

THIS OLD SPOOKY HOUSE WILL BE A
MUCH NEEDED FRESH START FOR OUR
FAMILY I CAN'T BELIEVE IT WAS LISTED
FOR SO CHEAP SURELY IT WILL BRING US
CLOSER TOGETHER AND WE WILL
REGRET NOTHING ABOUT THIS
LIFE-ALTERING DECISION

to haunt and be haunted

dozens

2025-03-05

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ABOUT

A haunted house game where each round a new family moves into the house and is haunted by the previous occupants and ultimately join their ranks to haunt the next owners.

Playable solo, designed to support serial succession solo play.

FEELS

This is how i want this to feel

It's a solo journaling adventure horror game designed specifically for solo succession play

create a hopeful family looking for a fresh start to move into the house

they start to notice weird things and are a little unsettled

then things escalate and the haunting manifests and they try to flee but find they cannot

finally they succumb to the house and become haunts themselves

the house keeps a ledger of all former occupants / current haunts. maybe in an attic or crawl space where nobody ever goes? this ledger also records their memories and desires as inventory. At the end of each cycle memories decay and desires are forgotten as the haunts become wisps and shades of their former selves

The house stands timeless. Each cycle starts with an ERA roll to determine whether it takes place in the past, present, or future.

There is an optional mapping and exploration mini-game?

There should be a feeling of tension and dread and captivity and uncertainty for the occupants.

There should be a feeling of rage and sorrow and regret and bitterness and confusion for the haunts.

GETTING STARTED

You will need:

- These rules
- A standard deck of 52 playing cards

QUICKSTART

1. Separate your deck of cards into four suits. Shuffle each suit, and stack the cards in order: spades at the bottom, then hearts, diamonds, and clubs on top.

PHASES OF PLAY

Phases of play 1: Outer Loop

1. Add new ghost(s) to roster
2. Erode and decay existing ghosts
3. Create new family

Phases of play 2: Inner Loop

1. Arrival: new family moves into house. ignorance, hope, beginnings, structure, opportunity
2. Haunts: weird stuff happens. conflict, corruption, deception, secrets
3. Entrapped: they try to leave but find they cannot isolation, violence, courage, delirium, captivity, prophecy, aid
4. Finale: entombed they succumb to the house. surrender, judgment, ending, renewal, loss

CARDS AND RANDOM NUMBERS

Playing cards can be used with little to no effort to simulate rolling four-sided, six-sided, and ten-sided dice.

A NOTATION FOR RANDOM NUMBERS USING CARDS

The phrase “Draw on the ‘Random Number Between 1 And 6’ table” or even “draw a number between 1 and 6” can grow to be tedious and verbose. Let’s develop a convenient shorthand.

To roll a six-sided die is to “roll d6.” So let’s say that to draw a random number between 1 and 6 is to “draw c6.” ‘c’ is for card.

Let's use this notation from now on. When you see "draw c6" now you'll now what that means. And if you see "draw 2c6" you'll know that means to draw twice on the 'Random Number Between 1 And 6' table, and so on.

FOR NUMBERS BETWEEN 1 AND 4

You can use cards to simulate a four-sided die to get a random number between 1 and 4.

Card	Result
CLUBS	1
DIAMONDS	2
HEARTS	3
SPADES	4

Table 1: Random Number Between 1 And 4

FOR NUMBERS BETWEEN 1 AND 6

This one is the most complicated because it requires a little math (dividing and rounding). But it's not that bad and you'll get the hang of it once you do it a few times. You got this.

To use cards instead of a six-sided die, divide a card's value by 2 rounding down. Ignore aces.

Card	Result
A	Draw again
2 - 3	1
4 - 5	2
6 - 7	3
8 - 9	4
10 - J	5
Q - K	6

Table 2: Random Number Between 1 And 6

FOR NUMBERS BETWEEN 1 AND 10

Getting a random number between 1 and 10 is simple. Draw a card and look at its value. A = 1, 2 = 2 ... 9 = 9, 10 = 10. Ignore jacks, queens, and kings and draw again.

MECHANICS

Card	Result
Red	Jovial
Black	Glum

Table 3: Tone

Card	Result
A	Draw again
2 - 3	Distant past
4 - 5	Proximate past
6 - 7	Present
8 - 9	Present
10 - J	Proximate future
Q - K	Distant future

Table 4: Distance (Time)

shuffle the individual suits of a deck of cards. stack them in order (from top to bottom): clubs, diamonds, hearts, spades

roll 1 six-sided dice. deal that many cards from the top of the deck face down into a packet. for each card in packet

and then resolve card

Card	Proximity
CLUBS	Distant
DIAMONDS	Far
HEARTS	Near
SPADES	HERE

Table 5: Distance (Space)

end the phase immediately when you turn over the king.

d6 + cards for family name, size

house ledger / tome list of people who lived there roster of ghosts slowly forget, lose their memories

CREATE A FAMILY

It's kind of a lot of work to make a family

Card	Family
CLUBS	Single
DIAMONDS	Couple
HEARTS	Couple with child
SPADES	Couple with children

Table 6: Family Type

OR: single/couple + child/no child + pet/no pet

card tables for names, family size, disposition, desire

CREATE A HAUNT

A haunt is a spirit, ghost, phantom, etc. that resides in the house.

You will create a haunt when the current occupant succumbs to the house and becomes one.

DESIRES

Haunts have a single desire: a condition under which it might finally be at rest.

While a haunt can never leave the house while it lingers (except on Halloween night), it can cross over to the other side.

Card	Desire
A	Harm
1	Heal
2	Warn
3	Solitude
4	Family
5	Power
6	Respect
7	Love
8	Wisdom
9	Magic
10	Destruction
J	Release
Q	Oblivion
K	Intimacy

Card	Desire
------	--------

Table 7: Desires

REACTIONS

Both occupants and haunts are nuanced and unpredictable people capable of a variety of reactions.

1. Draw on the “Reactions” table to determine a Reaction.
2. Draw c_6 to determine the Reaction Likelihood.
3. Draw c_6 to determine the Reaction Strength:
 1. -3
 2. -2
 3. -1
 4. +1
 5. +2
 6. +3
4. Fill in a number of segments on the character’s reaction track equal to the Reaction Likelihood. Label it with the Reaction and Reaction Strength.

Suit	Card	Reaction
Red	A	Lonely
Red	1	Confused
Red	2	Yearning
Red	3	Remorseful
Red	4	Sorrowful
Red	5	Compassionate
Red	6	Frightened
Red	7	Emotional
Red	8	Professional
Red	9	Trusting
Red	10	Honest
Red	J	Decisive
Red	Q	Friendly
Red	K	Curious
Black	A	Suspicious
Black	1	Violent
Black	2	Brutal
Black	3	Arrogant
Black	4	Agitated

Suit	Card	Reaction
Black	5	Patient
Black	6	Jealous
Black	7	Haughty
Black	8	Frightened
Black	9	Guilty
Black	10	Manipulative
Black	J	Broken
Black	Q	Aggressive
Black	K	Dishonest

Table 8: Reactions

Example: here is a blank pie chart:

EXPERIENCES

Reading a card from the reserve creates an experience.

MEMORIES

A memory is made of up to three experiences.

A family / individual / haunt can have up to three memories.

THE LEDGER AND CREATING HAUNTS

TODO

Cloud Empress Style table of Desires (Outlooks) and Responses

TYOV style Memories as Inventory

APPENDIX: CARD MEANINGS

suit	class	element	domain	meaning
swords/spades	nobility, military	air	understanding	logic, ideas, intellect, communication
cups/hearts	clergy	water	compassion	spirituality, emotion, love, relationships
pentacles/diamonds	merchants	earth	opportunity	nature, physicality, wealth, stability
wands/clubs	artisans, laborers	fire	magic	passion, inspiration, willpower, creativity

Table 9: Suits

Card	Meaning
Ace	Beginning, opportunity
Two	Balance, duality
Three	Growth, creativity
Four	Stability, structure
Five	Change, conflict
Six	Cooperation, communication
Seven	Knowledge, reflection
Eight	Accomplishment, mastery
Nine	Attainment, fruition
Ten	Completion, renewal
Jack	Knows (domain)
Queen	Has (domain)
King	Is (domain)

Table 10: Card Meanings

APPENDIX: EXPLORING THE HIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE BASEMENT

This is the exploration and mapping minigame.

You will need:

- A deck of cards

DO NOT GO INTO THE BASEMENT!

But sometimes you might have to go into the basement. Either of your own volition and choosing, or because a card instructed you to.

Deal out 24 cards and add the King of Spades so that you now have 25 cards. The King of Spades represents your GOAL, your reason for entering the basement. Shuffle your cards and deal them facedown into a staggered 5x5 grid

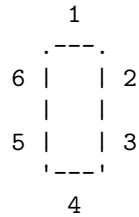
```

      ABCDEFGHIJ
1  o o o o o
2  o o o o o
3  o o o o o
4  o o o o o
5  o o o o o
6  o o o o o

```

Choose a card, e.g. A4, and flip it face up. This is the basement entrance. If/when you turn over a card of the same color and value, this is an exit to a deeper level of the basement. For example, If the basement entrance is the Five of Hearts, then the Five of Diamonds is an exit.

When entering a new room, turn that card over and look it up on the exploration table. Then roll 3d6 to determine the exits for that room/area.



Doubles = A hallway, (10 x pips) feet long

Triples = No exit!

The layout of the basement is bewildering and disorienting. You will often find doors leading back into rooms where there was no door before.

Some rooms are not reachable by any door or hallway. Remove them from the grid.

APPENDIX: NO CARDS NO PROBLEM

Featuring patent pending FINGER JAB technology!

box; box; box; box;

APPENDIX: CREDIT AND INSPIRATION

Stuff I have been reading, watching, playing, thinking about while making this

Haunted Houses American Horror Story Murder House

House of Leaves

Card and Dice Mechanics Alone Among The Stars: <https://noroadhome.itch.io/alone-among-the-stars>

The Quiet Year: <https://buriedwithoutceremony.itch.io/the-quiet-year>

Swords Without Master: <https://epidiah.itch.io/worlds-without-master-issue-3>

No Cards No Problem: <https://serialprizes.itch.io/no-cards-no-problem-0c0p>

One Page Solo Engine: <https://inflatablestudios.itch.io/one-page-solo-engine>

Odd Folk: <https://maxwellander.itch.io/oddfolk>

Memories as Inventory Thousand Year Old Vampire: <https://timhutchings.itch.io/tyov>

Reactions, Desires, and Escalation Cloud Empress Solo Rules: <https://cloudempress.com/>

Card based exploration Cardtography: <https://koboldpress.com/howling-tower-cardtography/>

Carta SRD: <https://peachgardengames.itch.io/carta-srd>

APPENDIX: DEVLOG

2025-03-05

I started working on this game while out of town visiting family. I have none of my usual game design tools here. That is, no role-playing dice. What I do have at the old family house is almost a dozen decks of playing cards. Nobody here ever played/plays card games together. No gin rummy or hearts or spades. Not for the adults anyway. There were fits of slapjack and go fish and crazy 8s amongst the children. But none for the adults, not that I remember. But there are sometimes simultaneous marathon sessions of solitaire. This family likes to do things alone together.

Which is yet another way to achieve group play with solo rules. Been doing it here for generations, in the succession game of this old family house.

Anyway, given the absence of other things to play with, I have decided that this game will mostly use playing cards for randomness, oracles, resolution, etc.

2025-03-04

I saw a thread on discord somewhere about **GROUP PLAY WITH SOLO RULES**. I can't find it any longer. But the idea took root. What intrigued me about it was not the idea actual collaborative group play that somehow uses solo rules, but a *serial* game of solo play using solo rules in which the world, the characters, the whole game is played with care and attention and then bundled up and handed off to the next player upon reaching some kind of landmark or checkpoint. A succession game.

This game came from that idea. The classic haunted house story is a succession game. It always starts with a naively hopeful family moving into the old house excited about a life chapter. And there is always a part where a confused ghost thinks they still live there and cries out, Get out of my house! And the plucky young family finally escapes, or they don't. And then a newer younger pluckier family moves in. Repeat ad nauseum.

And therein lies the beauty. The haunted house genre comes with the succession game already built in. There's nothing else you have to do it whatsoever. When your family succumbs to the house (or successfully escapes it), then you wrap up any loose ends and pass the game. This is the succession game I want to play.

APPENDIX: LISTENING

- <https://daily.bandcamp.com/lists/halloween-music-album-guide>