

Escape the Nightmare

Objective

You and your friends are trapped in a nightmare guarded by monstrous wardens. You must work together to escape, by harnessing aspects of the nightmare to defeat the wardens. However time is limited, because something terrible is chasing you. It's coming. Run.

Contents



The game contains 44 Nightmare cards, 9 warden cards and one “It’s Coming” card. There are 11 types of nightmare card, with 4 cards of each type.

Overview

Shuffle some nightmare types together and deal a hand of them to each player. Prepare a stack of wardens that are keeping you in the nightmare. Give each player time to read their cards and then begin the time limit.

Players trade cards attempting to obtain matched sets of nightmares, whenever a player obtains a matched set they pause the game and defeat one of the wardens. If all of the wardens are defeated then you have escaped the nightmare and are victorious.

However if the time limit runs out then you lose. Also whenever a player receives a card it affects them, restrictions make it harder to communicate or trade and actions require you to do something or immediately lose the game. Finally the wardens will try to stop you, using their powers to make it harder for you to obtain sets.

Good luck.

You’ll need it.

Setup

Shuffle the wardens and deal two into a face down pile; this is the “warden deck”. Flip the top one face up and remove the others from play.

Players	3	4	5	6	7	8
Nightmare Types	4	6	7	9	10	11
Nightmare Deck	2	5	4	7	6	5

Select a number of nightmare types depending on the number of players and shuffle them together. Deal the listed number of cards face down into the middle of the table to form the nightmare deck. Then shuffle “It’s Coming” into the remaining nightmare cards and deal them evenly between the players.

For your first game it is recommended that you use the following nightmare types: Delirium, Mutilation, Isolation, Mutation, Tentacles and Monsters. If you need more nightmare types for the number of players avoid selecting Abduction and Death if possible.

Give everyone plenty of time to read their cards, once they are ready to begin whoever has “It’s Coming” should start the game by saying “It’s Coming. Run.”

Play

Once play begins the action is continuous until either a warden is defeated or the players are doomed. All players act simultaneously, there are no turns.

Communicating

Unless prevented by a game mechanic players are free to talk about any subject at any time. You may describe your cards in as much detail as you would like, discuss what sort of cards you want to receive and ask and answer any questions that you see fit. However you may not show other players your cards unless required to by an action – difficulties in communication are an essential part of the game that may not be avoided in this fashion.

Trading

To trade with another player offer them a card, face down. Without looking at it they decide whether to accept, if they do they give you a card from their hand and then take your offer.

 Action: If you receive an action card then you must perform the action listed on the card as quickly as possible. If you complete another trade or if any player defeats a warden and you have not yet completed the action then you must call “pause” and announce that the group is doomed.

Hint: If you have an uncompleted action, tell other players about it so that they do not defeat a warden. Don’t be afraid to ask for help if you need it.

⊗ Restriction: If you receive a restriction it will limit who you can trade with or how you can communicate. The limitation lasts until the next time that you complete a trade. Trading ends the effect even if you still have the restriction card in your hand.

Note that both types of effect end (for good or ill) when you next trade, so you should only be under the influence of one card at a time. The sole exception is “It’s Coming”.

It’s Coming

If you have “It’s Coming” in your hand you must say “It’s Coming, Run!” and then count down from thirty to zero. If you reach zero then the game is over and the group is doomed.

If you trade “It’s Coming” then you immediately end your count with no ill effects, the person who receives the card now starts a new doom count from the beginning and you act as dictated by the card that you have just received in trade.

If you have “It’s Coming” in your hand and receive a second card then you are affected by both cards. If you are unable to continue the doom count while following the instructions on the second card then you must call a pause and announce that the group is doomed.

Hint: If you have “It’s Coming” always trade it away whenever possible. That way you won’t have to deal with two card effects at a time and the doom count won’t reach zero.
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You may not pause the count to have a conversation but it is legal to talk in between counts. “Thirty, help I need, Twentynine, abductioncards, Twentyeight, orwelose” is a legal doom count.

You should aim to say approximately one number per second, while a little variation is expected and even encouraged don’t take advantage of the timing mechanic. You know if you are cheating.

Doom

You are not subject to certain doom, so if you are doomed rotate the warden ninety degrees. If you are doomed again before defeating this warden then you have all lost and the game is over, however if you defeat this warden then you can survive another failure on the next one.

Wardens

The wardens have text on them, but this should be ignored until you increase the difficulty (see difficulty at the end of the rules).

Defeating Wardens (Winning!)

If you have “It’s Coming” and have four nightmare cards of the same type you may instead choose to defeat a warden. To do this call “pause” and perform the following steps:

First, shuffle the four nightmare cards into the nightmare deck and draw four new cards to replace them. You may receive some of the same cards again, if you receive exactly the same four cards repeat the process until you do not.

Remove the top warden from the warden deck from play, it has been defeated. Finally flip the next warden face up; you are now ready to begin again. When you defeat the last warden your group has been victorious!

If at first you don’t succeed...

Defeat can happen very quickly, possibly even within seconds. It’s expected that the average Nightmare play session will comprise of a number of attempts and you’ll only succeed a minority of time (but that it’ll be special when you do!). When you lose it’s important to get back into the action quickly without wasting your precious time on sorting lots of cards. Here are three alternatives to going through the whole setup sequence again:

Very Fast Restart: If you lose a game before defeating the first warden each player shuffles their hand and passes two cards to the player on their left. You are now ready to begin.

Fast Restart: Whoever has *It’s Coming* gathers the nightmare cards and shuffles them all together, dealing a nightmare deck and starting hands as at the start of the game. Someone else shuffles the defeated and undefeated wardens together and flips one face up. (On extreme difficulty they’ll also need to put the *Malignant Dreamer* on top).

Variety Restart: As a fast restart, but remove four identical nightmare cards from the deck and throw in a new nightmare type. If you’re playing with warden effects discard a warden that you’ve defeated and throw in another at random to replace them.

Ambiguities

Some of the cards follow the whimsical nature of dreams and may give instructions like “Sing the song of your people.” You’re free to interpret these as you wish; in this case depending on who you consider ‘your people’ you might decide that it’s anything from the national anthem to the theme of *Firefly*.

If you need precise rulings on specific cards and situations The Malignant Dreamer offers more specific rulings here:

<http://www.3dtotalgames.com/enter-the-nightmare/rulings/>

Please excuse her manner; she’s not a very nice person.

Difficulty and Customisation

The rules given above are for 'tutorial' difficulty, once you are used to the game you'll want to increase the challenge. There are a number of ways to make it more difficult or to customise the experience to your group.

Escape or Pursuit

The game described above is played with something chasing you through the nightmare. If this is too frantic try changing the game to pursuit mode. In this mode the "It's Coming" card has no game effect, besides being needed to defeat wardens and there is no doom count. However the game is played to an overall time limit, if you do not defeat the wardens within this time limit then you all lose. The default time limit is ten minutes.

Less Time

A lower doom count or smaller time limit increases the challenge of the game. It has been won with doom counts as low as five and overall time limits of just a few minutes.

Certain Doom

Certain doom makes the game more punishing, causing the players to lose as soon as they are doomed. No second chances.

Warden Count and Effects

Adding more wardens makes the game more challenging.

Additionally you can have the wardens apply their special effects. In this mode while a warden is face up their text applies to all players. If you do this make sure that you remove The Helpful Doctor or The Stranglers as is appropriate for your game mode. Also decide whether to include The Malignant Dreamer as she is dramatically more dangerous than the others.

Suggested Difficulties

Difficulty	Pursuit Doom Count	Escape Time Limit	Certain Doom	Warden Count	Warden Effects	Malignant Dreamer
Tutorial	30	10 mins	No	2	No	-
Easy	20	8 mins	No	3	No	-
Medium	10	6 mins	Yes	4	No	-
Hard	10	6 mins	Yes	5	Yes	No
Very Hard	8	5 mins	Yes	6	Yes	Random
Extreme	5	4 mins	Yes	7	Yes	Random
Impossible	5	4 mins	Yes	8	Yes	Top Warden

Customisation

Some players hate singing and others wouldn't hug each other if their life depended on it. The nightmare types that you choose will impact upon the sort of game that you play, feel free to include or exclude particular types in order to customise the game to your group's preferences.

These notes on the properties of each type of nightmare should help you to customise the game to your liking:

Nightmare	Difficulty	Notes
Delirium	Easy	Contains singing and a slight risk of poetry.
Insects	Easy	Players may be required to buzz.
Isolation	Easy	Includes light physical contact (high fives and hugs).
Monsters	Easy	Tends to be noisy. Involves saying mean things to the other players. Has a card designed to combo with Mutilation.
Mutation	Easy	All cards involve physical gestures or movement (not unique to this set). Has a card designed to combo with Monsters. Art may be inappropriate for some audiences.
Mutilation	Easy	Art may be inappropriate for some audiences.
Tentacles	Easy	Art may be inappropriate for some audiences.
Assimilation	Normal	Can be noisy. Sometimes involves saying lots of numbers very quickly.
Wilderness	Normal	Has a restriction that's crippling if traded early.
Abduction	Hard	Contains two actions that risk automatic failure based on hand composition.
Death	Hard	Involves cards with extra time pressures. Can not be used in "escape" mode.