

Story

It should be secretly, but rather easy task to perform. You, as a young, but fully graduated wizard, was assigned to the small convoy of imperial soldiers to escort its freight. The freight itself indeed was interesting, because it consists of recently discovered substance called explosive dust. However, the mission was rather boring and nobody expect something unusual, because it was seven or eight journey that year – but this time, something happens...

Before the noon, when the convoy almost leaves mountain areas near ruined and forgotten stronghold called “SpellBond Castle”, the convoy was attacked. Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately) to you, battle ends very quickly: you heard whish and something – probably wooden club – hit your head, bringing you into darkness with last thought in your mind: There was a traitor...

The darkness covers you for a long time, but after some time, you felt gigantic explosion and it was impulse to wake you up. You lay on the stone floor and you feel very weak. You slowly look round and see prison cell with broken portcullis, but what is the most surprise the walls are partially built from crystal formation, that seem familiar to you. After few minutes of concentration you recognized the crystals, they are called “dampers”. Strange name indeed, but can be easily understood: when they are connected to the source of mana, they emits energetic field, which damp every magic energy and can even cause death of the wizard, if he is too close and too long to them. Crystals are blank now, but you suppose that your weakness and crystals, explosion and your wake up are tightly connected. In your mind a suspicious starts build: “I’m in SpellBond Castle”.

Introduction

Presented variant is an attempt of transformation the “Mage Wars Arena” (2-player board game) into solo dungeon crawler game with card drafting mechanism. Many rules from the base game is applied, but there are some exception and new mechanism added in order to create new experience during the adventure.

Goal of the game

The goal of the game, as can be seen in the initial story, is to escape from ruined and abandoned (as many thought) stronghold called SpellBond Castle where you were imprisoned after ambush.

You are starting on the deepest (3rd) level of the dungeon, but because it is basic level it is called level 1 (L1) in the manual. To escape you must find three stairs leading your Mage up and stay alive. You lost if your Mage die during the quest. The stairs at every level of the dungeon are guarded by the boss and his companions, who must be defeated to progress. What is more, before you find the stair, you will wandering through different chambers of the dungeon, finding and getting new spells and companions to become more powerful and be able to escape. Of course, there are different monsters in the dungeon, which try to stop your Mage (called Player Mage – PM) from escape.

The dungeon you are is a part of SpellBond Castle, which was used in the past as a prison for wizards, because it is located in the area where the crystals called “dampers” are very common. To make the potential escape harder, the constructors of the dungeon saturated the wall and chambers of the dungeon with many spells, which support the guards of the prison and harm the prisoners, who try to escape. Fortunately for you, when the Great Council of Wizards were formed, the SpellBond Castle was out of use and become abandoned and ruined, so the spells in the walls are weaker and less common, but they can still be active. Sometimes you will feel that dungeon is alive and tries to stop you from escape.

What is more, you laid very close to the “dampers” for a long time and your magical abilities are very limited at this moment, so you will have to rebuild your magical power during journey through the dungeon.

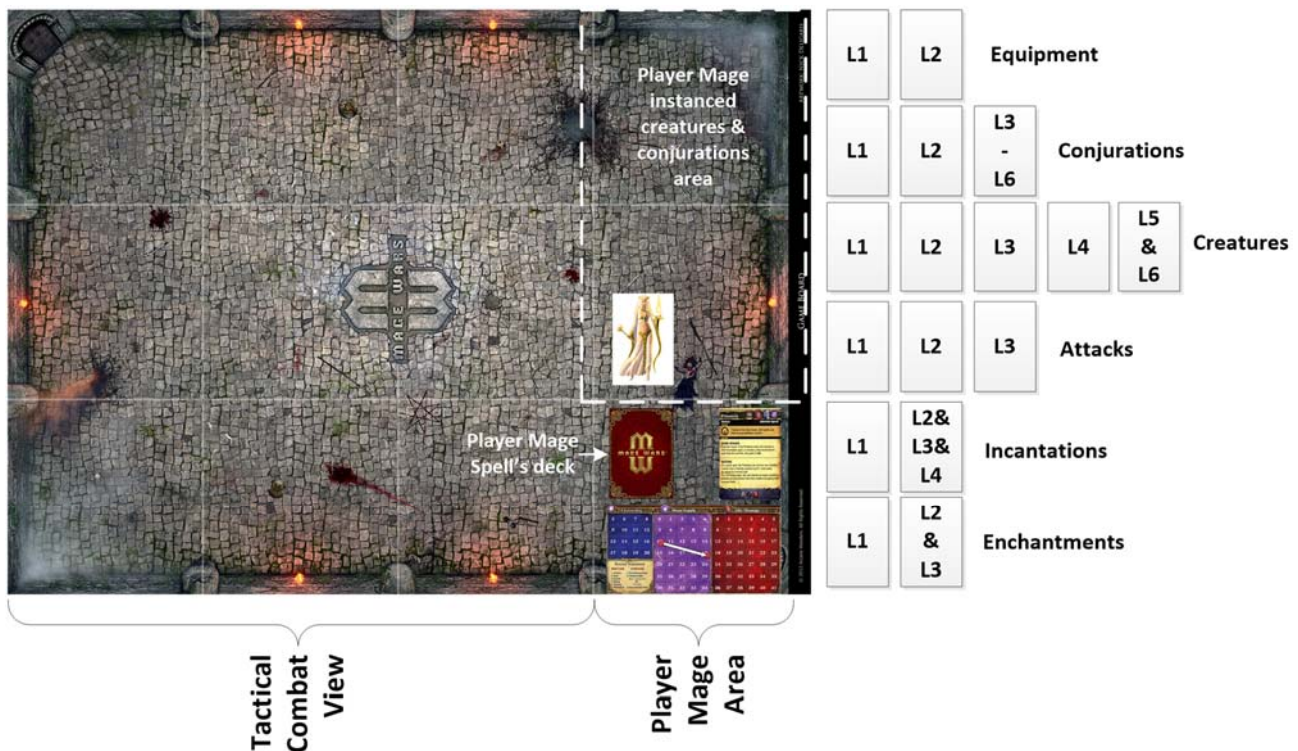
Required components to play

There is a list of components you will need to be able to play “Mage Wars: Escape from SpellBond Castle” with short description for what the component is:

- “Mage Wars: Arena” – the core game is needed with all components to play the presented variant; you can also try to add elements from other expansions and play them in the same (or similar) way, which is described in the variant, but it was not tested.
- Additional two D12 dice:
 - Violet (Navy Blue, Black, Dark) – used to determine, what enemy creatures are in the site you want to explore; also used to check, if some incantation’s spells are casted by the Dungeon during the battle,
 - Orange (Caramel, Bright) – used to determine, what can be looted at the site you want to explore; also used to check, if some enchantments spells are casted by the Dungeon during the battle.
- Few blank pieces of cardboard or paper with size similar to the size of zone of the arena – during combat in the dungeon, you will find different chambers with different size and shape, which will force you to choose optimal strategy during encounter. Therefore, you will need something to mark those parts of the arena, which are unavailable at this moment. You can use also use different items like blocks, markers, coins, standard playing cards (put them face down to have nice ornamented wall).
- Notebook – where you:
 - store the number of spellpoints your mage currently have, to be able to learn new spells and develop your strategy for the game and troubles you encounter,
 - making a map of the current level of the dungeon to see, where are you now – it also serves as a clock to ensure, that you find the stair at specific time and you visit all needed locations.

Setup

1. Put all the components of the core game as usually.
2. Choose your Mage called Player Mage (PM) put damage token, life token, current mana token and channeling token according to values specified on card of chosen mage. Take additional markers like “Pet” or “Bloodreaper”... Put those elements into right column of the board, which forms “Player Mage Area”.
3. Split all spells cards into piles according to the spell type: Creatures, Equipment, Attacks, Conjurations, Incantations and Enchantments.
4. Next, split every spell pile according to the spell’s level – e.g. Creatures – from level 1. to 6., Equipment – level 1 and 2, and so on.
5. Arrange the spell pile as shown on the picture – the creatures with level 4 and 5 there are not available and needed at the beginning, so you can put them somewhere to have more space available on the table, but You can also leave them if you have enough free space.
6. Shuffle every pile separately and put all shuffled cards facedown. To help you remember what card’s row is for, you can use post-it cards with name of each row.



7. In contrast to the core game, there is no complete spell book at this variant. You can learn new spells during the gameplay. At the beginning of the new game, you start to remember some spells you knew before rendezvous with “dampers” crystals. To simulate that process and to create your basic spell hand you start with, do the following activities:
 - a. note the number of spellpoints PM has in the notebook,
 - b. take randomly: 2x equipment (2 from level 1), 4x creatures (2 from level 1 and 2 from level 2), 2x attacks (1 from level 1 and 1 from level 2), 8x incantations (5 from level 1 and 3 from level 2-4) and 6x enchantments (4 from level 1 and 2 from level 2-3),
 HINT: If you draw the invalid spell for your mage (e.g. for Wizard only and you are Priestess), simple exchange it to the valid one. To conclude, all initially drawn spells can be used by PM.
 - c. choose up to 12 spells you wish start with, it will be your starting spells’ deck,
 - d. calculate spellpoints cost of all chosen spells (take under consideration schools of magic – see “Spellbooks” page 35-36) and subtract the result from current number of your mage spellpoints, you never can have deck with higher cost than limit of chosen mage and you cannot add new spells or companions if it brings total cost of all spells above the limit.
8. Take the notebook and draw first chamber your mage starts. All chambers in the notebook are drawn as a squares connected to each other via short and small rectangle, which represents corridor. The corridors are only for moving PM and his party from site to site, the activities (exploration and combat) happens only in chambers.
9. Roll D12 to determine who starts with Initiative token PM or the Dungeon:
 - 1-6 – YM takes Initiative token, put it in the bottom zone of PM area;
 - 7 – 12 – the Dungeon takes Initiative token, put it in the left and top zone of the tactical combat view.
10. You are ready to play.

How to play?

General overview of gameplay:

- I. Exploration – you moved through the dungeon, marking founded sites in the notebook and checking what site you have found. Then you can decide if you want to try to conquer it. If you will be successful, you will loot the location. Exploration is taking place until you find the stairs that lead you up.
- II. Combat – if you wish, the PM can enter to the chosen chamber to defeat all enemies, who are inside to progress and to loot the place.
- III. Loot – if the PM has won the battle, now you can loot the site to earn new spells or gather companions. What is more, during that phase healing can be done. Next, you continue exploration of the dungeon to find the next chamber or stairs.

I. Exploration:

1. Choose the exit from the current chamber PM already is: north, south, east or west. There are always four exits possible. Mark small corridor towards chosen direction.
2. Mark new chamber at end of the recently drawn corridor on the map.
3. Check, how many locations you already explored and defeated, by using table no. 1. “Locations limit”.
4. If you have reached no. of explored location equal to location level’s limit, the next location will be chamber with stairs in it. Check the table no 2. “Chamber with stairs” to know, what guards and rewards are inside. If you wish, you can enter that site and try to win the battle (see “II. Combat”.) to move toward the freedom.
5. If you have not reached level’s limit of location, roll 3xD12 (Yellow, Violet, Orange) and check the specific table (no. 7, 9 and 11) to determine, what kind of chamber you have found and what is inside. Take under consideration the level of the dungeon you are at this moment. Write rolled number on the map in your notebook inside the chosen chamber. DO NOT draw any cards at this moment.
6. If you wish, you can enter the discovered site to conquer it – see “II. Combat”.
7. If you afraid to enter the discovered site you can retreat to the previous location and start from 1. If you do this, when you will return here later, you use already written numbers instead of rolling once again. If you have discovered all possible site you must choose one and try to conquer it to progress.

II. Combat

Consists of two phase:

- preparation – where you prepare the battlefield by using part of the board called “Tactical Combat View”, placing the walls of the chamber to form its shape, placing the enemies as well as enemy conjuration(s),
- battle – where the encounter begins and actions of the creatures the PM and the Dungeon controls.

Preparation:

1. Roll Yellow D12 and use the specific table (no. 8, 10 and 12) to check what size and shape the site you have entered is. Limit the arena to the white zones only, the greyed field are unavailable and treated as an arena walls. The numbers in the squares are field’s id number used to place the Dungeon’s creatures and conjuration(s) and PM’s party.
2. Take randomly enemies and conjuration(s) from appropriate piles (according to the level). Put them near the board in any order.

3. Roll the Yellow D12 and put YM and his companions at rolled number. If you rolled central place, reroll – entry into chamber must be adjacent to border of the arena. Mark the place with additional token to represent the entry to the chamber. Entry will be important, if PM needs to retreat from combat if the things will go wrong. The PM can be assisted by his companions, which were summoned during previous battles. The initial party size depends on the current dungeon level and is described in the table no. 3 “PM’s party size”
4. Roll the Violet D12 for every enemy and put it on specific field of the chamber, there can be many creatures in the one zone. The enemy creature(s) can be even placed at the entry to the chamber, as well.
5. Roll the Orange D12 for enemy conjuration(s), if it should be placed and put it on rolled field of the chamber. If the zone contains the conjuration with “Zone exclusive” trait and another conjuration should be placed in that zone, re-roll to place it on different space. The enemy conjuration(s) can be placed at the entry to the chamber.
6. If all cards are placed in the chamber, the preparation is completed.

Battle:

The battle is played using standard rules of play described in the “Rulebook”. There are some tips according to ready and action stage:

Ready stage:

1. Initiative phase – Initiative token is passed between Player and Dungeon as usual, so when all creatures of Player and Dungeon did its action. Every time the Dungeon has the Initiative token, roll 3D12 (Violet, Orange and Yellow) to determine if any Incantation (Violet die) and/or Enchantment (Orange die) brings into play. If you have rolled at two or three same values on dice, additional attack spell comes into play. To determine what kind of the spells which has to be put into play, use the table no. 4 “The Dungeon’s initiative phase”:

NOTE: The spell casted by the Dungeon does not have range condition because they are materialized from the dungeon’s walls, so they can affect any creature in any zone.

Resolving Dungeon’s incantation spells:

If the incantation spells has no specific condition, it is put into play. If the target needs to be selected (friend or foe) use “Automate action algorithm” (AAA): 1. Selection of the creature. When selecting the target, take under consideration only valid targets for the specific spell (e.g. healing).

If the incantation spell has some triggering condition, resolve that spell in slightly different way:

When the spell is casted by the Dungeon, the spell is placed near the game board; if the current situation on the board meets the spell condition, the spell is triggered. If there is no that situation at this moment, the spell is awaiting, checking the condition after any creature’s action. If until the end of the current round the condition(s) will not be meet, the spell is returned at the bottom of the spell pile from which it has been taken.

Example: “Vampiric Strike” has been chosen to be casted. Because there is unknown if any of Dungeon’s creatures will attack that round, the spell is put near the game board and awaiting activation. When the first Dungeon’s creature performs strike, the spell is activated (the attack gains “Vampiric” trait). If any of Dungeon’s creature does not attack that round, the spell is returned without activation into bottom of the specific spells pile.

Resolving Dungeon’s Enchantment spells:

Almost the same is for enchantment spells, so put the spell revealed into play when it has not any condition. Otherwise (mainly for enchantments with mandatory revealing), the spell is awaiting activation – put it near the board.

To provide some uncertainty like in 2-player game: if the spell condition(s) is met, the additional 1D12 roll is performed, to check, if the Dungeon wants to resolve the spell at this moment or not. In case of 01 – 06 rolled: the spell is not resolved at this moment, in case of 07 – 12: the spell is resolved at this moment.

Example: “Jinx” has been chosen to be casted by the Dungeon. Because there is unknown, if any of PM’s creatures or PM itself will cast a quick spell that round, the spell is put near the game board and awaiting activation. When the first PM’s or PM’s creature quick spell is casted, the spell can be activated, so 1D12 die is rolled: if 07 – 12 will be rolled, the “Jinx” will be resolved and then discarded. If any of PM’s quick spell will not be casted that round, or every time the 01-06 was rolled, the “Jinx” is returned without activation into bottom of 1st level of enchantments spell pile.

Resolving Attack spells:

If the target needs to be selected use “1. Selection of the creature” from “Automate action algorithm” (AAA), during selection take under consideration only valid targets.

Zone target attack can be target only to the zone without the Dungeon’s creature in it and with PM’s creature in it. If there is no that zone at the current situation, the attack spell is waiting for activation similar to incantation/enchantment spell. If it cannot be resolved until the end of round, it is put to the bottom of its spell pile without activation.

All spells successfully resolved are moved into spells’ discard pile and can be absorbed into PM’s spell pile during “III. Looting” after the battle is won.

2. Reset phase – no changes according to “Rulebook”.
3. Channeling phase – no changes according to “Rulebook” for Player. The dungeon does not store the mana, but the Dungeon’s SpawnPoints and Familiars do – Dungeon’s SpawnPoint and Dungeon’s Familiars gets mana = 2 * channeling value.
4. Upkeep phase – only player can decide if he wants and can to pay the upkeep cost. The Dungeon has insufficient mana pool, so it always can pay for the spell. To get some uncertainty during the game, in case of the Dungeon payment roll 1D12: 01 – 06 – no payment for that spell this round and 07 – 12 – the Dungeon makes a payment for the spell this round.
5. Planning phase – no changes according to “Rulebook” for Player (two spells can be selected from the PM spell hand). The dungeon does not plan the spells.
6. Deployment phase – no changes according to “Rulebook” for Player. The dungeon tries to activate every SpawnPoint according to the current mana pool and rolled D12 for the SpawnPoint. To check the result, consult table no. 5. “The Dungeon’s deployment phase:”

If activation takes place take up to two spells from appropriate spell pile, and check if the mana pool is sufficient and the spell has valid target. If so, put the randomly chosen spell into play and decrease SpawnPoint mana pool. If no, take another two spell from lower level. If any spell cannot be casted, the SpawnPoint does nothing. All unresolved spells are put into the bottom of the specific spell pile. Resolved spell is discarded and can be absorbed by the PM during looting phase (see III. Looting).

Action stage:

1. The dungeon’s conjuration phase – see appendix to check, how the enemy conjuration works.
2. First quickcast phase – no changes according to “Rulebook” for Player. The dungeon can cast spells only during Initiative phase if it has Initiative token or by using the SpawnPoint during Deployment phase.
3. Action phase - no changes according to “Rulebook” for Player. The enemy creatures follow the automate action algorithm (AAA) to complete its actions. The AAA is described on the next page.
4. Final quickcast phase – no changes according to “Rulebook” for Player. The dungeon cast spells only during Initiative phase if it has Initiative token or by using the SpawnPoint during Deployment phase.

Automate action algorithm (AAA):

When there is an action phase for the Dungeon, it simply select creature and take the action using that creature:

1. Selection of the creature – to select which creature will act in the current action phase, roll violet D12 and check the table no. 6 “The Dungeon’s selection creatures/targets:”:
If there are at least one wounded Dungeon’s creature it always act first. If there are more wounded creatures to select, use the violet D12 and check the result in the way shown before.
2. Action of the selected creature – are consider in the following way:
 - a. the selected creature always want to use its full action if it is valid at the current situation,
 - b. if the full action is invalid (e.g. there is no target in range for full attack or there is no wounded creature in range – in case of healing) the selected creature moves to the closest zone with PM or PM’s creature in it (with using available traits like Fast),
 - c. next, the creature tries to make quick action (mainly quick attack) against PM or PM’s creature in the zone it currently is. If there is no valid target at current zone, the creature takes guard marker.

If during selection of the target for attack or movement, more than one option is available, use the same rules described in 1. So selected creature always tries to attack the most wounded creature/conjuration in range, then attacks the cheapest or the most expensive PM’s creature/conjuration in range (use the table in 1. to determine – treat conjurations as a creatures), as a last choice, the selected creature attacks the PM.

NOTE: The Dungeon’s creature’s defense:

If DM’s creature has “Defense” trait, if that creature is attacked the two D12 (Violet and Yellow) are rolled. In case of violet die shows 01 – 05 the defense is not used at this moment, otherwise (06 – 12) defense is used at this moment. If defense should be used, the yellow die shows if the defense is successful. It should give some randomness during attacking the Dungeon’s creatures with defense trait, similar to the game with real opponent, who can decide to leave some low-level attacks and try to avoid (by using “Defense”) more dangerous.

NOTE: PM’s Retreat:

If during the battle, things going wrong you can decide to flee. To do this you have to bring at least PM into place where the entry to the current chamber is. If you wish, you can bring companions of PM as well. When all creatures are at the entry, you have to pass one action stage of every creature to leave the chamber successfully. You can use guard markers on some creature, if you wish. After passing and resolving the Dungeon’s creatures action stage, PM and his companions moving into the chamber they start move into the current chamber. Companions who are not at the entry during escaping are lost and put into specific creature’s pile according to its level at the bottom. Casted conjuration are also lost after retreat.

The PM’s creatures itself can also be retreated from the current chamber, by moving them into chamber’s entry and spending next action stage to escape the chamber successfully. If at any moment, the PM’s party size is less than limit, the PM can use quick action to bring any number of chosen companion to the battle – the mana payment is not needed because the creatures are already summoned. The companions appears at the entry to the chamber and can be used in battle as normal without summoning sickness (they starts with their action marker face up).

NOTE: About the PM's spells

The main difference according to core game are PM's creatures, enchantments spells and PM's conjurations.

Creature spells – during combat as a full action PM can cast the creatures from his hand if you plans it. It is not included to the PM's party limit, because the limit is checked only during entering the chamber. The creature after battle stays as the companion of the PM, until it dies. After battle and looting, the PM's creatures are moved into creatures and conjuration section of the PM's area, but there are still real creatures that means, during next battle there are available during preparation (point 3.), but then, there are counted to the PM's party limit.

The enchantment spells – if are casted on the PM's creatures, they are connected to them all the time, until the creature will die or until some spell from dungeon or PM will remove it. If the enchantment spell was casted on enemy creature, when the enemy creature is destroyed and discarded, the enchantment is also destroyed and discarded, but the discarded spells can be included into PM's spell pile during looting using absorption mode – see III. Looting.

The conjurations – if the PM has conjuration(s) in his spell pile, he can casts it during combat and placed in the chosen zone, which is in range of the spell by spending full or quick action and mana. When the battle ends, the casted conjurations are moved into highest section of PM area, above creature section. During next battle, any conjurations, which is available in that section, can be casted into the battlefield, so the casted conjurations are not removed from the game, when PM leaves the chamber the conjuration was initially set up. The casting cost of the conjuration from PM's area is half of casting cost the conjuration rounded up, but the full or quick action is needed depending on the conjuration.

III. Looting:

When the battle is over (there is no enemy creatures in the chamber), the looting phase can be performed. Looting is done in two modes – normal, by getting treasures, which are in chamber according to last column of the table, which describe content of the chamber. The looting is done in the following way:

1. You randomly take **double** number of spells according to treasures column from appropriate spell's pile. All taken spells has to be valid to the PM, in other case re-draw new card(s).
2. You can choose only the number of spells listed in treasures column from drawn spells.
3. If you choose the spell(s) check, if PM's spellpoints limit is not reached.
4. If no, subtract the cost of the chosen spell or spells and put them into PM's spell pile.

Hint: If you have found the creature with "INST." note, it is treated as real creature (already summoned) not as the spell. So you will put it into middle section of PM's Area not into the PM's spell pile, but it casting cost has to be added to current spellpoints value.

Second mode of looting is using the absorption ability of every mage. That way of looting is as follow:

1. Make PM channeling once more according to current channeling value, but only once.
2. Check all cards discarded (all cards which were successfully resolved or were destroyed) during the battle, take under consideration also defeated creatures (enemy and PM's), as well as enemy conjuration(s) (destroyed or still present in the chamber).
3. You can absorb any discarded spells, as well as enemy conjuration still present in the chamber and add it to PM's spell deck, if you will pay the full spell casting cost (according to enchantment's spell you pay casting and the revealing cost).
4. You may take as many spell as you wish until PM has sufficient mana pool and they are valid to the PM.
5. If you choose the spell(s) check, if PM's spellpoints limit is not reached.

Both modes of looting are always possible and its order is up to the Player.

The stairs – looting:

The looting of the chamber with stairs is slightly different according to normal mode of looting. Depending of level of the stairs PM always earn:

- pool of healing points – the Player can distributed all of them between PM and/or PM's creatures to heal wounds, undistributed points of healing are discarded,
- pool of mana points – the Player can distributed them to buy spells drawn from specific spells' piles as noted in the table 2., the Player can also use current PM's mana pool to increase total pool of mana points to be able to buy more drawn spells he wishes. Undistributed points of mana increase PM's mana pool. The PM can absorb additional spells casted during the battle after increasing his mana pool.

When looting is finished, do the following activities:

1. Healing – if during the battle some instantiated creatures/conjurations are not involved into battle (there are in the middle section of the PM's area during the current encounter), they are slowly healing their wounds. Healing is equal to half points of current damage rounded up, despite of the battle has won or lost.
2. Next put: the PM, alive PM's creatures and PM's conjurations to the upper and middle section of the PM's area.
3. Recalculate all cards the PM has in his area to check, if the spellpoints limit is not exceeded.
4. Put all not absorbed spells at the bottom of specific spells' piles.

If at any time the spellpoints limit is reached, PM must discard (forget) a spell(s) from PM's spells pile to bring the limit down. The discarded spells are put into the bottom of specific spell's pile. That process can be also perform at will during looting phase to give the PM opportunity to learn better or more suitable spells. PM cannot however forget the creatures and conjurations, which are in his area, they can be forgotten only where there are destroyed during the battle and the PM decide to not absorbed them during looting.