Part II: Selection/Description

#1. Hot Lava Hopscotch

Hot Lava Hopscotch is my attempt to create a story that could motivate the actions of hopscotch and place them in a larger context. As I see it, there are three main activities in hopscotch: throwing, hopping, and picking things up while maintaining balance. I've decided that these actions make sense as part of an attempt to cross a channel of lava using moveable stepping stones. I enjoyed playing freeform games of hot lava on the playground as a kid, and I like the idea of a hopscotch board with moveable squares that can be used for actual travel.

In Hot Lava Hopscotch, alpha version, the player has about 6 stepping stones, represented by potholders or maybe Frisbees. The channel of lava the player must cross is quite wide (30 feet or so, marked by visual landmarks or sticks), and one places the "stones" by throwing them out onto the lava area. To cross the channel, the player must hop on the stepping stones without touching the lava. Since the channel is too large to cross by hopping on each stepping stone once, the player will have to hop back to stones that were used early on and pick them up (while maintaining balance) in order to reuse them.

There are some problems with this concept, the most notable being that moveable stepping stones that float on top of lava don't make a lot of sense. I'm choosing to ignore that for the time being. One would not want to use bare hands to pick up stones that had been sitting in hot lava, so I thought about adding a new kink to the game that would require the player to use a pair of kitchen tongs instead. There's also no reason why one would hop on one foot while crossing a channel of lava via stepping stones. The best I could come up with is a backstory in which the player burnt one foot during an earlier attempt to cross the lava. This is pretty ridiculous, though, and the more I think about it the more the story seems far-fetched and unnecessary and detrimental to the game. The hot lava pretext led to some neat developments but seems to have outlived its usefulness. If I were to develop Hot Lava Hopscotch further, I would ditch the story entirely and switch my focus to the game mechanics.

#2. Hopstomp

Hopstomp is my attempt to make the hopping part of hopscotch more interesting by varying the types of hops and adding an element of memory challenge. The game is played on a hopscotch board with pressure-sensitive squares that can each light up in any of three colors: yellow, red/pink, and blue.

The game begins with no part of the board lit. The first player throws the marker onto the first square, which lights up for the duration of time that the marker is resting on it. The color with which that square lights up is randomly determined but remains consistent for that player throughout the duration of the game. Color indicates the force with which one must hop upon a square—yellow for a normal hop, red/pink for a forceful, "stomping" hop, and blue for a light, "tiptoe" hop. As with a common Western game of hopscotch, the player skips over the square with the marker

in it, progresses up the board, and returns back down. The force with which the players hops on squares that have a higher number than the square the marker is on does not matter. However, when the player returns and picks up the marker, the light in the square the marker was on goes out. The player must hop on the square that contained the marker with the appropriate amount of force, in which case the square will momentarily light up, providing feedback that the hop was successful and also serving as a reminder/memory aid. An unsuccessful hop yields a buzzer sound and ends the player's turn, at which point play progresses to the next player.

As the game progresses, the player must remember what color each square turned when the marker was on it and adjust the force of his/her hop on that square appropriately. The colors/force of hop necessary for each square remains consistent for each player but is not consistent *between* players, in order to prevent the spectating players from being given an unfair memory advantage.

An example: the player throws the marker onto square #3, which lights up red, indicating the need for a forceful hop. The player remembers that squares #1 and 2 both require a light, careful hop, so he hops lightly on those squares, which each flash blue, indicating that those hops were successful. The player then hops over the square containing the marker, hops normally to the top of the board and back down to square #4, and stoops to pick up the marker (at which point square #3's light goes out). He stomp-hops on square #3, which flashes red, and tiptoe-hops on square #2, which flashes blue. However, his attempt to gently hop on square #1 is not light enough, and the buzzer sounds, ending his turn. He must ignore the next player's color pattern and try to remember the force with which he must hop on each of the first three squares when his own turn resumes.

It would be possible to partially playtest Hopstomp by having a person stand in for the technology and randomly generate/keep track of colors, state what color a given square had lit up, make buzzer sounds if a player had obviously not hopped with the correct level of force, etc.

#16. Graveyard Hopscotch

Graveyard hopscotch originated with a thought about changing the game mechanics so that a player who makes a turn-ending mistake is out of the game and must sit or lay across a square, becoming an obstacle to others. I didn't like the idea of players accidentally getting stepped on or kicked in the head, though, so I decided that using a proxy to mark the square might be preferable. This reminded me of the computer game Oregon Trail and the satisfaction of leaving a gravestone for later players to come across whenever a member of one's wagon party died.

In Graveyard Hopscotch, players who lose their balance or step on a line are "dead" and out of the game. A dead player must place a "gravestone" in the last square he or she was in before death. Dead players are considered to be ghosts in the graveyard and must keep out of the way of players who are still in the game. Players cannot throw the marker into or hop within gravestone squares—those squares must be skipped over in the same way one skips over the square with the marker in it. In addition, players must pay respects to the specific dead of a gravestone square by name before hopping over the square.

If a player forgets to pay respects or names the wrong name, the forgetful player is "possessed" and becomes a ghost, switching places with the "dead" player of that square, who comes back into the game and is no longer dead. The gravestone is now associated with the name of the forgetful player, and all players must pay their respects to the forgetful player rather than the former dead of that square; if

another player messes up, he or she is possessed, the player who died for being forgetful returns into the game, and the name associated with the gravestone changes again.

Gravestone squares that occur in clusters can present a considerable and ever-growing obstacle. If a player fails to jump over one or more gravestone squares, that player dies but no ghosts enter back into the game. To win Graveyard Hopscotch, a player must complete or have completed all non-gravestone squares (i.e. successfully tossed the marker onto the square, hopped up the board skipping that square, and returned back down the board, retrieving the marker on the way). It is possible for all players to die and become ghosts, in which case the entire group is doomed to haunt the hopscotch board forever.