

FIGHTING MONSTERS

A Game about Community, Loss, and Rebuilding



A Story Game by Kevin Petker

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Yes, we were monsters. We had our difficulties and problems, but we were a community, held up by mighty pillars; we did little harm and kept to ourselves, we even worked together to make things better.

Then the Terrors came.

INTRODUCTION

Fighting Monsters is a story-telling and drawing game.

The players will work together to create a community of monsters and then each will take the role of a **Pillar** of the community: unique members of this monster society that help hold things together and guide the others.

Then something terrible will happen: **Terrors**, beings of great power and size, will come and snatch away one of the **Pillars**. The game then explores how the community handles this loss and what permanent affects it has on its members.

The one that was **Taken** will be forced to serve the Terrors in terrible battles against other monsters; conflicts that scar the body and mind. Eventually, this individual is used up; of no more use to these terrible masters, they are discarded and will return to the community.

Is there still a place for them there? And will they accept that place after all they have experienced?

This is what will be discovered in play.

The game is designed for 2-6 players and takes about an hour to play, slightly longer with more or first time players.

Due to the content of this game, use of the following safety tools is highly recommended:

- Narrative safety tools (<https://t.co/4WfWJ3hjsY>)

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Deck of standard playing cards (Jokers removed)
- A blank sheet of paper to represent the community
- One cue card (or similarly sized paper) per player
- Pencils and other writing implements as needed

STRUCTURE OF PLAY

Fighting Monsters has a specific order of play as show here. Each section is completed before moving to the next.

Prologue – *Building the Community*

Players take turns answering questions to create their community of monsters.

Part 1 – *Fashioning the Pillars*

Each player creates a character that is a Pillar of the community; detailing their importance and contributions.

Interlude 1 – *The Terrors Come*

The Terrors come to the community and one of the Pillars is taken away; the community reacts to this terrible loss.

Part 2 – *Dealing Without*

The players detail the changes that have happened to the community in the aftermath of the Taken's disappearance.

Interlude 2 – *Fate of the Taken*

We learn the terrible things the Terrors have forced upon the Taken.

Part 3 – *The Return*

The Taken, discarded by the Terrors, returns to the community and the community responds.

Epilogue – *Everything Changes*

We discover how each monster has changed.

USING THE CARDS

The cards are shuffled and placed in the middle of the play area. During play, players will be asked to draw cards, revealing or concealing them as directed. It is usually only the suits of the cards we'll be concerned with. Each suit will correspond to specific options in each section of the game.

The values of the cards is used to determine the order of play in each section, with higher cards going first, from King down through Ace.

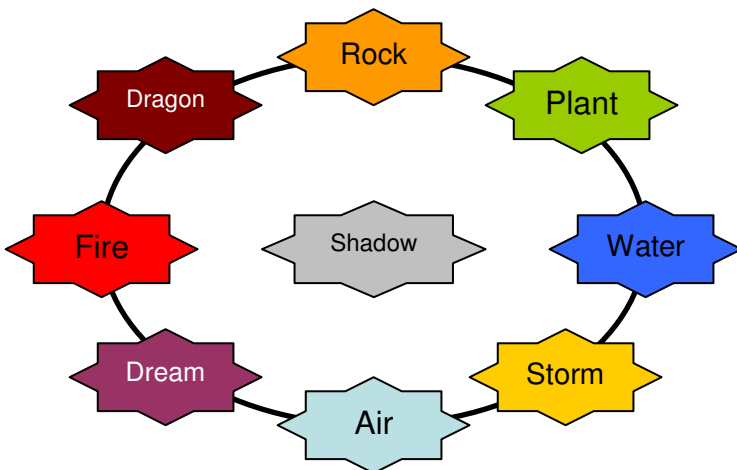
If cards of equal value are drawn, order is determined by suit as follows:



If a section does not include drawing cards, the order of play is determined as desired by the players unless a written rule directs other wise.

TYPES OF MONSTERS

There are many types of monsters that might make up a community in *Fighting Monsters*. Here are some that the players are encouraged to pick from when making their choices:



PROLOGUE - BUILDING THE COMMUNITY

In the Prologue we build the starting community of our monsters by answering questions and then drawing relevant details on our community map. Players are free to collaborate and discuss, but whichever player is answering the question has final say on the answer and what is drawn. Any player may choose to go first and each only answers one set of questions.

Question 1

- *Near what geographical feature is our community located? What strength do we draw from it?*

Question 2 (Choose one)

- *Our community is made up mostly of the same type of monsters, which type? What deficiency does this create for us?*
- *Our community is made up of different types of monsters, choose three; what tension does this cause for us?*

Question 3 (Choose one)

- *Our community is isolated; what allows us to maintain our independence?*
- *Our community is well regarded by others; what are we most famous for having in abundance?*

Question 4 (Choose one)

- *Our community is peaceful; how do we deal with rule breakers?*
- *Our community is vibrant; what is our favorite celebration?*

Question 5 (Optional)

- *Describe an interesting group in our community; what good work is performed by its members?*

Question 6 (Optional)

- *Describe an interesting structure in our community; why do we gather there?*

If there are three players, answer Question 4 together, if there are two players, take turns answering Questions 1 through 4. Use Questions 5 and 6 as needed for additional players.

PART 1 - FASHIONING THE PILLARS

Each player will create a monster that is a *Pillar* of the community to be their character for the rest of the game.

Every player should take a cue card and then draw and reveal two cards. Starting with the highest shown value, each player declares what type of monster their character is.

The type of monster that the Pillar belongs to does not have to be a type that was selected during community building; a community can have a wide variety of types belonging to it.

Each player then does the following using “I statements” to fashion their Pillar, taking notes and/or drawing on their card, starting with the highest value and passing to the next:



- describe a physical benefit you provide for the community



- describe a group in the community that you lead



- describe a social benefit you provide to the community



- describe a personal benefit you provide to another community member

The players may name, describe, and embellish their character as they wish, as long as they also do the above for each of their cards. They may add details to the community map and they may also discuss or create relationships between their characters.


Other community members could be characters the other players are fashioning or non-played characters that may be created as desired.



Once all the Pillars have been created, the revealed cards are discarded and play proceeds to **Interlude 1**.

INTERLUDE 1 - *THE TERRORS COME*


A terrible fate befalls the community as powerful beings come to take one of the Pillars away for terrible purpose.

One player must volunteer to draw and reveal one card:

 or  - *The Terrors come by day*


 or  - *The Terrors come at night*


Next, all players draw one card and reveal them simultaneously.

Any one player who reveals a  loses their character to the Terrors; if there are no spades or more than one spade drawn, the player with the highest value card loses their character to the Terrors; this character is *The Taken*.


That player then describes the capture and disappearance of their character at the hands of the Terrors.

All other players draw and reveal a second card and do the following for their two revealed cards:

 - *describe some physical destruction that happened to the community during the attack*

 - *describe how a group in the community was disrupted or fragmented by the attack*

 - *describe a social trauma inflicted on the community by the attack*

 - *describe a personal relationship that was disrupted or fragmented by the attack*

During these descriptions, the Taken's player may add, alter or amend the community map according to the details given. All revealed cards are then discarded and play proceeds to **Part 2**.

PART 2 - DEALING WITHOUT

The long term effects of the loss of the Taken are felt in the community.

Each player with a character in the community draws a card and reveals it. Starting with the highest value, each player does the following:



- describe a physical change in the community that resulted from the Taken's disappearance



- describe how a group in the community has changed because of the Taken's disappearance



- describe a social change that has happened because of the Taken's disappearance



- describe how you changed because of the Taken's disappearance


During these descriptions, the Taken's player may add, alter or amend the community map according to the details given. The other players may alter or amend their character cards as well.


After each community player has finished, all revealed cards are then discarded and play proceeds to **Interlude 2**.


INTERLUDE 2 - *FATE OF THE TAKEN*


We learn some of the terrible things that have befallen the Taken while they were forced to do battle against other monsters at the Terrors' command.

The player whose character was taken by the Terrors draws two cards and reveals them. If two different suits were drawn, do the following for each card:


 - *describe a permanent physical injury or change you suffered battling for the Terrors*


 - *describe a group you joined among those who battled for the Terrors*


 - *describe how you brutally defeated an opponent to win a battle for the Terrors*


 - *describe a mental injury you suffered while battling for the Terrors*

If two of the same suit are drawn, do the following for the second card:

 - *describe how you received a brutal injury, that will eventually be fatal, battling for the Terrors*

 - *describe a group you exploited and abandoned when battling for the Terrors*

 - *describe how you became a victor in battle for the Terrors and how you look down on your former community*



 - *describe the terrible nightmares that haunt you from your time battling for the Terrors*



All cards are discarded and play proceeds to **Part 3**.

PART 3 - DEALING WITH THE RETURN



The Taken is discarded by the Terrors and returns to their former community.



The Taken player draws two cards and reveals one:

 or  - *they announce their return and describe how they arrive*

 or  - *they are discovered and choose another player to describe their return*

After this reintroduction, each other player draws two cards and reveals one to do the following:

 or  - describe how you accept the Taken's return

 or  - describe how you reject the Taken's return

The remaining Pillars can certainly place conditions and restrictions on their acceptance or rejection, providing as much detail as they feel necessary.

Without drawing any cards, the Taken's player then describes how they decide to stay in the community or how they abandon it.

All cards are then discarded and play proceeds to the **Epilogue**.

EPILOGUE - *EVERYTHING CHANGES*

We see how the Taken's return has changed everyone.

Without drawing any cards, each player describes how the Taken's return has changed their character; the Taken's player always goes last and has the final word.

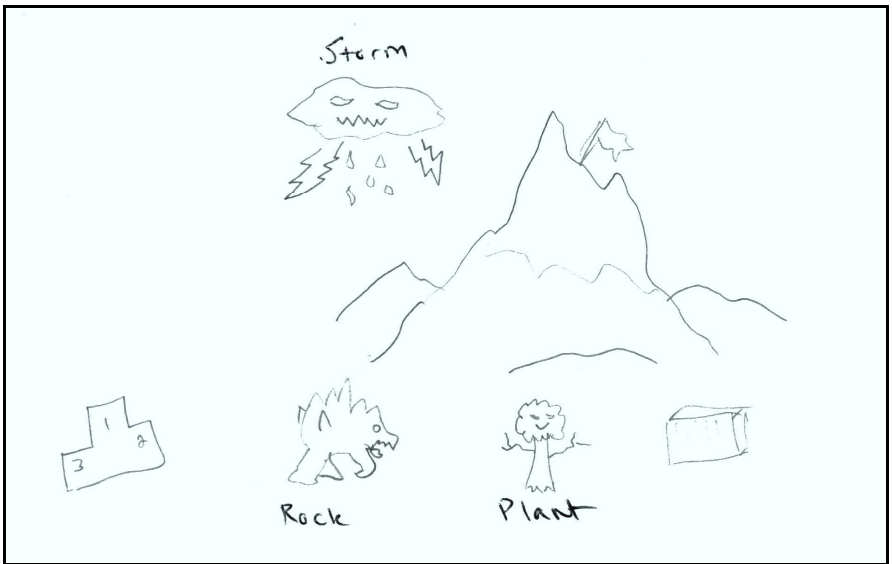
The End.

PLAYING FOR THE FIRST TIME

Don't worry about creating answers that are "right", look to provide answers that are *interesting!* Answers can be discussed and collaborated over, but the player whose turn it is has final say on what answer is true for their contribution. Answers don't have to be long, a sentence or two should suffice, and other players should feel free to build and expand on answers that have come before.

You don't need to be a skilled artist when drawing on the map or your character; quick sketches, some explanatory words, or some embellishments should work to focus your story.

Here's the starting map from the very first game of *Fighting Monsters*.



Rock, Plant and Storm monsters lived near a secluded mountain upon which they built walls and had vigorous sports competitions. Occasionally, the Storm monsters would act superior to the non-flying other monsters.

Then the Terrors came.

ABOUT THE TERRORS

The Terrors are deliberately left vague and undefined; all we know is that they are able to act with impunity with regard to taking away monsters and forcing them to fight.

We don't know why they do this.

You may wish to explore this in your story, but the focus of the game should be on the monsters and how they deal with the existence and predation of the Terrors.

THE MONSTERS THAT MADE THIS POSSIBLE

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I owe a debt of gratitude to those listed above; their support, financial, emotional and thorough playtesting, has allowed me to hone my craft and dedicate time to creating new games and experiences. Thank you all so much!

If you've enjoyed my games and would like to see more in the future, please consider pledging to my Patreon at the link below. Any amount is appreciated!

www.patreon.com/kpetker

POSTSCRIPT - *HOW THIS CAME TO BE*

Maybe you're wondering how this came about; the design process, how the game took form, and all the monstrous effort required to create something new. I wish I could explain it in a way that would be useful for others, because I'm not even sure I could ever replicate it.

You may know another of my games, *Princess World*, which was inspired by my daughter; she literally pitched it to me, starting with, "Make me a game, daddy!" Well, my son heard this tale, and he wanted me to make *him* a game as well. This was a bit later and he's about three years older than his sister, but he also had a pitch.

"Dad, you should make a game about [name of popular, gotta catch them all, monster fighting game]!"

Great idea, but I had to dash his dream: *There's already a game about [name of popular, gotta catch them all, monster fighting game] it's called "[name of popular, gotta catch them all, monster fighting game]"*. He was disappointed, but was able to laugh at it and I didn't think much more about it; but it turned out a little egg had been laid in my mind.

Flash forward to **Metatopia 2018** when that egg started to hatch with the thought: What does being captured and forced to fight others of their kind *do* to the culture and society of those pocket-sized monsters? Dang, this was something good. Unfortunately I couldn't get it to hatch any further and had to move on to other things.

Then I went to **GenCon 2019**; my very first, and had a great time. While there, I ran Laura Simpson's fantastic *Companions's Tale* for the IGDN and things started to take shape; Alex Robert's question based *For the Queen* also fit in there. Things started to churn, but still, that egg only showed fine cracks; it was very frustrating.

Then, halfway through a ten hour drive to visit family, the egg burst open and *Fighting Monsters* unfurled its wings and revealed itself to me. When we got to our destination, I hurriedly started typing up a rough playtest document, got some playing cards ran it for some friends, and now, here it is. I hope you like it.

K.

(Just so you know, this game *does* have a "secret heart", but you'll have to play it with me for me to share it.)

Here be monsters...

*Yes, we were monsters.
We had our difficulties
and problems, but we
were a community, held
up by mighty pillars; we
did little harm and kept
to ourselves, we even
worked together to make
things better.*

Then the Terrors came.



In **Fighting Monsters**, players create a community of monsters, the significant individuals who hold up this community and then play to discover how this society responds to the terrible loss of one of these pillars.

Along with this rulebook, you will need *pencils*, *paper*, and a *deck of regular playing cards*.

