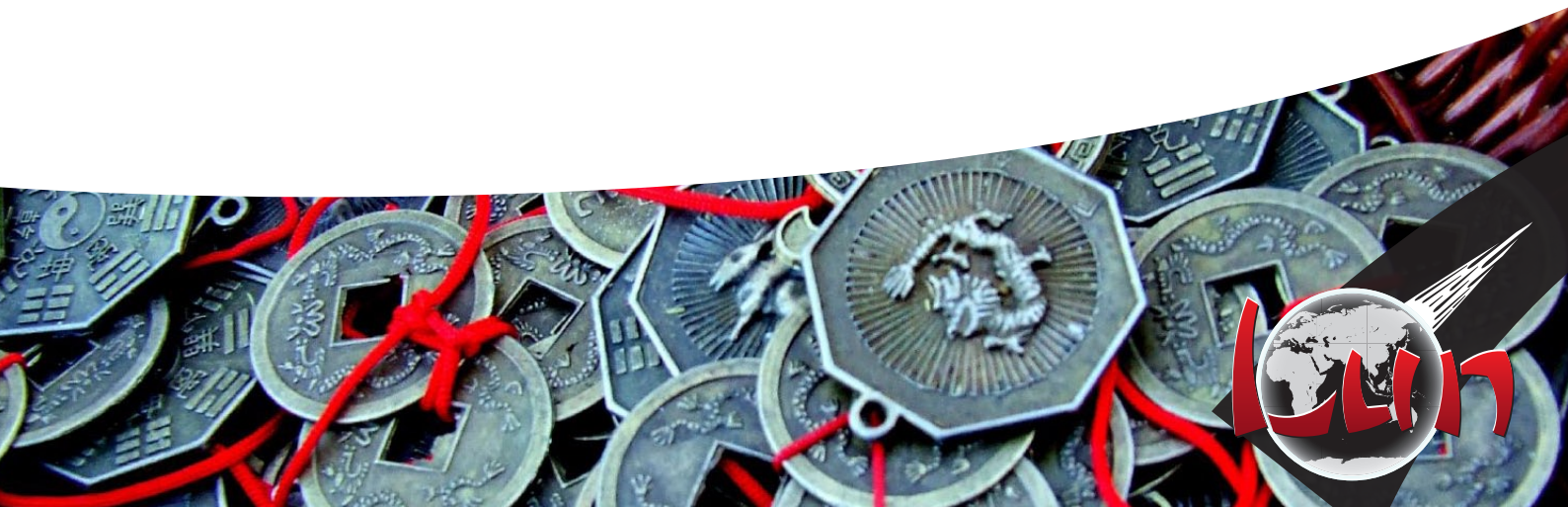
Then the Doom makes his step. He has a simple movement scheme:

round 1: no step
round 2: no step
round 3: no step
round 4: 5 steps
round 5: 5 steps
round 6: 5 steps (and now every round 5 steps)

If you throw your dices now, you will have to think about any active power-up which will make you go faster or slower (by just multiplying the pips by the right factor, which stands on your index card if you have followed the recipe through to here). To make the game faster you will have to round all real numbers up.

If you fall into a gap, or someone with a Minidoom throws you off the track, you have to pass for a whole round, but you still can activate your coins. At the end of the next round you will be placed back on the track right before the gap.

Whenever you pass a tower you reach the next level, which will increase your move count by one.



Example:

You throw your dices and get 10

You are in level two: one extra move => 11

But you're drunk => 11/2 = 5.5 => 6

What we have shown in the example is the thing you should keep in mind: add the special moves before dividing due to power-ups.

BTW: if multiple power-ups acts on you, you will probably have to divide more than once (for every active power-up divide by two).

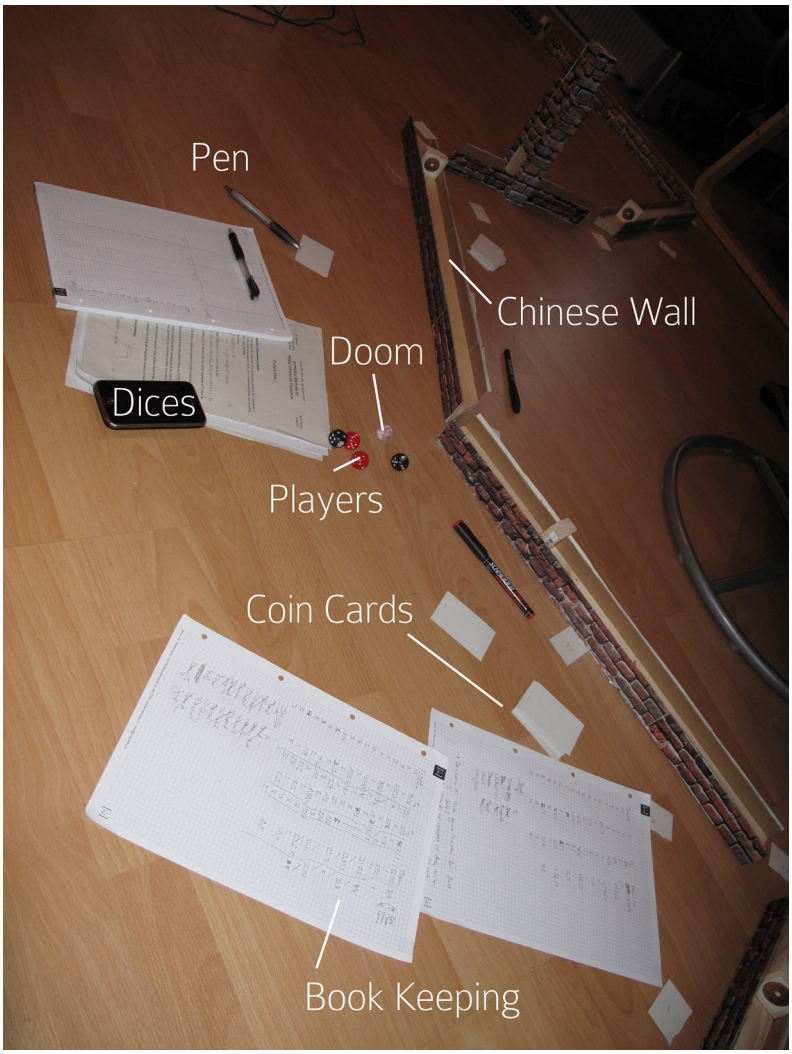
Example:

You throw your dices and get 9

You have inverse steering: 9/2=4.5 => 5

And your drunk => 5/2=2.5 => 3

As you already know, for every level you reach you will gain one unit in movement. But you should keep in mind, that also the Doom gains velocity for every level. And further every gap will get bigger in every level. This has the result that it will be harder and harder to jump over the gaps and not to fall into them.



Test baking

What proved most difficult baking Lun à la Just 42?

Building the prototype we realized that we need a way to incorporate time restrictions into the game. How do we prevent a player from moving arbitrary fast? How fast is the doom? How long does a coin last? We thus transformed the game into a round based dice game, where we could have simple time steps.

What we have learned from the baking

Playing with the prototype brought several issues to light, some of which we assumed would be there but we had no idea of how strong the impact would be.

The main issue is to prevent the first player to get too far away from the others and the doom. Since it quickly gets boring if one player leads by a great margin and the others just wait for doom to get them. We have thought of this issue before therefore already planning two counter measures: The switch coin, which switches the position of the calling player with the first one (has now been replaced by a teleport coin which moves the calling player just before the leading one, to counter act a situation where a player with a switch coin starts to lag behind until doom is very close to switch an opponent right into doom.) We could see this mechanism work very nicely in the prototype game, effectively keeping players together.

Another counter measure is to influence the speed of the players depending of their position. Thus the last player has a higher max speed than the first one, effectively keeping the players together. We did not implement this behavior into our prototype, since the effect will be subtle and is not well approximated by natural numbers.

Yet a third counter measure is the invocation of wall pieces that are more difficult to pass for the first player. Like a tower with a wooden door that needs to be destroyed and thus slowing down the player. Or a piece of wall with a pile of junk that has to be moved to effectively pass the piece.

The second learning from the prototype is that we might not need the coin stack, where every player can keep up to 3 coins concurrently, at all. Since we always used the coins before the stack actually started to fill up. We will nonetheless implement it as a stack with length one, just to be able to revert to the stack idea if testing of the game makes it suitable.

Another potential issue in a 3 or 4-Player game is the first player dying early and having to potentially wait passively for quite some time. Thus as a high target we want to incorporate some nice cooking and drink recipes and workout guides to keep the loosing player active and socially integrated.

What we have learned from the first public tasting

There were three main feedbacks: Too many coins, potentially boring track, beware of the switch.

We rethought the coins and went down from a staggering 23 to a still whopping 11 coins. This is still a lot, but we think it is worth implementing them. And most of the coins being mere post processing effects (e.g. blur, blind) or short deviation of physics (e.g. speed, jump) are simple to implement.

The linear track has been criticized quite a few times. Detours were suggested. We think that this is due to our presentation given, since we only showed linear pieces of wall with simple gaps.

In fact we plan quite a few special wall pieces that make you jump, avoid obstacles and fast movements. Since the detour was named a few times, we thought of a wall piece that makes you choose between a small detour or a risky but fast jump.

We do not want to incorporate real detours because we're generating a random track and this would be very difficult to implement and balance. Also most racing games have linear tracks where there are no detours to be made.

The switch coin has been deemed an interesting but potentially dangerous coin. A player might start to intentionally lag behind until he almost touches doom and then switch another player into certain death. To counteract this anti-social behavior we replaced the switch with a teleport coin: The player using the coin gets teleported just in front of the first player.

How far we are with Lun

Right now we're in the middle of finishing the functional minimum. Finding a useful class structure that represents the game mechanics proved to be quite demanding and also difficult to be done in a team, since everyone has to be working on the same central files. Thus we're lagging a bit behind schedule but are positive that we can pick up speed as soon as the core structure is done and we can program in more separated areas.