



DREAD IN THE BASEMENT

A SURVIVAL HORROR TTRPG



Game Design and Art Work by

Brandon, Joe, Kai, Kayden, Ollie, Reuben & Spencer

***Dread In The Basement was created in partnership with
Mind Mosaic Child & Family Therapies as part of
Magic Torch Comics CIC Storyworks Project, supported by
National Lottery Community Fund Young Start Programme.
Project delivery and book design by Andy Lever of Lost Haven Art.***



**STORY
WORKS**



**COMMUNITY
FUND**



Child and Family Therapies

DREAD IN THE BASEMENT

What is...??

Dread in the Basement is a tabletop role playing game that plunges players into a survival horror scenario, where they take on the roles of teenagers who have bravely entered the basement of a strange house at the end of the street. However, the basement is far from ordinary, expanding into a twisted labyrinth of tunnels, corridors, and staircases that lead to gruesome rooms, each revealing the house's haunting past.

The characters themselves are armed only with their mobile phones (all of which have dwindling battery) and whatever they can eventually scrape together during their attempt to escape before they become trapped and become just more spirits to haunt the depths.

What you need to play?

This game is played with a set of two six-sided dice, commonly called 2d6. One player takes on the role of a Games Master (GM) who dictates the game's tone, pace, and story, along with 1 to 5 additional players who will take on character roles.

For some actions in the game, a d3 roll is necessary. You can easily simulate this by rolling a d6: treat rolls of 1-2 as 1, 3-4 as 2, and 5-6 as 3.

MAKING YOUR CHARACTER

Creating a character is easy and can be accomplished in just a few simple steps. Remember, you're portraying typical teenagers, not superheroes!

Step 1 - Attributes

Each character is defined by four essential attributes that are crucial to the game play mechanics. Each character is has 10 points to distribute among the four different attributes.

Tactics - The skill to think rationally, identifying the optimal times and locations to hide or stealthily navigate past the frightening entities that may be present in the dark.

Alertness - Being on the lookout for helpful objects, identifying clues to unravel challenges, and sensing when something is amiss or concealed threats ready to pounce.

Bravery - Boldly stepping into the unknown, facing the fears that lurk in the shadows to defend yourself or a friend in danger.

Athletics - Being physically fit enough to run and keep on running, overcoming obstacles or lend a hand to friends by pulling them from danger or helping them escape from difficult spots.

Step 2 - Health

This step varies depending on the difficulty the GM has set for the game and each character starts with the same amount of Health.

Easy - 15 Health, **Normal** - 12 Health,

Difficult - 10 Heath, **Nightmare** - 6 Health

Step 3 - Phone Battery

In step three, players will make the first dice roll of the game. This roll establishes the battery life each character has in their phone at the start. The phone is an essential tool, acting as a flashlight or, at times, players may choose to utilise it as a camera to peer into narrow spaces or deter certain monsters.

Roll 2d6

On a 10+ the phone begins with 100% battery. If the roll is less than 10 multiply that number by 10 to get your percentage.

As an example, Brandon uses 2d6 to calculate his character's starting battery life, rolling a 5 and a 2 for a total of 7. This indicates that his character's phone starts with 70% battery.

Final Steps

Choose a name and age for your character. The age is a reminder that they are a teenager, while the name is what the GM and other players will call you during the game.

HOW TO PLAY

As the game progresses, players will face a range of challenges including traps, navigating through dark areas, climbing walls, breaking locks, running from monsters, or even standing up to them.

Sometimes, just one player rolls the dice, especially if they're the one kicking things off, but there are times when multiple players have to roll. The GM will ask for a test linked to one of the four attributes: **Tactics**, **Alertness**, **Bravery**, or **Athletics**. The player rolls 2d6 and adds their rank in the relevant attribute. The aim here is to try and match or exceed the **Target Number (TN)**. This target number begins at 8 but will increase as the game goes on and things begin to get more tense.

Success: If the players roll matches or exceeds the **TN** then their character has succeeded at whatever task they were trying to achieve.. If the character was using their phone to help with the task it loses 1d6 battery life.

Failure: If the player rolled less than an 8 then their character fails, the GM describes what occurs as a result of that failure and the character will take 1d3 damage to their Health. If they were currently using their phone to help with the task they'll lose 2d6 battery life.

Dramatic Failure: Sometimes luck isn't on a player's side and the roll double 1's in this case it's a dramatic failure. The repercussions will be pretty devastating for the character and likely their friends. Characters lose 1d6 Health, if they were using their phone to aid with the task it loses 3d6 battery life. The Game also adjusts the doom clock by one segment.

Some other things to consider that may effect dice rolls are items that have been found can be used to make things easier. There isn't a limit to how many items can be carried by a character but it should be reasonable.

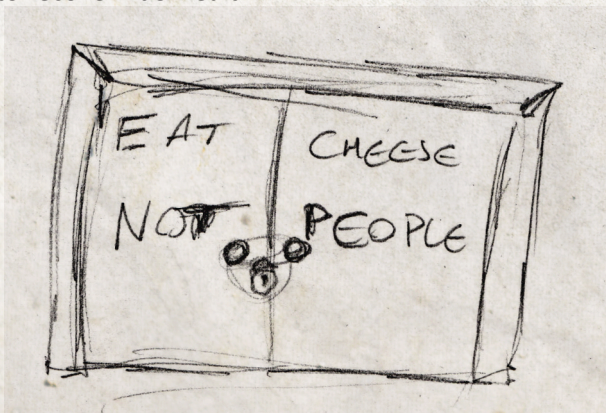
USEFUL ITEMS

In their effort to get out of the house, the characters may stumble upon helpful items. These could be one-time-use things like bricks or glass bottles, useful for distracting whatever is hunting them tools in various conditions, weapons like pipes or knives, and medical supplies for treating a range of injuries from the dangers and monsters they've run into.

Regardless of what it is items found in the house have a limited number of times that they can be used. From 1 to 3. This is determined by the GM upon a successful Alertness test to find the object in the first place. The GM will describe an item that fits the current environment and then roll a d3 to determine how many uses it has before it breaks or is used up.

Most items provide a +2 situational bonus to whatever test they're being used to help with. Throwing a bottle to distract a monster would add +2 to the Tactics test while swinging a metal pipe at something that's right behind you and your friends would grant this bonus to Bravery.

Medical supplies work differently. Each use of medical supplies allows a character to recover 1d3 Health.



RUNNING THE GAME

As the Games Master it's your job to run the game. This can seem overwhelming if you're new to it. However this game has been designed to be simple in terms of rules and so most of it is your imagination!

Setting the Scene

In this game, Scenes are used just like in films. Each time players shift from one location to another, it signifies a new Scene. They might navigate through hallways and corridors, but these are just brief transitions that keep the players on edge or give them a chance to catch their breath as they evade danger.

To establish a scene, describe the location where the characters currently are. Since this is a horror game, aim for descriptions that create a sense of dread, discomfort, darkness, and terror. The environment should be dirty, dusty, rusty, decaying, and in disarray, which contributes to the horror theme. Keep in mind that it's not just about what's visible; sounds and smells are also significant, and you might want to point out things that are oddly missing from the setting.

Here, you can highlight some things that could be interesting to look into for useful items or hints, as well as some potential challenges for the players. Then, let them explain what they want to do and request any necessary dice rolls.

Example Introduction Scene

You all managed to climb into the basement through a narrow window. You weren't expecting the drop to be quite as far and as the last of you slides in the window slams shut behind you.

The room you find yourself in is bathed in an orange light from the sun setting outside. Dust and cobwebs cling to everything, and the damp

smell hits your nostrils as soon as the fresh air is stopped from outside. There are some rusty metal shelves in here containing crates of old tools, rusty paint cans and dust empty bottles.

Trying to climb up and reopen the window is difficult and it won't budge its as though its welded shut. The only other way out of this room is a red door with the paint peeling off it. What would you like to do?

Dice Rolls

There's no need to roll the dice for everything, only for actions that could be dangerous. When characters look for items, they might knock something over and hurt themselves on things they can't see. If they try to sneak past a monster, they could get attacked or miss another threat. Climbing, running, or jumping carries risks too, and bursting through doors or standing firm can be life threatening.

End Game

The game can finish in different ways. As the Game Master, you might consider putting a time limit on the story, like an hour and a half to two hours, which is pretty reasonable. But if you have more time and want to extend the story, that's totally okay too. The game should come to a close as the time runs out, with the characters getting stuck forever if they can't find a way out.

Sometimes, the characters are able to navigate past the traps and frightening elements in the basement, get into the actual house, and escape out the front door. If that takes place, let them talk about their feelings and wrap up the tale.

Every character has been captured by The Stranger or snatched away by another creature in the terrifying basement of the house.

DOOM CLOCK

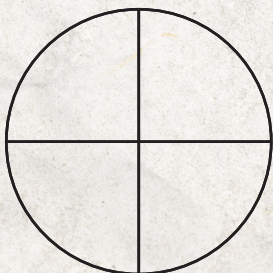
As the GM you'll keep track of the Doom Clock. The doom clock is split into 4 segments as depicted bellow. A section is filled in through one of two circumstances.

First is if a character rolls a double 1 on a test. Maybe describe a notable shift in the house, everything seems darker, and like the place itself is closing in on the characters.

The other way is if a character is reduced to 0 health. This means they've met their end here becoming another spirit to haunt the house and hinder the rest of the group.

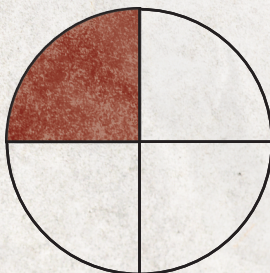
Mechanically each section of the Doom clock that is filled increases the TN required for tests by 1. The basement beneath the house becomes more and more dangerous.

Once filled The Stranger comes home and will actively hunt the players.



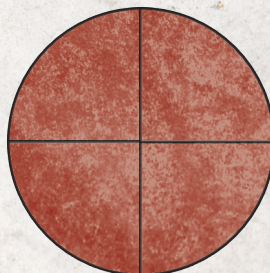
Empty Doom Clock

TN is 8



Segment Filled

TN is now 9



Doom Clock is Full

TN is now 12

GM can introduce The Stranger

SUPERNATURAL ENTITIES

Within the depths of the house, its rooms, passageways, and tunnels harbour a variety of supernatural creatures that stalk, chase, and instil fear in those who enter. Some may be recognisable urban legends, while others are steeped in greater mystery.

For the Players, these beings are terrifying, lurking in the shadows or hiding around every corner, presenting a real threat to their characters.

For the Game Master these entities serve as tools to propel the story forward, to build up tension and atmosphere and to challenge the player characters.



THE PALE GIRL

The Pale Girl is a local myth. It's said that she was a girl from many years ago who couldn't stand being looked at. According to the tale, she either isolated herself or was locked away by someone to avoid others. In time, people forgot about her, and she passed away. Now, she haunts as a ghost, covering her face with her long black hair. When she pushes it back to show her face, it's terrifying enough to frighten people to death. Rumour has it that even though she's terrifying, The Pale Girl doesn't like being photographed.

The Pale Girl increases the amount of damage take by failed tests to D6 and dramatic failures by +2. Being a ghost her presence also disrupts electricity reducing the battery power of everyone's phone by 1d6 whenever she appears. Using your phone to confront her decreases the TN by 2 as she doesn't like being on camera.

Introduction Scene

The room is long and narrow, cluttered with what appears to be old hospital equipment with three doors on either side. Above, there's a buzzing noise from the sole light, a dreadful red strip light that randomly flickers. If you examine the doors more closely, you'll see they all have barred windows and metal slats.

Out of nowhere, a noise interrupts the buzzing of the light. Is it laughter or crying? It's hard to say, and where is it coming from? Did I just see a pale hand on the bars in the back corner room? What are you going to do?



SHADOW MAN

Kids who have been to the house talk about a shadowy presence that seems to trail them. They don't claim it harms them, just that it gives them the creeps like someone is watching. Some think it does this to distract you from the real dangers lurking in the house. They also say that if you turn off all the lights, it will completely disappear because there's no light to make shadows.

The Shadow Man is a distraction when he's around increase the TN of tests to notice other dangers by 2. Spending time in complete darkness is enough to bore the Shadow Man and keep him away for a while at least.

Introduction Scene

The room is dimly lit, casting eerie shadows from a few chairs, some stacked boxes, and a broken wooden desk. Perhaps there's something valuable hidden in those boxes. Out of the corner of your eye, you think you see the shadows shifting—could that be a hand? A pair of eyes? Is it approaching? What will you do?



THE RAT KING

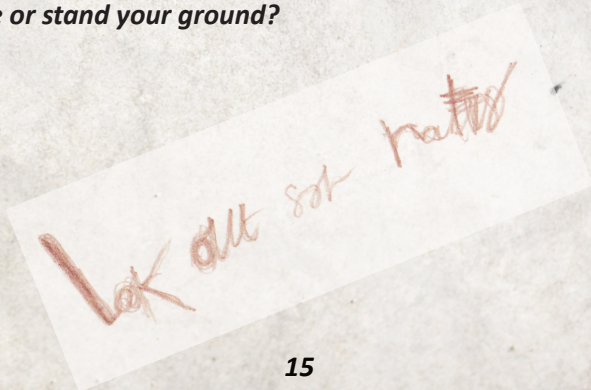
The Rat King is rumoured to be a human-like rat that stays in the dark. Kids around here say he can command rats and communicate with them, which lets him use them to keep an eye on people or to stalk his targets until he's ready to attack. So, if you're trying to hide from him, it's super tough when there are rats around, as they'll let him know where you are. According to those who have seen him, the only way to get him to leave you alone is to trap him, and like any typical rat, he has a weakness for cheese's.

Attempts to Hide from the Rat King increases the TN by 2. Using cheese to lure him into a trap reduces the TN by 2.

Introduction Scene

As soon as you start to open the door, the awful odour of spoiled cheese fills the air, making you feel like you might be sick. Once you manage to open the door more, you're greeted by complete darkness until you can turn on a torch.

When the light moves around the room, you notice hundreds of small, shiny eyes looking right at you, along with a larger pair from a human-sized, rat-like being sitting on a big wooden chair that looks like it's been bitten by thousands of tiny teeth. Suddenly, the rat-like creature jumps off its chair and begins to approach you in a menacing way. Do you escape or stand your ground?



THE FISH BOY

You know how the older kids used to say that you'd catch a whiff of Fish Boy before you actually saw him? He has this really fishy smell, and his wet, clawed, webbed hands and feet make a slapping sound on the stone as he crawls out of whatever water he's hiding in. They say he's like a fish that walks on two legs, with sharp teeth and a craving for kids. Nobody really knows where he comes from or if he's even a boy, but what they do know is that if you can avoid him long enough, he'll go back to the water, only able to come on land for a little while.

Trying to take on The Fish Boy is risky because of his sharp claws and teeth; he's definitely going to put up a tough battle. When you fight him, raise the target number by 2. The farther away the players are from where they first meet Fish Boy, the easier it is to fight him since he's not as close to his water. Each time he appears after the first reduce the TN by 1.

Introduction Scene

An enormous archway rises up above you, and you can hear the echo of dripping water, along with splashes and footsteps. Then, without warning, a loud screeching sound erupts as a heavy iron grate falls behind you, blocking the path.

All of a sudden, the disgusting smell of brine and fish pulls you back from your shock of being trapped, and you can hear footsteps splashing closer. What will you choose to do?

Splish! Splash!
Splish! Splash!

THE ALIEN MOULD

You've been warned that down there, it's not only ghosts and monsters that pose a threat. In the darkest corners of the rooms, there's a strange mould that seems to pulse and even shift a little. It tries to grab onto the living and gradually drains them. But it dislikes bright lights, and some say it reacts painfully to fire.

Tests to move through or escape rooms filled with the Alien Mould increase their TN by 2. Using your phone to take pictures with the Flash setting will let you move without making it difficult but reduce the battery life by an extra d6. Successful uses of fire to fight the mould will get rid of it making the room safer for a while.

Introduction Scene

The door feels kind of hard to push open, and when you step inside, it's completely dark. There's a really strong musty smell that makes it hard to breathe. As you take a clumsy step, you hear something crunch beneath your feet.

With your torch in hand, you scan the area and find the walls are smeared with a dark, fuzzy mould that seems to writhe under the light. Looking down, you notice bones scattered everywhere, all covered in the same mould that looks like it's trying to reach out to you. What's your next move?

It GROWS IN THE
DARK

THE MANNEQUINS

Legend has it that in the 1800s, a woman lived in this house. She was a seamstress celebrated for her exquisite dresses. Yet, over time, several women went missing. Days later, the police found their bodies, posed like mannequins in beautiful gowns stained with blood. Rumour has it that there's a room in the house where these mannequins are kept, and they can strike when you're not looking. But if you look directly at them, they get shy and remain completely still.

Failed alertness tests around the mannequins result in receiving more damage than usual. Increase the damage taken by failed tests by 2. As long as the characters move carefully or come up with some other way to make the mannequins feel like they're always being watched they don't need to worry.

Introduction Scene

At first glance, the room looks really calm. It's organised with a desk, an old sewing machine, scissors, thread, fabric, and needles all in order. There are vintage dresses hanging on wooden rails, and the mannequins scattered around are wearing similar outfits.

Even though the mannequins don't have faces or eyes, they still give you a creepy feeling like someone is watching you. Their waxy skin and limbs are unsettling, and when you blink, you could swear some of their heads have moved just a tiny bit.



HELLHOUND

The other kids burst into laughter when you said you'd use the front door. When you asked them why, they explained that the Hellhound guarding the place for the Stranger would eat you alive. This monster has three heads and a craving for fresh meat. On the other hand, entering through the basement is a safer choice, even with whatever else might be down there. But hey, you might get lucky and the hellhound could respond to a goofy name like 'Cupcake' or 'Teacup' and turn out to be friendly.

The Hellhound is flat out dangerous with multiple heads, massive muscles and heightened senses trying to avoid it is nearly impossible. All tests increase their TN by 2. However if you can find out the beasts true name it'll be an obedient puppy.

Introduction Scene

You've made it into the house, and it doesn't seem like much time has passed, or maybe it's been a whole day since the sun is still setting outside. The air feels much better here, but the kitchen looks really old. Just when you think you can relax, you hear a growl and some barking from another room, and it's getting closer. You're so close to getting away—what's your next move?



THE STRANGER

People refer to them as The Stranger because nobody in town really knows who they are. They come and go from that spooky house, but no one ever gets a clear look at them. The descriptions are all over the place. Some say he's a young, charming guy, while others claim he's a bitter old man who despises the young. Some say they're a pleasant woman that could easily be a mum or auntie and who makes you feel safe until it's too late. The only thing you know for sure is that you don't want to run into The Stranger.

If The Stranger comes into play, it typically indicates that the Doom Clock has reached its limit, resulting in every test having a TN of 12. This makes it really hard and dangerous to escape. The GM will set a number of successful tests the group needs to complete to escape, usually one for each character, but you can change that depending on the difficulty level you want for the game.

The Stranger can appear any place in the Basement or the house. The characters will hear them calling out and asking if someone is there. That they don't need to hide or be scared.

GAME DIFFICULTY

Dread in the Basement is a difficult game. The odds can seem stacked against the characters, horror stories after all seldom have happy endings. However the GM can adjust the difficulty in a few ways.

The first way involves setting a game difficulty, this impacts the starting Health each character begins with.

Health Difficulty

For an Easier game let the players start with 15 Health instead of 12. For more difficult games consider reducing this to 10 or even 6 if you really want to be mean.

Target Numbers

You can also adjust the Target Numbers to make the start of the game a little easier, going to 7 or even 6 at the start until you start introducing monsters.

Starting Items

Considering letting each player decide on a single 3 use item that they have on them to begin the game. Just make sure it makes sense that their character would be carrying such an item.

REMEMBER TO HAVE FUN

Always remember that the essence of Role Playing games lies in having fun and crafting stories together with friends. No matter if you're the GM or a Player, be attentive to the feelings of your fellow participants.

In the midst of all the excitement, it's common for some individuals to feel a bit overwhelmed, especially in a horror game where certain elements might be unsettling. If you observe this happening, take a moment to pause the game, check in with the player or players who seem distressed, and once you resume, consider adjusting the game play to ensure they feel more at ease and can fully enjoy the experience.

It may be helpful to discuss this before starting the game to ensure that everyone is comfortable with the horror theme and understands that their characters may face difficult situations.

It might be helpful to introduce an X Card for the players at the table. This card, marked with an X, allows a player to signal if they are experiencing something uncomfortable or distressing. When a player places the X Card down, the GM should pause the game, check in with the player to ensure their well-being, and then smoothly transition to the next scene without focusing on the issue that prompted the card's use.



NAME:	AGE:
-------	------

TACTICS	
---------	--

ALERTNESS	
-----------	--

BRAVERY	
---------	--

ATHLETICS	
-----------	--



HEALTH



BATTERY

ITEMS

NOTES

AN OLD HOUSE STANDS AT THE FAR END OF THE STREET, AND IT'S BEEN THERE FOREVER. PEOPLE SAY A MYSTERIOUS STRANGER LIVES THERE, BUT THEY HARDLY EVER TALK TO ANYONE IN THE TOWN.

PEOPLE SAY THAT THE HOUSE WAS BUILT ON A SITE WHERE EXECUTIONS HAPPENED, AND THAT THERE ARE OLD HOSPITAL OR ASYLUM LEVELS UNDER THE BASEMENT. SOME BELIEVE IT WAS ONCE HOME TO A SERIAL KILLER, OR THAT A YOUNG GIRL DIED THERE ALL BY HERSELF. OTHERS THINK ALIENS USE IT FOR COVER, OR THAT SECRET LABS HAVE CONDUCTED WEIRD EXPERIMENTS MIXING ANIMAL AND HUMAN DNA. THESE ARE ALL LOCAL LEGENDS THAT HAVE BEEN SHARED THROUGH THE YEARS.

THE HOUSE DEFINITELY HAS ITS OWN TRADITION. EVERY FRIDAY THE 13TH OR HALLOWEEN, LOCAL TEENS CHALLENGE EACH OTHER TO SNEAK INTO THE BASEMENT THROUGH A BACK WINDOW AND BRING BACK SOMETHING TO SHOW THEY DID IT.

IN FACT YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE TEENAGERS!

THIS BOOK HAS EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO PLAY OR HOST A GAME OF DREAD IN THE BASEMENT. IT INCLUDES RULES FOR MAKING CHARACTERS, HOW THE GAME SYSTEM OPERATES, AND INFO ABOUT THE DIFFERENT SUPERNATURAL BEINGS YOU MIGHT MEET. JUST GRAB SOME DICE, A PENCIL, PAPER, AND A COUPLE OF FRIENDS!



STORY
WORKS



COMMUNITY
FUND



Child and Family Therapies