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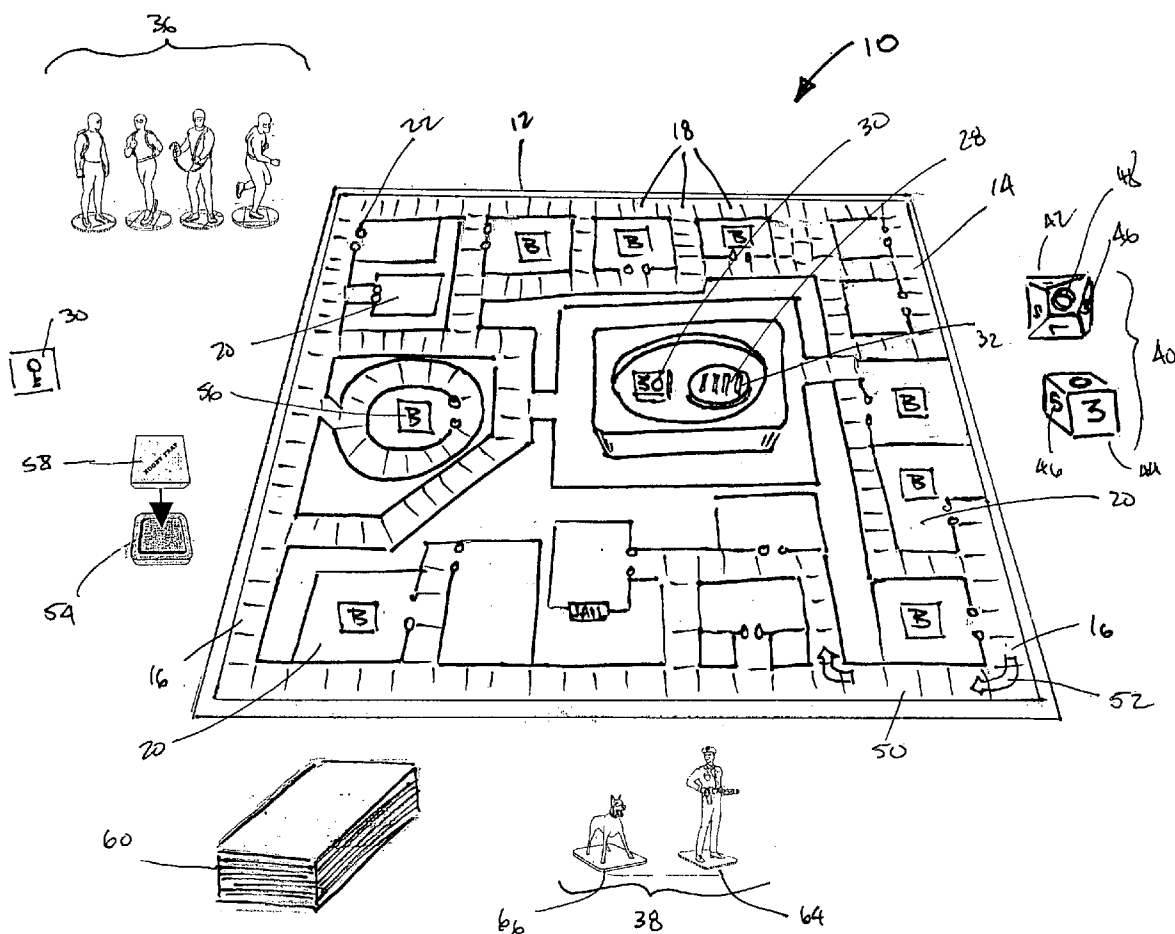
(57) **ABSTRACT**

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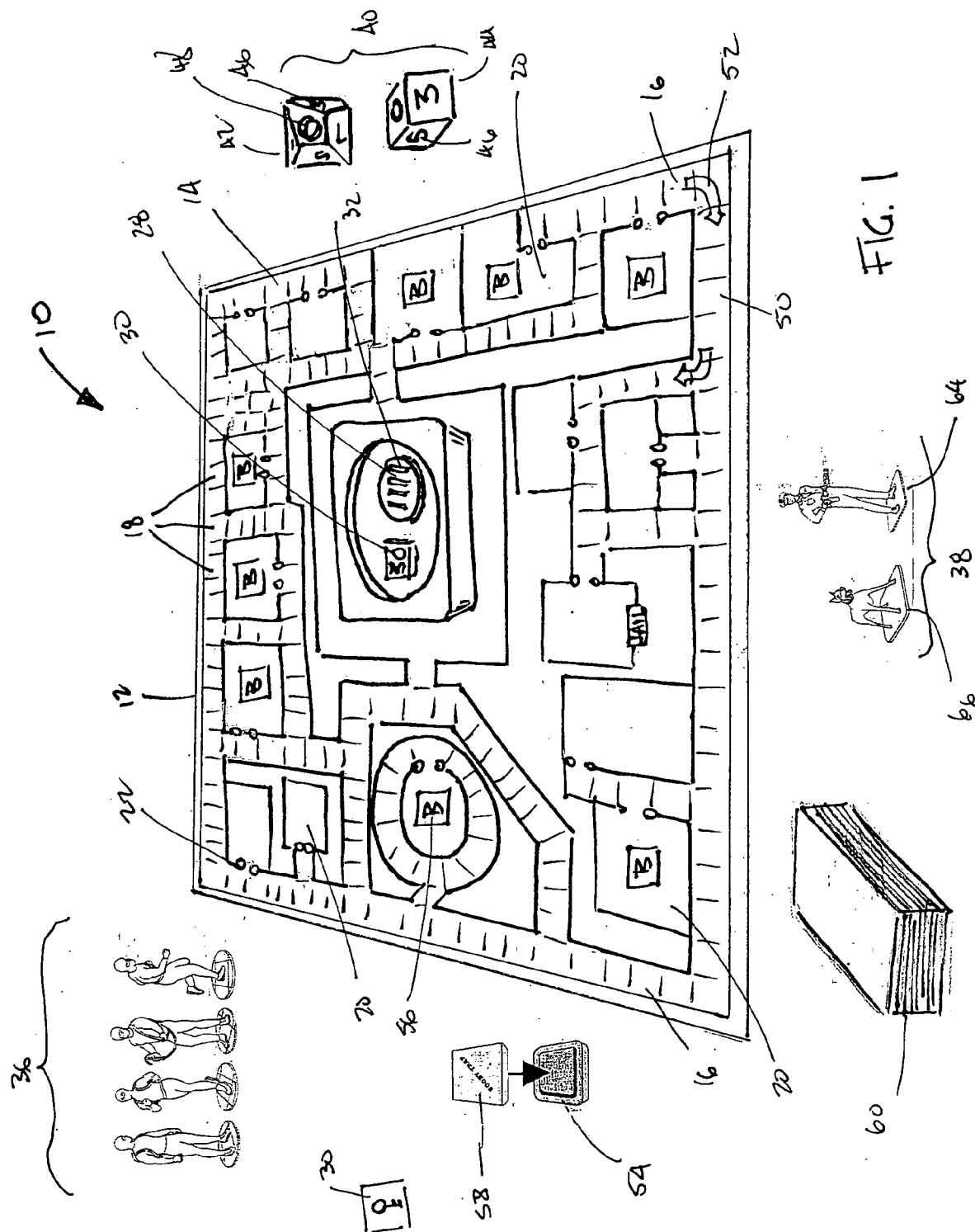
A board game is provided comprising a game board and a plurality of game pieces positionable on the board. The game board includes a continuous game path comprising a series of spaces along which the game pieces may be moved. At various positions along the game path are provided one or more chambers within which the game pieces may be moved. The game pieces include at least one player game piece and at least one non-player token game piece positionable upon the game path, wherein the token game piece moves independently of the players and the player game pieces and may influence the position of the player game piece on the game board. A timing mechanism is included to provide a deadline within which the players must achieve a common goal, which timing mechanism may be integrated within a lockable safe mechanism that cannot be opened until a certain number of "keys" are inserted into slots provided within the mechanism thereby signaling the completion of the goal.

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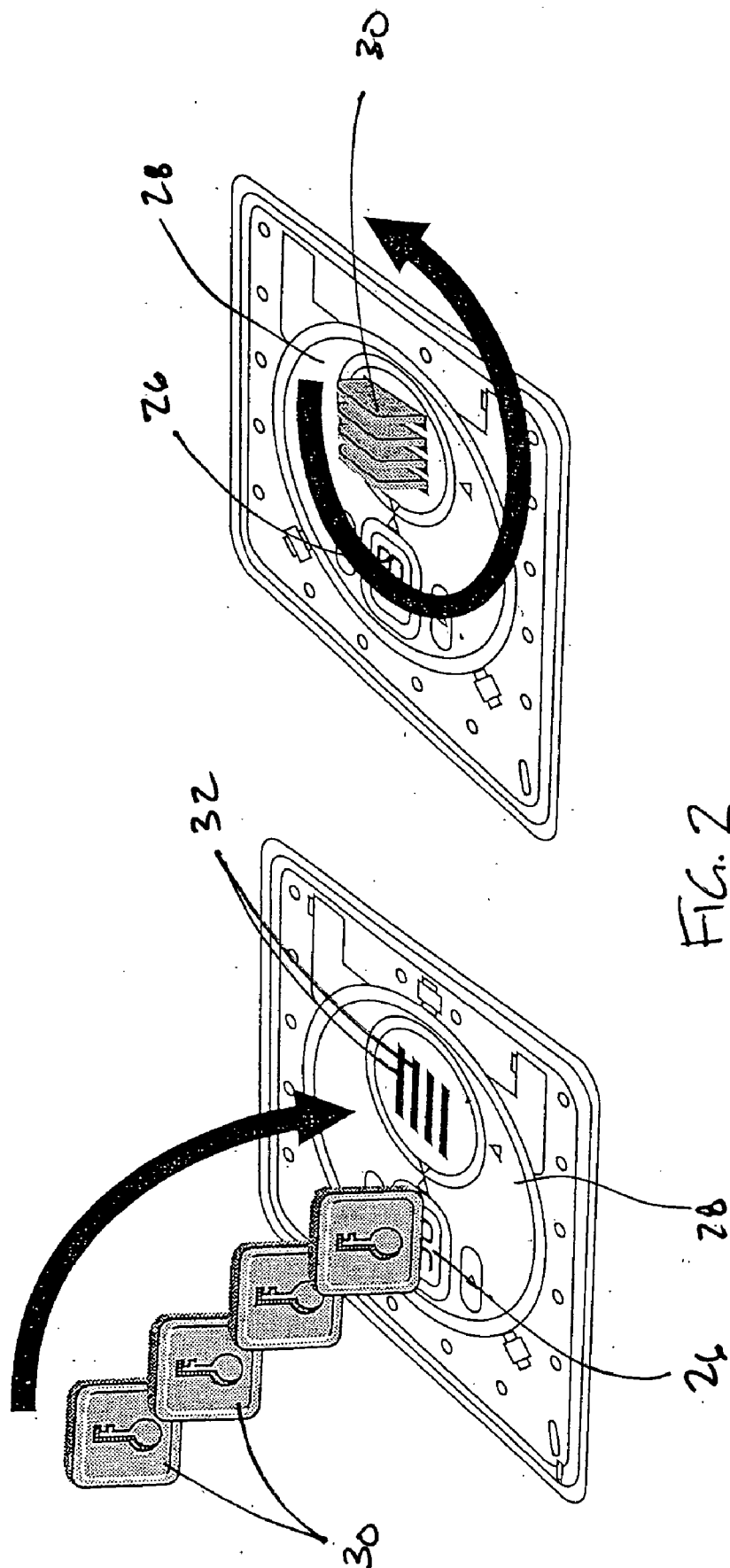
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## SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PLAYING A COOPERATIVE GAME

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

#### [0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates generally to a board game, and more particularly, to a board game for two or more players wherein the players are not competing against each other but instead must cooperate to complete a common goal within a given amount of time.

#### [0003] 2. Description of the Prior Art

[0004] Board games, table top games and parlor games, are well known and have been universally used for centuries, many of these games utilizing common elements, such as a standard game board, player markers, dice or other randomizing agents, timer mechanisms, cards, money and the like. What all of these games have in common is that each of the players, whether there be two or more, are competing against each other. In many of these games, the players might be grouped into two or more teams, but in these instances, the teams themselves are competing against each other.

[0005] While there are other cooperative games on the market, none of them provides the specific features of the cooperative game of the present invention. For example, in the game *Cranium Hoopla* all players (playing together as one team) attempt to successfully communicate a target number of content pieces to one another using four different clueing methods within a set period of time.

[0006] Another such game is *Lord of the Rings*, a cooperative game published by Hasbro, Kosmos and Parker Brothers in 2000 where the object is to destroy the Ring while surviving the corrupting influence of Sauron. Each player plays one of the Hobbits in the fellowship, each of which has a unique power. The game is played on a number of boards: the Master board indicates both the physical progress of the fellowship across Middle Earth and the corrupting influence of Sauron on the hobbits, and a number of scenario boards which detail the events and adventures of particular locations. Progression across the boards is determined by playing cards (many of which represent the characters and items of Middle Earth), and the effects of corruption are represented by a special die. The game is lost if the ring-bearer is overcome by Sauron, or won if the ring is destroyed by throwing it into the volcanic fires of Mount Doom.

[0007] Another example of a semi-cooperative game is a game published in 1993 by Decipher, Inc. entitled *Star Trek—The Next Generation: A Klingon Challenge*. The game features some cooperative aspects (the extent of this is not known) and a game timer in the form of a constantly-running VHS videotape that players start at the beginning of the game.

[0008] There exists a need for a class of board games in which players cooperate in order to achieve a common goal, namely the opening of a safe allowing the players to simulate a heist while avoiding non-player tokens such as guards and dogs, within a predetermined amount of time. As shall be appreciated, the prior art fails to specifically address either the problem or the solution arrived upon by applicant.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] Against the foregoing background, it is a primary object of the present invention to provide a board game wherein two or more players or teams cooperate to achieve a common goal.

[0010] It is another object of the present invention to provide such a board game further including a timing mechanism for setting a deadline within which the players must achieve the common goal.

[0011] It is yet another object of the present invention to provide such a board game that may be completed in a predetermined period of time.

[0012] It is still another object of the present invention to provide such a board game that includes an element of randomness to the outcome of the game.

[0013] It is another object of the present invention to provide such a board game including one or more elements that operate independently of the players, which elements may influence the player game pieces or the player's achievement of the common goal.

[0014] It is yet another object of the present invention to provide such a board game including at least one non-player game piece positionable on the game board and moving independently of the players' game pieces, wherein said non-player game piece may influence the position of the player game pieces on the game board, and the player game pieces may influence the position of the non-player game piece on the board.

[0015] It is still another object of the present invention to provide such a board game that includes a lockable safe mechanism that cannot be unlocked until all four keys are inserted, which keys are acquired by players by completing certain tasks.

[0016] It is but another object of the present invention to provide such a board game that is playable by two or more players.

[0017] It is yet another object of the present invention to provide such a board game that is appropriate for a broad range of age groups.

[0018] It is but another object of the present invention to provide such a board game that allows players to simulate a heist.

[0019] It is yet another object of the present invention to provide such a board game wherein players experience the thrill of competition without an adversarial atmosphere.

[0020] To the accomplishments of the foregoing objects and advantages, the present invention, in brief summary, comprises a board game having a game board and a plurality of game pieces positionable on the board. The game board includes a continuous game path along which the game pieces may be moved, the game path being comprised of a series of spaces or tiles. At various positions along the game path are provided one or more chambers or rooms, within which the game pieces may be moved. The game pieces include at least one player game piece positionable upon said the game path and at least one non-player token game piece positionable upon the game path, wherein the token game piece moves independently of the players and the



player game pieces. The token game piece may influence the position of the player game piece on the game board and conversely, the player game piece may influence the position of the token game piece on the board. A timing mechanism is also provided for providing a deadline within which the players must achieve a common goal prior to the expiration of time on said timing mechanism. The timing mechanism may be integrated within a lockable safe mechanism which cannot be opened until a certain number of "keys" are inserted into slots provided within the mechanism. When the keys are all inserted, the safe mechanism may be opened and the game is won if the players complete the task prior to time running out on the timing mechanism. In an alternative embodiment, a single player may play an interactive game by using a puzzle book that includes puzzles that must be completed prior to opening a mission book having mission solutions relating to the puzzles, wherein the missions must be completed within a certain predetermined period of time.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0021] The foregoing and still other objects and advantages of the present invention will be more apparent from the detailed explanation of the preferred embodiments of the invention in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0022] **FIG. 1** is a perspective illustration of the board game of the present invention, including the elements disclosed in the preferred embodiment; and

[0023] **FIG. 2** is a perspective illustration of the combination timing mechanism/locking safe mechanism of the board game of the present invention.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0024] Referring to the drawings and, in particular, to **FIG. 1** thereof, the board game of the present invention is provided and is referred to generally by reference numeral **10**. The board game **10** comprises a game board **12** which, in the preferred embodiment, is substantially planar and is foldable so as to fit within a smaller area, such as a storage box. At least one surface of the game board **12** contains a playing surface **14** upon which the game is played. The playing surface **14** includes a continuous game path **16** comprising a plurality of connected spaces or tiles **18**. At various positions along the game path **16** are provided chambers or rooms **20**, said chambers **20** being connected to the tiles **18** by a door marker **22**. One of said chambers **20** serves as the start/finish room **24** wherein play commences and ultimately terminates.

[0025] A timing mechanism **26** is utilized to provide a deadline within which the players must achieve a common goal. The timing mechanism **26** illustrated in **FIGS. 1** and **2** is an electronic timer that counts down in a digital readout from 30 minutes to 0 upon the commencement of the game. In the preferred embodiment, the common goal is the opening of a lockable safe mechanism **28** which cannot be opened until a given number of keys **30** are inserted into slots **32** in the safe mechanism. The keys **30** may take on any variety of shapes or forms, such as a plastic skeleton key or a key imprinted on a plastic tile. Until all the required keys **30** are inserted within the slots **32** of the safe mechanism **28**, however, the safe mechanism **28** cannot be opened, and play

must continue. It is only upon the successful acquisition of all the keys **30** and the unlocking of the safe mechanism **28** within the time frame provided by the timing mechanism **26** that the game is won by the players, not by competing against each other, but rather by cooperating towards a common goal.

[0026] Game pieces **34** are utilized to represent the players as well as non-player characters and random events. The game pieces **34** include at least one player game piece **36** positionable upon the game path **16**, which player game piece **36** is controlled by a player or players. In the preferred embodiment, at least one non-player game piece **38** is also provided, which piece **38** is also positionable on the game path **16** and moves independently of the player game pieces **36**. As will soon be appreciated, the non-player game piece **38** may influence the position of the player game piece **36** on the game board **12** and conversely, the player or player game piece **36** may influence the position of the non-player game piece **38** on the game board **12**.

[0027] The player game pieces **36** and non-player game pieces **38** are moved along the game path **16** a number of spaces **18** corresponding to the results of a die or dice **40**. In the preferred embodiment, the dice **40** comprise a player movement die **42** and a non-player movement die **44**. In this embodiment, the player movement die **42** is an eight-sided die with numerical indicia **46** and graphical indicia **48** being provided on each of the faces. The numerical indicia **46** represents the number of spaces **18** the player game piece **36** is to move, while the graphical indicia **48** represents a certain action either the player game piece **36** or non-player game piece **38** must take. Also in this embodiment, the non-player movement die **44** is a six-sided die with numerical indicia **46** provided on each of the faces. It should be appreciated that the dice **40** are but one method of determining a random result, and any number of alternative devices may be used, such as a spinner or electronic means.

[0028] In the preferred embodiment, the player game pieces **36** may be moved in any direction, while the non-player game pieces **38** follow a predetermined path **50** along the game path **16**, said path **50** being established by a plurality of directional arrows **52**. In the event that there is more than one non-player game piece **38**, a different set of multiple directional arrows **52** may be used for each piece **38**, each of which set may establish a different predetermined path **50** for each game piece **38**.

[0029] Additional game pieces **34** are also provided in the preferred embodiment, which game pieces **34** are designed to fit in with the scheme of the board game **10**. For example, in the preferred embodiment, in the initial setup of the game, the keys **30** are randomly imprinted on the bottom of top secret tiles **54**, which tiles **54** are placed on predetermined locations **56** in one or more of the chamber **20**. The top secret tiles **54** are adapted to receive booby trap tiles **58** which are placed face down on the top secret tiles **54** so as to hide their identity from the players prior to being encountered. During gameplay, when a player game piece **36** enters a room in which a top secret tile **54** holds a booby trap tile **58**, the booby trap tile **58** is revealed and the player must "disarm" the booby trap revealed thereon. Once the booby trap has been disarmed, the top secret tile **54** is flipped over, potentially revealing one of the keys **30** required to open the safe mechanism **28**. The top secret tile **54** may contain other



indicia on the bottom thereof, such as the key to a secret passage or the occurrence of an event, such as the player being stunned.

[0030] In the preferred embodiment, tool cards 60 are provided to allow the players to “disarm” the booby trap revealed on the booby trap tiles 58. For example, if the booby trap tile 58 reveals a laser web, the tool card 60 required to disarm it would feature a deflection mirror. Other examples of corresponding traps and disarming tools include heat sensor and ice suits, glass cages and ice cutters, and barbed wire and wire cutters. The tool cards 60 may also include other indicia prescribing actions required of the players, penalties or awards for the players, random occurrences and the like. For example, a lock pick tool card 60 will release a player game piece 36 from jail, or a jet board tool card 60 will allow a player game piece 36 to move double the die roll.

[0031] It should be noted that the embodiment shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, in which the game board 12 is configured in the design of a spy complex that the players must sneak around in to recover the hidden keys 30 to unlock the safe mechanism 28, is but one representation of the fundamental concept of the board game 10 of the present invention. The keys 30 do not need to consist of actual representations of keys, nor does the safe mechanism 28 have to appear as a safe, nor do the non-player game pieces 38 have to be a guard and his dog, etc. The concept of the board game 10 is to require the players to cooperate towards a common goal—the collection of one or more items using certain tools that may be transferred between players while avoiding non-player game pieces 38 and overcoming obstacles, such as booby traps. For example, the player game pieces 36 may be made in the representation of elves, and the safe mechanism 28 is designed to look like a magic cave, and the players must find four magic beans (the equivalent of keys 30) from within a cave complex to place within the magic cave before the sun sets.

[0032] Furthermore, while the timing mechanism 26 in the embodiment shown is an electronic timer, this is but one method for setting a deadline in the game. Various other electronic devices will work just as effectively, as would a variety of mechanical or kinetic devices. Simple tools such as spring wound timers or hourglass devices are well known in the game industry. Other timing devices more appropriate to the theme of the particular game are also envisioned, such as balls dropping down ramps, cars moving around a track, water filling a bucket, etc. All that is required is that the timing device is relatively consistent in the setting of a deadline to complete the required task.

[0033] In actual gameplay, the game is set up by mixing up and randomly placing the eight top secret tiles 54 face-down onto the marked spots 56 on the game board 1210, and then by mixing up and randomly placing the eight booby trap tiles 58 face-down on top of the top secret tiles 54. Each player is then randomly dealt an equal number of tool cards 60. All twelve tool cards 60 are distributed (for four players, each get three, for three players, each get four, for two players, each get six). Once all the game pieces 34 and cards 60 are in place, the game is begun by starting the timer in the timing mechanism 26. This timer begins counting down from 30 minutes, and does not stop until the game is over.

[0034] Each player controls one player game piece 36 token throughout the game players begin the game with all

of their player game pieces 36 in the start/finish room 24, or “Safe Chamber.” players take turns, beginning by rolling the dice 40 (on the first turn, the first player only rolls the player movement die 42.) The player movement die 42 determines the number of spaces on the game board 12 the player game piece 36 may move.

[0035] The player game pieces 36 may enter chambers 20 indicated on the game board 12. When a player game piece 36 is in a chamber 20 with a face-down booby trap tile 58, that player may turn over that tile to reveal its contents. The booby trap tile 58 must be removed before the top secret tile 54 underneath it can be revealed. In order to remove the booby trap tile 58, players must meet the conditions required by the specific booby trap. In the preferred embodiment, these conditions include:

[0036] 1. Playing the following tool cards 60 for the corresponding booby traps:

- [0037] a. Gas Mask for the Poison Gas
- [0038] b. Bug Spray for the Killer Bees
- [0039] c. Ice Suit for the Heat Sensor
- [0040] d. Deflection Mirror for the Laser Web
- [0041] e. Wire Cutters for the Barbed Wire
- [0042] f. Glass Cutters for the Glass Case

[0043] 2. Using the robot car 62 (not a tool card) for the Ring of Fire booby trap

[0044] 3. Having at least two player game pieces 36 in the same chamber 20 for the 500 Pounds booby trap

[0045] Top secret tiles 54 that are marked key 30 are removed from the game board 12 and kept by the player until the end of the game. Other top secret tiles 54 are left in place on the game board 12 when they are turned over. In the preferred embodiment, the top secret tiles 54 are as follows:

[0046] 1. Four Keys (these are kept by the players as they are discovered)

[0047] 2. Two Secret Passages (these remain on the game board 12)

[0048] 3. One Empty (this causes no action)

[0049] 4. One Stunned (this causes the player who revealed it to lose one turn)

[0050] One player begins the game with the robot car 62. This can be used on the payer’s turn to legally pass ONE tool card 60 to any other player. The robot car 62 can also be passed to another player without a tool card 60. This is a key element to the cooperative nature of the game: players use the robot car card 62 to move resources to the player who can use them.

[0051] If a player rolls a graphical image 48 of a guard or dog on the player die, that player may not move his player game piece 36, but instead must place the guard token 64 or dog token 66 on the appropriate space indicating they are now in play. (If the guard 64 is already in play when a player rolls guard, the guard 64 is taken out of play. If the dog 66 is already in play when a player rolls dog 66, the dog 66 is taken out of play.) Until these tokens are taken out of play, each player on his turn must roll the non-player movement



die 42 in addition to the player movement die 42. This determines the number of spaces the guard 64 and/or dog 66 are moved. These tokens always move along the same path, and always in the same direction (unless acted upon by a player using an appropriate tool card 60. The guard 64 and dog 66 send player game pieces 36 to Jail by being in the same corridor, or by being within six spaces 18 of a player game piece 36, respectively. In addition to the die roll, the guard 64 and dog 66 can be taken out of play by legal use of the appropriate tool card 60 (Telephone and Bone, respectively).

[0052] Players may escape from Jail by using the appropriate tool card 60 (the Lock Pick), or by rolling an open lock on the player die on their turn, or by another player moving his player game piece 36 into one of the chambers 20 on the game board 12 marked Jail Release. Players may not send or receive the robot car 62 while in Jail.

[0053] If the players obtain all four keys 30 and move their player game pieces 36 successfully back to the start/finish room 24 before the timing mechanism 26 reaches zero, they may insert the keys 30 into the lockable safe mechanism 28 and stop the timing mechanism 26 (as shown in FIG. 2). They have won the game. If the timing mechanism 26 reaches zero prior to the players completing their task, the game is over and the players have lost.

[0054] Having thus described the invention with particular reference to the preferred forms thereof, it will be obvious that various changes and modifications can be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention as defined by the appended claims. For example, a solo play game is envisioned whereby players must first complete puzzles contained in a puzzle book before opening a mission book containing various missions relating to the puzzles solved in the puzzle book. A timing mechanism 20 is utilized to provide a deadline within which the missions must be completed.

Wherefore, we claim:

1. A board game wherein two or more players cooperate to achieve a common goal within a predetermined time frame, said board game comprising:

- a game board;
  - at least two player game pieces positionable upon said game board; and
  - a timing mechanism for counting down the time in said predetermined time frame, wherein said players must achieve said common goal prior to the expiration of time on said timing mechanism.
2. The board game of claim 1, further including at least one non-player game piece positionable upon said game board, said non-player game piece moving independently of said player game pieces, wherein said non-player game piece may influence the position of said player game piece on said game board and said player game piece may influence the position of said non-player game piece on said game board.
3. The board game of claim 2, wherein the movement of said player and non-player game pieces are dictated by the rolling of a pair of dice by each player.
4. The board game of claim 2, wherein said non-player game pieces comprise the figure of a guard and a dog.

5. The board game of claim 4, further including a continuous game path comprising a plurality of discrete spaces provided on said game board, wherein said player game pieces and said non-player game pieces are positionable and movable along said game path.

6. The board game of claim 5, further including at least one chamber provided on said game board, wherein said chamber is connected to said continuous path and may be entered by said player game pieces.

7. The board game of claim 1, further including a lockable safe mechanism that can only be unlocked by inserting at least one key therein, wherein said common goal comprises the recovery of said at least one key and the opening of said safe mechanism.

8. The board game of claim 7, wherein said timing mechanism and said safe mechanism are incorporated within a single unit.

9. The board game of claim 8, further including at least one top secret tile, which tiles are placed at predetermined locations on said game board, wherein said keys are imprinted on one surface of said top secret tiles.

10. The board game of claim 9, further including at least one booby trap tile, which booby trap tile is placed above said top secret tile thereby preventing access to said top secret tile until said booby trap has been disarmed.

11. The board game of claim 10, further including at least one tool card, wherein each of said tool cards corresponds to one of said booby trap tiles, and said tool card is required to disarm said booby trap.

12. The board game of claim 11, further including at least one robot car, wherein said robot car may be utilized to transport said tool cards between players.

13. A board game wherein two or more players cooperate to recover two or more keys and use said keys to open a lockable safe mechanism within a predetermined time frame, said board game comprising:

- a game board;
  - at least one player game piece positionable upon said game board;
  - a timing mechanism for counting down the time in said predetermined time frame, wherein said players must collect said key elements prior to the expiration of time on said timing mechanism; and
  - at least one non-player token game piece positionable upon said game board, said non-player game piece moving independently of said player game pieces, wherein said non-player game piece may influence the position of said player game piece on said game board and said player game piece may influence the position of said non-player game piece on said game board.
14. An interactive game for a single player, said game comprising:
- a puzzle book including puzzles to be completed by said player;
  - a mission book including missions having solutions relating to said puzzles, wherein said puzzles must be completed prior to said mission book being opened; and
  - a timing mechanism, wherein said timing mechanism is activated upon the opening of said mission book to thereby count down the time in which said player has to complete said missions.



**15.** A method for two or more players to play a cooperative board game within a predetermined period of time, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a game board having a continuous game path included on the surface thereof and at least one chamber accessible from said continuous game path;

providing a timing mechanism for counting down the time in said predetermined time frame, wherein said players must achieve said common goal prior to the expiration of time on said timing mechanism;

providing a lockable safe mechanism, said safe mechanism being opened by the insertion of at least one key therein;

providing at least one top secret tile in said at least one chamber, wherein said at least one key is randomly hidden under one or more of said top secret tiles;

providing at least one booby trap tiles upon said top secret tiles such that said top secret tile cannot be uncovered until said booby trap tile has been disarmed;

providing at least one tool card for disarming said booby traps;

providing at least one robot card for exchanging said tool cards between said players;

providing at least two player game pieces positionable on and movable along said continuous game path at a starting location;

providing at least one non-player game piece positionable on and movable along said continuous game path at a separate starting location;

providing at least two dice having numerical and graphical indicia thereon, said indicia determining the movement of said player and non-player game pieces;

rolling said dice;

moving said player and non-player game pieces as indicated by said indicia;

upon entering said chamber, uncovering and disarming said booby trap tile;

recovering said at least one key; and

unlocking said lockable safe mechanism using said at least one key.

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