Filling Out a Questionnaire

• The goal of filling out a questionnaire is not to create a character that will survive and thrive in any environment the host throws at you, but to create an interesting character that makes the story worthwhile participating in.
• Consider what sorts of flaws your character will have to heroically overcome and try to bring them out in your answers.
• If you are stuck on the answer to a certain question, move on and return to it later.
• If a question is unclear, ask the host for clarification or explanation.

As the title suggests, Dread is a game of horror, but it is also a game of hope. The thrill of Dread lies within the tension between desire and loss. You will take on the role of someone trapped in a story that is only as compelling as it is hostile—someone who will find themselves making the sorts of decisions we hope never to face in real life. Those who play will participate in a mutual telling of an original macabre tale. The goal of Dread is to sustain the delicate atmosphere that is necessary to produce the hand quivering emotion that lends its name to the game.

Dread is a game of the imagination, and a dark one at that. It should be said that Dread is not necessarily a game for everyone. While the main purpose of Dread, as well as that of any other game, is to have fun, Dread, like a good game of Truth or Dare, should make you uncomfortable from time to time. If this does not sound like fun, then please do not play Dread.

If, however, you desire a game that focuses on alienation, tension, anxiety, fear, and all those other delicious emotions that draw an audience of millions to horror novels, stories, comics, and movies each year, then by all means, enjoy.

Preparing for the Game:

• The host creates a unique character questionnaire for each of the players’ characters.
• The players then fill out the character questionnaires.
• The players should introduce their characters to the rest of the players.
• Do not reveal any information the other characters wouldn't know.
• Stack the tower and pre-pull 3 blocks for every player you have less than 5. (This is the only time a character isn’t lost when the tower tumbles.)

During the Game:

• The host describes all that happens to and around the characters.
• Players contribute by declaring what their characters are doing, whether they are controlled by a player or the host.
• Host: The player who creates the framework for the story, adjudicates conflict in the story, and controls all the other characters.
• Player: Generally speaking anyone playing Dread, but specifically those players who have only a single character and no hosting duties.
• Pull: The act of removing one block from the tower and placing it on the topmost level.
• Session: Each time a group of players gathers to play Dread.
• Story: An entire storyline that may be played over one or more sessions. Also referred to as a game.

Important Terms

• Character: The role the players adopt during a Dread game, as defined by their questionnaires. Or, anyone who populates the story being told, whether they are controlled by a player or the host.
• Host: The player who creates the framework for the story, adjudicates conflict in the story, and controls all the other characters.
• Player: Generally speaking anyone playing Dread, but specifically those players who have only a single character and no hosting duties.
• Pull: The act of removing one block from the tower and placing it on the topmost level.
• Questionnaire: A list of questions designed to flesh out the main characters of the story.
• Session: Each time a group of players gathers to play Dread.
• Story: An entire storyline that may be played over one or more sessions. Also referred to as a game.
• Tower: The basic metaphor of the Dread game. A stack of blocks that are pulled and restacked as the game progresses. A version is available commercially under the trade name Jenga®.

A Sample Questionnaire Template

• A question to establish profession, archetype, and/or hook
• A question about a specialty
• A question about a psychological weakness
• A question about appearance
• A question about a personality question
• A question about the character’s equipment
• A question about the character’s world view
• A question about a fear, phobia, or psychological weakness
• A question about the character’s habits and daily life

This is just an overview of the rules. Find out more, including where to buy the full rules, at www.tiltingatwindmills.net.

Dread Quick Reference © 2004 The Impossible Dream

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Abandoning the Pull:

- If there is time in the story to do so, the player may attempt to avoid the pull by changing the circumstances so that they are more beneficial, so that his or her character does not fail outright.
- If the circumstances change enough to make the task easily accomplishable, the character succeeds.
- Otherwise, the player may still be asked to pull (though possibly for a different reason).
- If the player pulls successfully, the character succeeds.
- If at any time during the game a player causes the tower to collapse, his or her character is removed from the game.
- If the character was attempting an action at the time, he or she fails.
- Exception: If the player deliberately knocks the tower over, his or her character succeeds in a dramatically appropriate way, but is still removed from the game.

Once the tower tumbles, re-stack it and pre-pull, as at the start, but with three additional blocks for every character removed from the game. (Characters can be removed if the tower tumbles during this re-stacking.)

Pulling:

- You must use 1 hand at a time, though you may switch hands at any time.
- The block being pulled must be from beneath the topmost complete level.
- After being pulled, the block must be placed atop the tower, laying in the opposite direction of the blocks in the level beneath it.
- Place the block within the topmost layer if it is incomplete.
- After placing the block on top, wait a few moments to see if the tower will collapse.
- Players may change their minds about what part of a complex action a particular pull represents at any time during the process.

Abandoning the Pull:

- At any time during this process, the player is allowed to abandon the pull.
- If a block has already been dislodged, it is not necessary to return it to its original place; it may be left partially pulled.
- If the player abandons a pull, the character fails at the action the pull represented.
- Players may change their minds about what part of a complex action a particular pull represents at any time during the process.

Ways to Remove a Character:

- Died.
- Fleed in terror.
- Fell into a catatonic state.
- Imprisoned.
- Called away to visit a sick loved one.
- Possessed by a malignant spirit.
- Monstrously transformed.
- Knocked unconscious.
- Trapped in a cave-in.
- Hospitalized.
- Called in to work a double shift.
- Dragged or incarcerated.
- Grounded by overprotective parents.
- Paralyzed.
- Prematurely aged by fear.
- Crippled in a car accident.
- Chased off by fellow characters because of poor manners.
- Arrived too late for the ship’s departure.
- Ejected from the hall for forging an invitation.
- Left to find a better career.
- Joined a cult.
- Regressed to a child-like state.
- Seized by a paranoia strong enough to cause him or her to fear the other characters.
- Realized that he or she was also putting his or her family in danger.
- Stricken with grief.
- Embarrassed to the point of flight.
- Or consumed with uncontrollable joy.

Conflict between Players’ Characters:

- It is recommended that this method not be used for most conflicts between players’ characters, especially verbal ones.
- When a character tries to do something to another character, the target can usually be assumed able to avoid it.
- If a player doesn’t want his or her character’s action to be avoided, he or she can risk one or more pulls from the tower.
- The player of the character who is willing to up the conflict should pull one or more blocks and declare his or her intentions towards the other character(s).
- The intended result of the pull can not be so drastic that it would remove the other character from the game. This is only possible through a collapsed tower.
- The player of the target must either accept the intended result, or pull to defend.
- If this player then decides to retaliate, he or she has the option to pull again and declare his or her intentions against the other character(s).
- This process continues until one side refuses to pull, or the tower collapses.
- If the tower collapses during this conflict, the character of the player responsible is removed from the game.

Elective Pulls:

- Players always have the option to pull a block without being asked to. There are a number of reasons why one may want to do this. It usually represents the player’s character putting forth more effort than he or she would normally put forth on a given task, but can also represent dumb luck, fate smiling upon the character, or some other subtle form of fortunate intervention. The player should indicate just in what way the extra effort is being used, or how luck shines upon the character, but the host ultimately decides how it affects the story.

Creating a Questionnaire

- The characters need questions that define their strengths and limits.
- The story needs questions that help the characters through some of the foreseeable hardships or circumstances.
- Creating questionnaires is more art than science.
- Players always have the option to pull a block without being asked to. There are a number of reasons why one may want to do this. It usually represents the player’s character putting forth more effort than he or she would normally put forth on a given task, but can also represent dumb luck, fate smiling upon the character, or some other subtle form of fortunate intervention. The player should indicate just in what way the extra effort is being used, or how luck shines upon the character, but the host ultimately decides how it affects the story.

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