

Antihivemind, Marshmallowmonster, & the Btwn-World

Three new practices to add to your burrow toolkit.

Carry this beside your **Burrow Notebook v2.1** and your **Bookwormcard**. The practices below are bookworm-facing. They live at the table during play.

One. The antihivemind. How to stop a burrow from collapsing into one shared opinion.

Two. The marshmallowmonster. The shortcut creature that shows up the moment the burrow starts agreeing too fast.

Three. The btwn-world. The space between worlds where the burrow itself takes place. Five names for the same place.

ONE

The antihivemind

Burrows are collective. Five bookworms read one book and walk one world together. The trouble with collective is that collectives tend to converge. One bookworm says what they think, the next agrees, the third agrees louder, and by the fourth nobody can remember whether the original idea was a good one or just the first one anybody said.

That is a hivemind. It looks like agreement. It feels like agreement. It is actually one bookworm thinking and four bookworms going along.

An antihivemind is anything the burrow does on purpose to keep real disagreement alive. Real disagreement is the only raw material a burrow can think with.

Five antihivemind practices

Silent first vote. When the burrow has to decide something, every bookworm writes their position on a scrap before anybody speaks. Reveal at the same time. The shape of the scraps tells you whether the burrow was actually agreeing or whether one voice was carrying everybody.

Independent compass. Every bookworm has a compass card with four directions on it. When the burrow reaches a choice-point, each bookworm picks a direction from their own card without checking the others. The DM reveals the spread. A burrow that picks four different directions has four different readings of the same moment, and the four readings are the substance of the next conversation.

The contempt token. Every bookworm starts with one contempt token per session. Spending the token means: I disagree with what just got decided, and I want it on the record. The token does not block the decision. It marks that someone in the burrow did not go along. Tokens come back next session.

Chance interruption. Once per session, the DM may roll a six-sided die. On a six, the burrow's emerging consensus is interrupted by an event the DM has been holding in reserve. Not punishment. A reminder that the world does not wait for the burrow to finish agreeing.

The minority report. If the burrow ends a session with a clean answer, the bookworm who agreed least writes a one-paragraph minority report at the back of the notebook. The next session opens with the minority report read aloud. Sessions that follow each other build on the dissent as much as the consensus.

Removing earworms is the everyday name for what the antihivemind does. An earworm is an opinion you carried into the burrow without checking whether it was yours or whether you picked it up from somewhere. The practices above pull the earworm out before it spreads through the rest of the burrow.

TWO

The marshmellowmonster

There is a creature that lives in every burrow. It is white, soft, warm, and friendly. It eats your homework. Nobody sees it eat your homework because it is so soft. It is called the marshmellowmonster.

The marshmellowmonster shows up the moment the burrow finds a shortcut. The shortcut is always reasonable. The shortcut is always faster. The shortcut is always what everybody seems to want anyway. And the shortcut is always how the work that the burrow signed up for ends up undone, while everybody at the table feels like the session went really well.

How to spot a marshmellowmonster

- The burrow agrees too fast. Fifteen seconds, all five bookworms nod, the choice is made.
- The reading skips a passage and nobody says so. The passage was hard, the burrow skips it, the conversation continues as if the passage was easy.
- Somebody in the burrow says “we basically already covered that.” Sometimes true. When it is the marshmellowmonster, the thing that was covered was a different thing in the same shape.
- The session ends ten minutes early and everybody feels good. Real burrow work usually ends on time and everybody feels tired.
- Nobody can remember what specifically the burrow decided. The decision had a shape. The shape was agreeable. The content was marshmellow.

How to defeat one

The antihivemind practices above are the standard weapons. Silent first vote pops the marshmellowmonster before it gets fat. Independent compass forces the burrow to look at the spread instead of the average. Contempt tokens give the bookworm who noticed the marshmellowmonster a way to say so without halting the session.

The non-standard weapon: ask the question one more time. The marshmellowmonster cannot survive the burrow saying “wait, what did we actually just decide?” Saying it twice in one session is rude. Saying it once is the burrow protecting itself from being eaten while it eats.

The Marshmellowmonster also stars in its own children's book, available separately. The book and the burrow practice are the same creature seen from different sides of the page.

THREE

The btwn-world

Every burrow takes place somewhere. Not the room you are sitting in, and not the world of the book you are reading. A third place. The place between the two worlds where the burrow actually happens.

This place has five names. They all point at the same place. Different burrows like different names. Use whichever one lands.

btwn-world

The short name. The space between the world of the book and the world of the bookworm. Easy to write. Looks like a chat abbreviation, which it kind of is.

rainbowworld

The colour-name. Inside the btwn-world the rules of the outside world bend. Things that were one colour become every colour at once. The bookworm who keeps a Rainbow Item from a burrow is carrying a piece of this place out with them.

the Upside Down

Borrowed from a TV show you may know. Same idea: a place that looks like the regular world but is structured differently. Things that move slowly here move fast there. Things that feel solid here might be air there. The Upside Down is the burrow's version of itself.

a state of exception

The serious-sounding name. When the regular rules of a place are paused so something can happen that could not happen under the regular rules. A burrow is a state of exception that the burrowmates agree to enter together for a session.

the rainbow bookworm burrow between worlds world

The long name. The full name. The one to say out loud when somebody asks what a burrow even is and the short answer is not landing. The whole phrase is the answer.

What you do with the names

When a burrow opens at the start of a session, the DM may say “we enter the btwn-world now” or “the Upside Down opens.” The bookworms cross in. While inside, things from the book and things from the bookworm are equally real. Rainbow Items collected during the session come out of the btwn-world with the bookworm when the session ends.

When a burrow closes, the bookworm steps back out. The book becomes a book again. The bookworm becomes a bookworm again. The notebook holds the Rainbow Items the bookworm carried across the boundary.

Three practices. Three places to put them in your notebook. Carry forward into the next session.

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COLOPHON

Carry this with you.

The three practices in this supplement are designed to be added to your existing Burrow Notebook. Tear these pages out or keep the supplement folded inside the back cover. Bring them to the next session.

Antihivemind defends the burrow against false agreement. Marshmellowmonster names the creature that eats the work when the burrow takes a shortcut. The btwn-world names the place where the burrow itself takes place. Three names. Three practices. One toolkit.

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