

house

This is a game about a house.

To play it, you will need two or more people, a sheet of paper, something to write with, and a deck of cards.

Begin by deciding what the exterior of the house looks like. Is it old? New? Do you often see cars coming and going from the driveway? Is there a picket fence around the perimeter, or just a mailbox, at the end of a long, gravel driveway? Is there a swing set in the yard? How many floors does it have? Where are the windows?

There's a house down the road from me that's had a rust colored stain running up one side of it, for as long as I can remember. Maybe since before I was born. I don't think anyone lives there, but I walk past it on my way to the convenience store, and sometimes there are cars in the driveway. There's no fence around it, just some short stone pillars. One has a mailbox in it.

The rust colored stain starts at a window close to the ground, one of those small basement windows. I think I could squeeze through it if I tried.

Gather the other players, and decide on your characters. Who are you? How do you know each other? Why are you investigating this house? Do you really believe something is wrong with it, or are you the skeptic of the group?

There were police at the house down the road today. I don't know why. A.C. at the convenience store said there was just one car in the driveway when he passed it this morning, but not a cop car. Just a regular station wagon. He said sometimes people go urban exploring in the house, since it's been abandoned for so long. Even though it's trespassing.

The rust colored stain on the side of the house looked bigger, when I walked past it. Longer. Like it's growing upwards. And the basement window was open.

Decide when you meet up to enter the house, and how each of you prepares for it. What do you bring? Do you meet in broad daylight, or the dead of night? Do any of you have second thoughts about going inside?

A.C. says his neighbor at the trailer park said that the station wagon belonged to a missing person. Maybe the cops thought it was a lead, or that it was stolen. I looked around on the internet - I think it belongs to this girl Lena who went to college around here. I saw a post her brother made, telling people to call him or his parents if they run into her anywhere. She's been missing for four days.

When I walked home, the basement window was closed. The rust colored stain is still bigger than it was.

Draw a square symbolizing the front room of the house on the bottom edge of your piece of paper. Decide as a group what the front room looks like. Is it a small hallway, or an expansive foyer? Is it cluttered with objects, or empty and open? Where are the light fixtures? Where are the windows?

I've been watching the house.

On my way home from the convenience store, I stand across the road and watch it, for as long as it takes me to drink a strawberry slush. The cops haven't been back since the day Lena's station wagon was there. I don't even know if it was hers, actually. I've just been assuming.

I looked online to see if the house is listed for sale, but apparently someone already owns it. A married couple. I couldn't find anything about them, just a few social media pages that haven't been updated in months.

I sent the husband a friend request on Facebook. I don't know why, or if he'll accept. I just need to put my mind at ease, I guess.

If that couple really does live in the house, why is the driveway always empty?

Draw a square of any size, connecting to one side of the square you made for your front room. Decide together on what sort of room it is. A kitchen? A laundry room? A long hallway? A stairwell reaching up to the second floor?

The husband messaged me back today. I'm surprised. I'd almost forgotten I'd sent him anything at all (though I'm still watching the house, almost every day).

He said he and his wife own the house, but they don't live in it. They rent it to people. They didn't know about the cops being there the other day, which is...weird. You're supposed to keep tabs on that kind of thing when it happens on your property, right?

He didn't know anything about Lena, either, when I asked. Said it was sad that she's missing, but he's never seen her before in his life.

I tried to ask him about the rust colored stain, but he stopped replying to my messages.

Remove the jokers from your deck of cards, shuffle it well, and draw one. Let the suit of the card dictate the mood of the scene that plays out in the new room you've made.

Hearts	Love, friendship, compromise, bonding, obsession
Diamonds	Willpower, good luck, discovery, a second wind, greed
Clubs	Emotional conflict, hidden agendas, envy, indecision, betrayal
Spades	Physical conflict, suffering, doubt, fear, danger, grief, alienation

The front door was open when I passed the house today.

It was closed when I went back to look, after hitting the convenience store. A.C. said it was closed when he drove past the house on his way to work, too. But I swear when I walked past it, the door was open. I stopped to look at it, to see what was inside, but there was nothing there. Just darkness.

I think the rust colored stain is bigger again.

Let the premise of the scene taking place in your new room be dictated by the card's number.

- Ace:** An unexpected obstacle
- Two:** A hidden monster
- Three:** A displacement in time
- Four:** A grim discovery
- Five:** A critical misunderstanding
- Six:** A lie uncovered
- Seven:** An echo from the past
- Eight:** A vicious fight
- Nine:** A noise from nowhere
- Ten:** A betrayal of trust
- Jack:** A message received
- Queen:** A puzzle to solve
- King:** A personalized temptation

If the couple who owns the house rent it out, why do people go urban exploring there? When's the last time someone actually lived inside? Isn't it a waste of money to own the property and not do anything with it?

A.C. said that when he drove past the house today, the front door was open again. It was open when I walked past it, too. I thought I saw someone standing inside, out of the corner of my eye, but there was no one there when I turned my head to look. The door was still open when I stopped to watch the house on my way home.

I've been having dreams about the house, too. The inside. I guess it could be any house, but somehow I know it's that one. In my dreams, the inside is bigger than it should be, a maze of interlocking rooms that double back on each other. There's an upstairs and a downstairs, but I can never tell which floor I'm on.

The deeper I get into the house, in my dreams, the more featureless the rooms are. The front hall is normal, a foyer with a small chandelier and a staircase up to the second floor. The kitchen is normal too, with black-and-white floor tiles and dusty cabinets. Maybe the table is missing some chairs.

The living room is missing a lot of chairs. All it has is window drapes and a TV set on top of a long table. I can never get the TV to work.

The rooms lose their furniture more and more, until they're all featureless, just black walls, black ceiling, black floor. Smooth and textureless. There's no light - I have to feel my way along the walls until I find the next door. It feels like I'm in a system of caves, getting deeper and deeper underground.

I can hear something in the basement, no matter where I am in the house. There's a scratching that comes up from beneath the floor, like rats scrambling around in the foundation.

Like someone trying to claw themselves free.

I messaged the husband to ask him when the house had been rented last, even though he never replied to my other question, about the stain. He answered right away, this time. He said if I'm interested in renting the house and want to look at it, there's a spare key hidden in the pillar with the mailbox in it. All you have to do is remove a stone.

Keep drawing cards and adding rooms to the house.
Proceed to endgame when you run out of room on the
paper, when you run out of cards, or when any of the
players become too tired to continue.

To end the game, organize all the cards you have drawn by suit. The suit with the most cards drawn dictates what will happen to you when you try to escape the house.

HEARTS

Your group is unexpectedly rescued by an ally. Who are they? Were they also trapped within the house, or have they come from the outside? What's their exit strategy?

DIAMONDS

You make an escape plan on the fly, and are forced to improvise. What's the plan? Who cracks under pressure, and who keeps a cool head? What must you sacrifice?

CLUBS

An unexpected antagonist causes complications to your escape. Who is it, and how do they reveal themselves? What's their agenda? Is anyone injured? Killed?

SPADES

You must fight your way out of the house with tooth and nail. How does the house fight back? Who gets hurt? Who must stay behind? Who goes back later to rescue them?

The basement window was open again, when I went to the house today. Someone was watching me from inside. I could feel their eyes on me. When I got closer to the window, to try and see into the basement, I could hear scratching. Like someone scraping their nails on wood, over and over.

I took the key from the secret compartment behind the mailbox, before I left.

I thought about touching the rust covered stain, but I didn't. I don't want to know what it feels like.

house is inspired by house of leaves, the dionaea
house, betrayal at house on the hill, and the house
with the rust colored stain down the road from mine. it
is loosely a hack of the dark sentencer, also by me.