Beyond Success and Failure: The 3-Tier Skill Check Method

Skill checks shouldn't dead-end the party. Even a failed roll can spark curiosity, create tension, and push the story forward. This framework gives your players something on every roll, with richer detail for higher results.

Core Principles:

1. Distinguish Essential vs. Valuable
   - Essential info = story cannot continue without it. Always provide in some form.
   - Valuable info = deepens intrigue, expands lore, or rewards attentive players. May be gated by checks.
2. Three Tiers of Results
   - Failure → Vague, sensory, or incomplete observation that hints at more.
   - Partial Success → Clearer but still incomplete clue.
   - Full Success → Complete and specific detail.
3. Keep the Story Moving
   - Clues from failures should point toward actions the players can take next.
   - Use sensory hooks (sound, smell, touch, light) to intrigue.

Outcome Table:

RESULT	NARRATIVE GOAL	PLAYER EXPERIENCE
Failure	Hint without context	Sparks questions; encourages more investigation
Partial	Clue with gaps	Gives direction; invites interpretation
Full	Complete detail	Provides certainty and potential advantage

Tips for GMs:

- **Failure still means progress.** The goal is to make failure interesting, not frustrating.
- **Match the clue's tone to the setting.** In Cindralis, mundane objects can whisper of divine influence or ancient politics.
- **Encourage player theories.** Leave enough ambiguity for speculation before the next check reveals the truth.

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