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INTRODUCTION: WAKING DREAMS



INTRODUCTION



Gregory dug in his heels, putting all 68 of his pounds behind them. The snow from last night crunched under his weight and soaked through the canvas of his secondhand shoes. He bit his upper teeth into his bottom lip and focused hard on the faint glint in the distance. The boy strained his ears to hear. Beyond the rush of the winter wind, the beast's distinctive growl was cold and clear.

The boy closed his eyes, putting everything he had into hearing the creature. He knew seeing it didn't do any good. Like chasing a springtime rainbow, your eyes only worked against you.

The growl turned into a moan turned into words on the wind. The boy's ear perked up as they caught the creature's threat.

"I'm gonna eat you, boy," the beast said.

The boy's breath caught in his throat. He fought back a cough as the chilly February air burned his throat.

"I'm not scared of you," the boy said, mostly for his own sake. "You're just a dog. Not a monster. Just a dog."

A howl in the distance. Gregory's eyes opened before he could stop them. The creature was on the ridge now, not a hundred feet from where the boy was standing. A clutch of bare trees stood behind Gregory. If he ran into them, it might be harder for the beast to find him. But Gregory didn't know these woods. He didn't know anything about where he was. He'd only opened a door and rushed out. He hadn't had time to think about where it might lead him.

The dog hadn't been just a dog then. It had been something else. Gregory wasn't sure why it changed when its skin hit sunlight.

"No," Gregory corrected himself. "It didn't change. It's just a dog."

"And you're just a boy," the beast replied.

Gregory swallowed hard. He could feel cold moisture on the rim of his eyes. His father always told him there was never a need for a boy to cry. Boys grew into men, and men had to be hard. Gregory wasn't so sure about that. He fought back the tears anyway.

"I'm not scared of you!" Gregory said, this time louder. "I'm not! I'm not scared of you!"

The black lips of the beast curled into a grin. Hot drool traced the jagged line of its misshapen teeth. Human eyes inset on a canine skull narrowed.

"Yes, you are," the creature said, mocking him. "After all, your fear made me."

Knowing Fear

The world is a scary place, especially for children. The world around them is strange, full of rules that seem to be always changing. There are so many things they can't do, they can't

say, they aren't allowed to talk about or see. The world to them is an open door leading to a room they can only enter in tiny steps.

The world they live in is full of rules but those rules are not their own.

But in their dreams, in their imaginations there are no rules. No boundaries. No curfews, no bedtime. They can play in the mud, dance in the rain, fly through the clouds. They are free from all the rules that restrict their daily lives.

These dreams give life to so many things: flights of fancy, fairy tales, and the distant realms only an untamed imagination can unlock. A vast world. A world full of doors.

Behind these doors are knights and princesses, high castles guarded by dragons, magic railways, young warriors with mystical creatures held captive in brightly-colored orbs, young wizards and witches whose daily drudgery is made tolerable because they are learning magic, not boring old math or history. It is a world where childhood has no limits and where the kids are kings and queens, superheroes, astronauts, and more.

But behind these doors, something else lies. Beyond the towering mystical spires that stretch toward the heavens, past the gruff and grumbling ogres whose rough exteriors belie their generous hearts, deep in the shadows, where the even the rats don't go, are monsters.

These monsters are born of fear, of belief, of the world to which children escape when the real world becomes too confusing, too confining, for them. When there is too much pain or frustration, the children twist those feelings inward, tying them into knots. And when the knots unravel, a monster is born.

These are not fictional, fanciful creatures. These are not make-believe menaces. These monsters are real. They are alive. They crawl and breathe and claw and grab and scream into the wind. They hunger and hunt and track and kill. Their eyes glow red beneath the bed. Their dagger-like fingers scratch at the floorboards, peeling away soft wood with every scrape of a nail. They break toys and they break bones. They dirty up rooms and they dirty up minds. They shut the latches tight. They shatter windows and door frames. They whisper naughty little ideas into gentle minds drifting off to sleep.

Adults don't see them so don't believe they exist. Truth is, these monsters can only be seen by those who have the capacity to believe. By those whose minds are not caged by rational thought. But that doesn't mean we're all safe.

Though born of it, these monsters are not confined to the worlds of imagination. They have a home outside the minds of cautious children. It is a place of darkness, abandonment, loneliness, and misplaced trust. Empty playgrounds sit in perpetual darkness with swings that sway lazily out of habit while twisted vines pull the metal off the monkey bars.

Forgotten flags flap in the still wind. Shadows appear suddenly just on the other side of the window—then disappear just as quickly. Squeals of laughter dissolve into screams before all is replaced—suddenly—by silence.

In the emptiness of an old house, children hear it.

In the darkness under the bed, children see it.

It is the glint in a strange dog's eyes. The uneasy grin of a passing stranger. The space between a child's smile and his mother's heart.

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It is the shaking of tree limbs seen in a lightning flash. It is the old toy once thought missing that reappears out of nowhere—broken. It sits at the dinner table where a parent should be. It is the cackle of the schoolyard bully. It is the dividing line between childhood and adulthood.

It is the place you can't see once you've decided to grow up.

It is a place called Closetland. It is a child's Hell.

Things That Go Bump

Monsters take all sorts of shapes and forms. There are those who are tentacled beasts, with gaping maws and slavering jaws, clutching claws who attack without pause. There are those who hide inside other things: the possessed dog at the junkyard whose throaty howls ring out from miles away; the gurgling beast that lives in the sump pump whose burbling moans echo through the pipes; the cold-eyed stranger on the long walk home who glares at you with suspicion and threat; the dolly on the nightstand who refuses to sit up straight and who, you swear, giggles when the moon is just right; the grass around the gravestone that you feel wrapping up your ankles when you get too close.

Monsters often hide in plain sight. That is what makes it so easy for grown-ups to not see them, to dismiss the fanciful stories told by children, to tut-tut and hush-now whenever their young son or daughter tells them a story that goes beyond their belief.

Sometimes, even other children cannot see the monsters. Children who haven't the time to be children, who must grow up and burden their hearts to childish things. There are even some children who have already seen too many monsters and simply cannot stomach seeing any more.

Those Who Fight Back

But the monsters do not go unopposed. There are children who are strong enough, smart enough, brave enough, or simply foolish enough to stand against them. Sometimes these children are brave boys and girls—those who know the monsters are real and seek them out wherever they may hide—but just as often they are would-be victims who find their hidden resolve and manage, despite themselves, to stand against the monsters.

This game is about those children. Whether they are questing knights or just unlucky enough to be in a certain place at a certain time, they are all heroes. And you will tell their stories.

Tone and Setting

Little Fears Nightmare Edition is about people coming together to create spooky and compelling stories. It is a dark and fantastical game where everyday kids come face-to-face with monsters both real and imagined. It is up to the players to determine who those children are, what monsters those children will face, and how those stories will unfold.

No matter their history or environment, the characters are all heroes. They may be reluctant, foolhardy, naive, or timid, but they will all find their inner strength and the courage to use it. They have to, or the monsters will win.

The inspiration for the monsters can come from a variety of places. They can be creatures from myth or literature (such as vampires, yetis, trolls, harpies, Frankenstein's monster, or an evil sorcerer bent on world domination) or from your own wicked imagination (rules are provided so you can create any monster you dream up). You

can pull ideas from real world horrors that are “ripped from the headlines” (such as kidnapping or child labor) but, given that it’s not only a horror game but a horror game featuring kids as the main characters, always be mindful of your players—both their limits and their personal histories. No one needs to have a painful memory laid out on the table.

That being said, this game does touch on some dark matters. It is not done to exploit or trivialize those matters but to give meaning and contrast to the light. Even in the most dire circumstances, the most dreadful situations, there is hope. And it is that hope that the characters must cling to in order to push back the monsters and win the battle.

The assumed setting for the fiction and references in this book is modern day America but you are not required or confined to set your stories in the here and now. I’m writing from that perspective because it’s what I know but obviously there are children all over the world. And the struggles they face are unique to their region, political environment, cultural standards, media influence, traditions, and history. No matter the where, no matter the who, no matter the when, the themes and struggles in this game are both universal and timeless. I’ve personally run games in the 1980s (the era of my own youth), the 90s, and today. I’ve run games set in the rural country, the inner city, and the upscale suburbs. When building a scenario and creating characters, have in mind not only the when and where but the who, what, and why. Don’t worry about the how, that’s what the system is for. But all the rest is up to your group.

A Game of Stories

If you have never played a story game before, welcome. I’ve written this game in the hopes that both experienced and brand-new players will be able to read and understand the premise, setting, and rules with minimal studying or memorization. If you’re new to story games, here’s a quick primer to help you understand what’s happening in this book.

Inside this book, you will find a setting and a collection of rules that you and your friends will use to tell a story together. The premise, the basic idea, is that there are monsters only children can see and only children can fight. The players take the part of those children and they are the focus of this game.

It is called a story game because it’s both a storytelling device and a game. The main goal is to have a great time, to immerse yourself in fiction for a few hours, and connect and engage with characters and their struggles, setbacks, and triumphs. That’s the story part. There are rules as to when and how something will happen and who will succeed. That’s the game part.

You need at least two people to play this game. One of these people will be the game moderator and she will have a special job. The rest—and a group of three to four people is ideal in my experience—are called players. Players create characters and contribute to the story through those characters. Creating a character should be fun—and it is even more fun when all the characters are made together. These characters are called player characters or PCs because, as you can guess, they’re characters designed and controlled by the players. Every player should have a copy of the character sheet (found at the back of this book and also at www.littlefears.com) which will make creating a character faster and easier. Every character needs his own sheet.

One of the players is going to be the game moderator or GM. Her job is to help guide the story and also to portray the other characters, both human and monster, that

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are in the story. These characters are called game moderator characters or GMCs. The GM also has the responsibility of injecting the environment into the story. By that, I mean the game moderator has tools that help her respond to what characters wish to do. Throughout the story, the characters will be opposed, by other characters and by situations. They will face challenges and overcome obstacles. Otherwise, their victory or defeat lacks substance or meaning.

Imagine you're all making a film (this won't be the last time I draw parallels between the two). The players are the actors and they're portraying (in words, not actions) the characters in the film. The game moderator is the director, setting the scenes and putting certain player characters in the spotlight at certain times. Both the players and the game moderator will collaborate on the screenwriting. A player will speak for his character, improvising dialogue and deciding how his character will act in a variety of different situations. The game moderator will act as everyone who isn't a player character. The rules determine who acts and speaks at what time and what happens when characters disagree or act against each other. We'll get to the details of this in the next chapter.

There is no winner in this game though characters will be rewarded for doing well. The game moderator's primary duty is to oppose the actions of the characters and to test the decision-making skills of the players. The game moderator is not the enemy even if she does oppose the characters and control the monsters. Every person at the table shares the goal of telling a great story. They just serve different roles in accomplishing that.

Everything else you need to know about Little Fears Nightmare Edition can be found within these pages. If you have any questions, visit www.littlefears.com. You'll find contact information and further resources there.

Welcome to the treehouse. Now let's tell some scary stories.

What You Need to Play

In order to play Little Fears Nightmare Edition, you will need the following:

Basic Understanding of the Rules

What you should read is covered below, but having working knowledge of the basic rules and goals of play will save you a lot of time you'd otherwise spend flipping pages.

Pencil, Paper, and Dice

Every player should have a character sheet and everyone will need a pencil as well (or erasable pen). The game moderator will need copies of the monster and GMC sheets.

Every player (and the game moderator) will need some six-sided dice. These can be purchased anywhere, if you don't already have a sack full of them. Hit up the local hobby shop, board game store, or the party supply aisle of your local megamart to find them. As players will often be rolling dice at the same time, it's a good idea for everyone to have their own set. A supply of 8-10 six-sided dice per player is good.

Friends

This is a not a single-player game so having some friends to play with is essential. This game can be played face-to-face around a table or hanging out in a living room but can also be played online via chat clients such as Skype. Whichever way you and your friends are comfortable playing is fine.



Using This Book

This book is designed to tell you everything you need to know, in a manner that makes sense. Here is the rundown of what you will find within these pages and how to use that information.

The Chapters

This book is broken into seven chapters (including this introduction). The chapters are, in order:

Introduction: Waking Dreams

You're reading this right now (and it's almost over). This is an overview of the fictional world of Little Fears Nightmare Edition as well as the game elements you'll run into throughout the rest of the book. The other chapters delve into each in more detail.

Chapter One: It's Just a Game

Chapter One details the rules of play. Almost everything you need to know in order to play the game is in here.

Chapter Two: To Be Young Again

Chapter Two covers character concept and creation. It is designed to give the players everything they need to both create and portray a character with guidelines, advice, and examples along the way.

Chapter Three: Someone to Watch Over Me

This chapter talks about the game moderator and her role in the game. It has advice on constructing and running sessions as well as guidelines for customizing the game rules to suit different tones and settings.

Chapter Four: It's a Big World Out There

Chapter Four is the first of two chapters that detail the world of Little Fears Nightmare Edition. It covers the "real world" and has advice on using it as a character in the game. It also talks about those the children can call on for help, should their paths cross.

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Chapter Five: Behind the Door

Chapter Five is the second of the two setting chapters and is all about Closetland, the twisted reality that is home to all the things that go bump in the night. It covers what Closetland is like, how kids get there, and how monsters get here as well as some of the people and places found within. This chapter includes all the rules for making and playing monsters.

Chapter Six: Spooky Stories

This game is a toolset designed to help you tell your own stories with your own characters. This chapter has more information and advice on creating stories and includes a selection of pre-generated characters, a full scenario titled “The House of Apple Court,” and some adventure seeds to get your creative juices flowing. These seeds will also give you a starting point should a few friends show up and say, “Hey, feel like running a game tonight?”

What You Need to Read

If you are a player, Chapters One and Two cover everything you need to know. If you are the game moderator, you should read Chapters One, Two, Three and the last part of Five to get all the rules you need to know. Chapters Four, Six and the first part of Five have a lot of advice and ideas but are not absolutely essential to play.

Nothing in this book is off-limits. If you are a player who likes surprises though, it's better you avoid reading past Chapter Two.

The Nightmare Edition

If you played the original Little Fears, prepare yourself for a different take on the same premise. The Nightmare Edition uses a game system that incorporates familiar ideas but was newly built from the ground up. The world of Little Fears has changed drastically. Closetland still exists but is different than what was presented in the original edition. No matter the changes, Little Fears is still the game of childhood terror. The corebook you're reading right now is centered on campfire tales but there are a wide variety of stories to be told with this game and in this world.

Whether you are a fan of the original, someone giving Little Fears a second shot, a person new to the game (or new to story games in general), I hope you find a frightfully good time within these pages.

CHAPTER ONE: IT'S ALL JUST A GAME



sample file

CHAPTER ONE



In this chapter, we'll talk about how Little Fears Nightmare Edition is played, how the game works, and all the rules you need to know. This chapter should be read by players and game moderators alike as it will take you through everything you need to know about how to run and play the game.

After you're familiar with this chapter, players can go ahead and read Chapter Two. That will give players everything they need to know for their part in the game. Game moderators should read Chapter Two as well so they can offer advice on character creation and help the group form a collective whole.

PART ONE: PLAY BASICS

A story game is unique in that there is no board or deck of cards like you usually find in a game. That is not to say this game does not require certain items and a basic understanding of particular concepts. Here are the basics with which you should become familiar.

Players and the Game Moderator

We defined players and the game moderator in the Introduction. Before a session begins, the group should decide who is going to be a player and who is going to be the game moderator. This chapter will go into detail as to the responsibilities of each so that everyone can get familiar before they decide. I find 2 to 4 players is an ideal number but there is no minimum beyond 1 and there is no maximum.

Of course, just because a person was game moderator for one session, episode, or season of the game doesn't mean she always has to be. But it will probably be easiest for the first couple sessions if the same person is the game moderator and the others are players.

Characters and Sheets

Each player will have his own character. For this, I recommend using the sheets at the end of this book or found online. The sheets will let you easily track everything you need to know about your character.

The game moderator has her own characters so she will need GMC sheets, monster sheets, and possibly the episode sheet for reference.

Dice and Tokens

The only type of dice used in this game are standard six-sided dice. You can find these in most game and hobby stores. If you don't have a game store near you, they are also sold near the playing cards in mass-market retailers and party supply shops. Whenever there is a reference to dice, it's always talking about the standard six-sided kind.

Tokens are also used in this game. The most you will need is ten per player and a stack for the game moderator as well. These don't have to be anything fancy. I recommend pennies (found in pockets, couches, and jars), poker chips (found near the dice at those mass-market retailers), or glass beads or stones (that can be found in craft stores).

Sessions, Episodes, and Seasons

Whenever your group sits down to play the game, that's a session. It usually lasts 2 to 4 hours. A session can cover a single conflict, resolve a personal issue, or a long sequence of events. What's important to know is that when we talk about a session in this book, it means that 2 to 4 hour span where the group is seated around the table.

When we talk about an episode, we're talking about a complete story, same as television. It's quite possible, and for some likely, that each session will cover an entire episode but that's not necessarily true. A single episode may span multiple sessions.

A season is like its television namesake: it's a bunch of episodes that feature the same characters and setting and are at least tangentially connected. They might be strung together by a recurring plot or enemy, group of characters, or they might share a location. Throughout a season, a character will change and grow from episode to episode and will likely resolve some major issue or challenge particular to him or the group.

PART TWO: SETTING UP THE GAME

Before the first session, the players and the game moderator should sit down and make characters. It's alright for a player to bring an established or already-made character to a game but it's important that the group is able to talk about the characters before the game begins. They should discuss how their characters know each other, establish relationships, and go over the premise of the episode.

Character creation can be a session all to itself or done right before everyone plays for the first time. Character creation is found in the next chapter but we'll discuss how parts work as we go through the system.

Player Prep

For each session, a player should have a character sheet. Along with the character, it's a good idea to have a pencil and own set of six-sided dice (ten dice should be fine).

Game Moderator Prep

The game moderator needs to do a little bit of work before each episode. She fills out the episode sheet and creates the characters she plans to use (GMCs as well as monsters). Advice and instruction on all this is in Chapter Three (GMCs) and Chapter Five (monsters). For each session, she will bring these to the table along with her own dice and a stack of tokens.

Assembling It

Once everyone has done their prep, there isn't a lot of set up to do. Each player should get out his dice and character sheet. The game moderator should get her episode sheet, GMCs and monsters, and her dice. It's a good idea for a GM to have blank GMC and monster sheets available in case she needs to create something on the fly.

At the beginning of the game, the game moderator gives each player a number of tokens equal to his character's Belief. With that done, let the game begin.

CHAPTER ONE

PART THREE: SCENES AND ROUNDS

As has been stated, Little Fears Nightmare Edition is a game where folks come together to tell a great story. Stories have characters and opposition and drama as well as structure. With this game, the players and game moderator tell a story through a sequence of scenes. The game moderator sets up the scene and sets in place the goal of the scene. It is up to the players to resolve the scene. Scenes that focus on time-sensitive tasks, such as combat, include rounds wherein each character acts once per round.

Scenes & Scene Goals

In this game, how the story unfolds is controlled (or at least heavily-influenced) by everyone at the table. The game moderator's job is to set the initial scene, have a basic framework for the entire story in mind, and help move the narrative along. The initial scene will be a few sentences or a short paragraph of setup or exposition. *"You arrive at the train station. It's well after midnight and the sky is heavily overcast. If it weren't for the occasional street lamp, you wouldn't be able to see anything at all. Everything is dark inside the station except for a small light—maybe a desk lamp—glowing softly in a room beyond the teller window. What do you do?"*

The player's job is to control and speak for a main character, devise ways to solve puzzles and problems, interact with others characters, confront the enemies, and help tell a story. In order for that to all come together as planned, the story plays out in scenes. Just as with a film or scripted television show, it isn't about meandering characters or pointless dialogue going far and leading nowhere. It's about drama and tension, active protagonists doing things, and characters acting and reacting to what's happening around them.

Rounds/Turns

Some actions call for a finely-tuned way to deal with time. A single action can make all the difference in fighting and footraces, for example. For these types of scenes, we use rounds and turns. A round is when everyone involved in the scene gets an action. That action is done on the player's turn. In the story that's being told, the actions will probably happen simultaneously. But each action needs to be resolved separately and having everyone roll dice at the same time—especially against a shared opponent—can be confusing and more hassle than it's worth.

The easiest way to resolve these actions is to go in a circle. The player to the left of the GM goes first, with actions being resolved in order clockwise from that player with the GM going last, if she's involved. Once everyone has had a turn, the round is over.

The game moderator can use rounds as a means for adding tension to a game. By saying something such as *"The devil dog is hot on your heels. It knows you're in the treehouse and is running full speed towards it. You have four rounds before it gets to you. What do you do?"* This gives a sense of immediacy to the players' actions with a very real consequence if they don't get off their duffs and do something.

PART FOUR: HEART OF THE SYSTEM

Before we delve into the system, we need to speak briefly about characters. The next chapter is dedicated to creating them but since we'll be talking about them, here are a few good things to know.

Player characters have Abilities, Qualities, Virtues, and Stuff. Those cover your character as far as how he relates to the system. We will talk about each in more detail as they come up in this chapter.

Game moderator characters may or may not have all those things. For the purpose of this chapter, we will assume they are made and act the same as the player characters.

Monsters have these same elements as well though the names and functions of some of them are different.

The Order of Things

Here is a primer on the order and flow of this game that will help give context to everything you're about to read.

1. The GM sets up a scene. She includes atmosphere, mood, other characters, and implies the goal of the scene. She ends by asking the players, "What do you do?"
2. Each player says what his character is doing—including the GM!
3. When a character action causes conflict or tests a skill, a roll or "check" is made.
4. The check results in either success or failure on the character's part.
5. The result of the roll is described and incorporated into the scene.
6. Steps 2-5 repeat as the characters go about the scene.
7. When the scene is resolved, the GM sets up the next scene.

That is, in its purest state, how this game operates. Now, to the rules.

When to Use the Dice

When the outcome of an action can yield either dramatic success or dramatic failure, the game moderator should ask the player to roll dice. This is called a check and there are three different types that are detailed further in this chapter. Every action taken by a character has a chance for success or failure—even walking or writing on a blackboard—but a check is only needed when the task pushes a character's Abilities to the limit (such as leaping across a wide gap or racing a bike up a muddy hill) or when the task's failure would be just as dramatically interesting as its success (such as combat which could lead to character change or death).

Who Narrates What

We call anything that happens in a scene "narrative." The story part of this story game comes from the narrative. The ultimate goal is, were the game session transcribed, it would sound like a story. What needs to be addressed is who controls which part of that narrative.

The rule of thumb is that the GM handles narration for the world and her characters (including monsters) and each player controls narration for his character. After a successful check, for instance, the player would describe his character's success in accordance with the how well he rolled. (A high level of success allows for a grandiose description while a narrow success would mean the characters succeeded but barely.) This acts as setup for the GM to finish with a few lines of reaction from the world.

After a failed check, the GM begins the narrative describing how the character was bested. The player finishes the narrative with how his character responds to that failure.

CHAPTER ONE

Task vs. Conflict

There are two basic types of challenges: a task and a conflict. Think of a task as the battle and a conflict as the war. If two kids are fighting on the playground, every individual punch and kick is a task but the brawl itself is a conflict. One kid trying to outrun another: every few feet is a task but the entire race is a conflict. It's all a matter of scope.

In this game, you'll use the system to resolve both. You determine the appropriateness of which to use based primarily on pacing. If it's a tense scene and you want to stretch it out, resolve the individual tasks. If a kid is attempting to sneak into the school after hours to take a peek at his grades, you may want to resolve each task separately: getting inside; making his way through the halls; avoiding the janitor; getting into the classroom; picking the cabinet lock. In a movie, that would be a tense scene and there would be an obstacle every step of the way: the doors are alarmed; there are motion-activated lights; the janitor is jumpy and always has his eyes open for trouble; the classroom is locked; the cabinet is jammed—even after the lock is picked. This is a scene where each task has tension and failure could lead to as much drama as success would.

If you want a faster-paced game, you resolve the conflict. Using the above scenario, you'd have the player roll to see if they got the file. The other details would be left out or glossed over.

When it comes to choosing task versus conflict, remember that pacing and drama are the key points to consider.

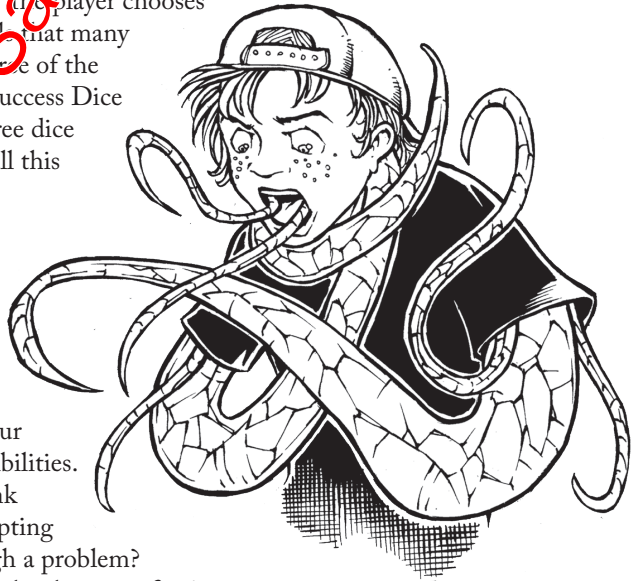
Rolling Dice

Whether task or conflict, all are resolved by rolling dice. There are three types of rolls in the game: Quizzes (unopposed rolls), Tests (opposed rolls), and Exams (sustained rolls). All rolls use the same foundation: the player chooses an Ability, adds a Quality, and rolls that many six-sided dice. The player picks three of the dice (usually the highest) as the Success Dice for the roll. The totals of those three dice are added together. Let's look at all this further.

Pick an Ability

Player characters have five Abilities: Move, Fight, Think, Speak, Care. Each states plainly what a character can attempt to do in any given situation. When you are asked to roll for your character, you pick one of these Abilities.

When choosing an Ability, think about what the character is attempting to do. Is he trying to think through a problem? Is he trying something athletic? Is he throwing fists?



Is he attempting to comfort a friend? Is he trying to convince his parents to let him stay out late? Anything a child can do falls under one of these five Abilities. The player gets a number of dice equal to the rating in that Ability.

So if your character has a Fight of 4, you get four dice. If he has a Think of 2, you get two dice. Whatever the number, grab that many dice and put them in front of you.

Hard Choices

If your character is attempting something that could conceivably fall under two or more Abilities, think about what the child is trying to accomplish. If he is at an archery competition, aiming for that little red dot on the target, using Move is a good choice. If he is lowering a crossbow loaded with freshly-sharpened wooden pencils at a bloodsucking vampire, use Fight. If you can't figure out a single Ability, either refocus what your character is going to do or pick the highest Ability of the ones that could apply.

Pick a Quality

Qualities define things a player character can do. Think of them as skills, hobbies, and talents all rolled into one. In play, it's likely that you'll choose a course of action that your child has some experience with or previous knowledge of or aptitude in. That only makes sense; it's something we all do in real life: We play to our strengths. I don't try to fly to the mall; I drive. You, as the player, will likely make similar choices for your character.

In this game, the purpose of those Qualities is not only to help define your character and give you a sense of who that character is, but also to aid him during play. When your character has a Quality that is relevant to an action he is attempting, you add dice for that Quality to the Ability.

A Quality adds 1, 2, or 3 Dice to the roll (you'll know beforehand as this is decided during character creation). So when a Quality applies, grab that many more six-sided dice and put them with the ones you got from your Ability. You'll roll all of them together.

Hard (Quality) Choices

As with Abilities, there may be times when two or more Qualities apply to a situation. In these cases, you only get to add the dice for one of the Qualities. System-wise, the one you choose doesn't matter but it can affect how the success or failure plays out in the story.

No matter what you're attempting, you can only use one Quality in a single roll.

Rolling Just a Quality

There are instances, such as when a character's Wits has dropped low, where you may not be able to use one of your character's Abilities. In those cases, if the character has a Quality that applies, you may still roll the dice you get from the character's Quality, even if they are the only dice you roll.

If No Qualities Make Sense

There are circumstances in which the character will not have a relevant Quality. His options have dwindled, he's way out of his comfort zone, and he's being forced to improvise. From a dramatic standpoint, that's awesome. Though it does make life harder for the character.

If your kid does not have a relevant Quality, then you need to use just the Ability. It decreases your chances but, with open-ended sixes on the Success Dice, nothing is impossible. Of course, that doesn't mean it won't be highly improbable.