

“With a little luck, you’ll dismiss this labor, react as Zampanò had hoped, call it needlessly complicated, pointlessly obtuse, prolix-your word-, ridiculously conceived, and you’ll believe all you’ve said, and then you’ll put it aside...and you’ll carry on, eat, drink, be merry and most of all you’ll sleep well.

Then again there’s a good chance you won’t.”

- Johnny Truant, October 31, 1990, Hollywood, CA

- **Mark Z. Danielewski, House of Leaves**

Haunted is a card game of haunted house ghost stories. Not the kind told around the campfire for cheap thrills. No, this game is one where you are drawn into a house of your own creation, built from the bricks of your past and mortar of your secrets. Will you get out? Discover the answer? Go mad?

All of the above?

--- **Requirements** ---

This game requires the following:

- ◆ Players. More players will generally lead to a shorter game, but any number of players can play. For a solo game, use the Single Player Variant rules.
- ◆ 1 deck of standard playing cards, with Jokers
- ◆ Index cards or scratch paper and pencils
- ◆ A token of some kind for each player

You are all trapped within a mysterious house, with no memory of how you got there.

--- **Setting up the Game** ---

Write down these three things on a card.

___ WILL: What do I remember?

___ BODY: What do I bring with me?

___ FEAR: What do I fear?

What is stronger, your BODY or your WILL? Write “5” next to that entry, and “3” next to the other. Everyone begins with the same FEAR, which is equal to the number of players. Leave the questions unanswered, for now.

- ◆ Having high WILL at the end of the game *could* mean that you remember.
- ◆ Having high BODY at the end of the game *could* mean that you escape.
- ◆ Having high FEAR at the end of the game *could* make it impossible for you to escape.

Next, take the four Aces and the two Jokers out of the deck. Place the Ace of Diamonds face-up in the center of the table. Shuffle the rest of the deck thoroughly, and deal four cards face-down around the Ace of Diamonds, such that the sides all touch and the five cards form a cross. This is the center of the house. Deal each player 2 cards face-down (these are called your Secret Doors), and then 1 card face-up (this is your starting Room).

Each player places their token on the card in front of them. These cards represent the room each character finds themselves in at the beginning of the game. Count off two cards per player and set them aside. Shuffle the remaining Aces and Jokers back into the remaining deck, place the set-aside cards on top, and place the deck where it’s accessible to everyone.

--- **Starting the Game** ---

You each describe the last thing you remember before your appearance in the house. Were you asleep? Walking alone? At a party?

You each begin in a separate room of the house, represented by the card in front of you. Somewhere, there are Ways Out, represented by Aces. The Ace of Diamonds is the one Way Out that you all can see, right now.

Start with the player on the card with the lowest number (use suit to break ties, Diamonds beat Clubs beat Hearts beat Spades). You are the **active player**. The player to your left (the **house player**) describes the room you are in, based on the card’s Suit entry on the Card Effects chart. You also apply the mechanical effect listed.

The active player can describe their reaction to the room, including what they’re thinking and feeling, and must end any narration or monologue with an attempt to leave the room. **The active player must move onto an adjacent card at the end of their turn.** If there are no adjacent cards (as is the case on the first turn), they must open a new Door.

--- **Opening New Doors** ---

The active player declares Color or Suit, and then the house player turns over the top card of the deck.

- ◆ If you choose Color: Reference the value of the card drawn on the appropriate Room Description chart, Red or Black. **If there is no matching value** already on the table, apply the effect as described. **If there is a matching value** already on the table, ignore the effect and add +1 to BODY (for Black) or WILL (for Red).
- ◆ If you choose Suit: Reference the value of the card drawn on the appropriate Room Description chart, Diamonds, Clubs, Hearts or Spades. Apply the effect as described. “You” always refers to the active player.

Once the card has been drawn and the effect applied to the current play, that player places the card adjacent to any free edge of the card their marker is currently on.

If the card is also the same color or suit of another card on the table, the player may declare that the two rooms are adjacent, and moves the cards however necessary to make that connection on the table.

Once the room is revealed and the active players’ token has moved into it, the house player describes it (per the entry on the Room Description chart), embellishing as desired. The house player then becomes the active player and takes their turn, and so on.

If an Ace is revealed, it’s a Way Out. If a Joker is revealed, it’s a Trap.

--- A Way Out ---

You've managed to find a way out of the house! But can you take it?

- ◆ If your FEAR is highest of your three stats: You can't take the exit. Describe what's keeping you in the house. Answer the "What do I fear?" Question.
- ◆ If your BODY is highest of your three stats: You can escape! Answer the "What do I bring with me?" Question, and describe how you get out of the house!
 - ◆ ... and your FEAR is equal to or higher than your WILL: but you lose your sanity. Reset your WILL to 0 before determining the winner of the game.
 - ◆ ... and your WILL is higher than your FEAR: and you remember what brought you into the house in the first place. Answer the "What do I remember?" Question.
- ◆ If your WILL is highest of your three stats: You know why you're there! Describe the thing that haunts you, and answer the "What do I remember?" Question.
 - ◆ ... and your FEAR is equal to or higher than your BODY: but you still can't escape. Circle your WILL number, it's now locked there and cannot change for the rest of the game.
 - ◆ ... and your BODY is higher than your FEAR: and you can escape! Answer the "What do I bring with me?" Question in so doing.
- ◆ If your BODY and WILL are tied, or if all 3 are tied: use the suit of the Exit to break the tie. A Red Exit means your WILL counts as higher, and a Black Exit means your BODY counts as higher.

If you escape before the other players, you still turn over their Doors and narrate the rooms that they find themselves in, but you do not open any more Doors yourself.

--- Trap! ---

You're trapped in this room! You can't leave it unless someone else comes into the room and helps you. On your turn, you draw a Door, but instead of moving onto it, take a look at it. You may play it face-up adjacent to the room you're trapped in, and adjoin to another room of matching suit. If you cannot make a connection, you must play the card facedown instead, adjacent to any card on the table (face-up or facedown).

You still act as the house player to the player on your right.

Once another player moves into the room with you, they narrate how they get you out of the trap, and you both reset FEAR to 2. You both move normally on your next turns.

Any players still Trapped when the game ends suffer the most horrible fate of all.

--- Secret Doors ---

Anytime a player would draw a new Door, you can instead play your Secret Door. Say that you're doing so before the Door they are moving into is revealed. They still pick Color or Suit, and the effect is applied to the active player. You can play your Secret Door on yourself. If you do so, you can add +1 to any stat you wish, in addition to the effect of the Door.

--- Moving Through Revealed Rooms ---

You can move onto any card adjacent to your current card, including back to the room you left on your last turn. Whenever you move onto an already revealed card (like if you connect a room to an already revealed room), you do NOT apply the mechanical effect. We've already seen this room.

You can only use a card to connect to another card when you play it. That is, if you move onto an already revealed card, and it matches suit with another already revealed card, you cannot connect them.

--- BODY, WILL and FEAR ---

Every time you suffer an effect from moving into a new room, change the relevant number. Numbers cannot go below 0 - if an effect would push a number below 0, simply ignore it. If a number is "locked," ignore any effects that would change it.

--- Ending the Game ---

The game ends once any one of these things happens:

- ◆ someone escapes
- ◆ all players complete a turn after all four exits have been revealed
- ◆ all players complete a turn after the last card in the deck is played

Each player adds their WILL and BODY, subtracts their FEAR, then adds 1 for each Question they've answered. The winner is the player who:

- ◆ escaped the house. Failing that;
- ◆ has the highest positive point total. Failing that;
- ◆ nobody wins!

For a longer game, play until everyone escapes (or the game ends otherwise). The escaped player with the highest positive point total is the winner.

--- Single Player Variant ---

For solo play, set up the game as normal, but don't deal yourself a Secret Door, and don't include any Jokers. Your Fear starts at 2. Turn over your own Doors and apply the effects as described. If you escape before your FEAR becomes your highest stat, you win! If you fail to escape, you are trapped in the house forever.

If you get to a Way Out, could escape, but don't want to end the game yet, treat it as an opening to another level of the house. Discard all of the face-up cards you've already revealed, and keep moving from the Way Out card until you find another Way Out.

--- Multilevel Variant ---

When a player moves onto an Exit, note down everyone's current score [(WILL+BODY+questions answered) - FEAR], and then discard all unoccupied face-up cards. Continue play from the current Exit. You cannot escape until the fourth and final Exit is revealed (the game can end earlier if the deck runs out of cards). When the game ends, the winner is the player with the highest cumulative positive score.