

FRAYED IN THE FREEZING NIGHT...

A mini-RPG by Côme Martin, written in December 2017 during the Doudou Chef, for 3 to 5 players and no MC.

You've been protecting the Child against their nightmares forever. Whatever the circumstances, you're always here to comfort them... except for today. Today, the Child forgot you during an outing with their parents, and came back home without you. Outside, it's cold, there's noise, Christmas lights hurt your eyes, and without your protection, nightmares roam freely... Will you get back to the Child, against all odds, before the nightmares devour them?

Creation

Each player draws on a blank sheet the cuddly toy (CT) they will play. They then puts 10d6 wherever they want on the drawing: they define what the CT can do skillfully (to put 3d6 on a tiger CT's head, for instance, can mean it ferociously bites its opponents and/or can rack its brains when need

be). Also prepare a space for a support pool, which begins empty.

Each player decides of a name for their CT, and they all agree on the Child's name as well as their age and where they live. It's implied the CTs all belong to the same Child. Then, roll 1d6 to know where the CTs start:

1 - In a movie theatre	3 - In the middle of a mall	5 - In front of a carousel
2 - In a pool's locker room	4 - In a bus, at the last stop	6 - In the arms of another child!

Finally, each player takes 2 pieces of paper on which they describe or draw a small and a regular nightmare—the physical shape they take in the real world. The players then create a big night-

mare as a group, each adding a detail in turn. Small nightmares are worth 1d6, regular ones 2d6 and the big one 3d6 (separate them into 3 piles). If you're lacking inspiration, roll for a few details:

3 - Enormous yellow eyes	9 - Thousands of hairy paws	14 - Always hidden at the corner of your eyes
4 - Too many pointy teeth	10 - Slimy tentacles	15 - A fur with horrible smell
5 - Made of black smoke	11 - Growls like a monstrous cat	16 - Breathes in all the surrounding light
6 - Made of a swarming mass	12 - Leaves oily traces everywhere	17 - Exhales a freezing cold
7 - Blood-soaked claws	13 - Moans like a child	18 - A pasty consistency
8 - Ash wings		

CTs and the big outside world

CTs can talk to each other and to other toys, pacifiers and children. They're led to their Child through an unshakable bond of love; the same power stops adults from noticing the CTs moving by themselves, talking and fighting against horrible nightmares.

How a session unfolds

The session is divided in three acts: I. Leaving the starting location, II. The way home, III. Coming back to the Child. In each act, a new nightmare size (little / regular / big) is added to the end of the current pile. When a nightmare is defeated, it's torn off and removed from the pile. The CTs move from one act to the other by common agreement. The game is over when the CTs have made it home and defeated the big nightmare terrorizing the Child; conclude with a short epilogue.

The game is played without a MC and is divided in turns. During each turn, one of the CTs is under the spotlights: their player describes where it is, what's it doing and so on. The other CTs act when their players decide they do.

During a turn, a player can start two actions which require a roll of the dice: a Brave Act and a fight against a nightmare (see at the back). None of these two actions is mandatory. The rest is handled through narration: there are other obstacles separating the Child from the CTs, but those are events, not dangers.

Facing the outside world

Attempting a Brave Act

This is a risky action which, if it succeeds, adds dice to the support pool. It's always described by another player than the active one, through their CT: "Geeez, Greenie, we'll never manage to climb this building!"; "Squarehead, are you sure you want to go down this cellar with no light at all?"; and so on. The player putting forward a Brave Act also puts forward 1, 2 or 3d6 from the pile: the active player needs as many success as there are dice to complete the Act. A Brave Act can always be refused.

If the active player gives it a go, they roll *all* the d6 of their CT's appropriate part(s). Each die

scoring 4 or more is a success: if the Brave Act is a success, the dice that were put forward go into the support pool. If a die rolls a 1, it's lost and the CT gets hurt; if there are no more dice on a part where there were before, it's ripped off. To be stitched or to stitch new parts to a CT, players need dice from the support pool: they take them and put them on the CT's drawing. You can never stitch your own CT and it needs to make sense within the story. If a CT has no more dice, it's only a pile of rags, barely held together by the power of love; it can't do anything (not even moving or talking!) until someone gave it at least one die from the support pool.

A few possible Brave Acts:

3 - Squeezing out of a crowd without getting trampled	11 - Stopping a child from stealing one of the CTs
4 - Scaring away toys which want to capture a CT	12 - Fleeing from a big angry dog
5 - Getting the help of an adult	13 - Catching a starting car
6 - Climbing a building in spite of strong winds	14 - Crossing a street with cars zooming by
7 - Finding your way in a place without lights	15 - Getting inside a place with locked doors
8 - Using one of your threads to pull out a stunt	16 - Sending a soothing message to the Child
9 - Escaping from the rodents running in the subway's halls	17 - Appearing impressive and not simply cute
10 - Staying clean despite the rain and the mud puddles	18 - Comforting a stranger in deep sorrow

Fighting against a nightmare

The active players puts the first nightmare from the pile face up, and describes where and how their CT fights it. The die or dice of the nightmare are rolled: their score is the number of success needed to beat it. If the dice rolled score lower than the number of CTs, that number is added to the necessary successes.

Example: 4 CTs fight against a small nightmare. Their players roll 1d6 which scores a 5; it means 5 successes will be needed to defeat the nightmare. If the d6 had rolled a 2, they would have added the number of CTs (4) and 6 successes would have been needed to defeat the small nightmare.

The CTs can then make one action each against the nightmare: dice are rolled just like for a Brave

Act, and what happens is described depending on the number of successes and defeats. If CTs act as a group, they can add dice from the support pool to their rolls.

If everyone has acted against the nightmare and it's still standing, it hits all the CTs present who each lose one die; then the turns starts again, if the CTs want to keep on fighting. A face-up nightmare never lets the CTs go and can follow them; it can even fuse with another nightmare if players feel they have too many opponents after them (their scores are then added).

When a nightmare is defeated, each CT wins its number of dice as a reward, not going over the maximum of 10d6. To defeat a small nightmare thus gives a 2d6 bonus to everyone.

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