

# **TERROR-A MONSTER TTRPG**

**By Nico Sfera**

Terror is a rules-light narrative TTRPG about ordinary people barely escaping terrifying, out of this world monsters.

It uses an experimental dice method where the monsters roll absurd and abnormal dice, and the humans try to get a clean long division by comparing rolls.

The Player Characters will have to find creative ways to apply their abilities physical, mental, verbal, or technological, along with items from their person or environment in reaction to the Monster, controlled by the Game Master.

They will have to balance their Terror, making sure they don't become too scared to dodge out of the next lethal swing of the Monster. Death always looms one corner away.

To play this system, you will need a couple of brave friends, pen and paper, a set of polyhedral dice (from four-sided dice to twenty-sided dice), an online dice roller or number randomizer, and an unsettling atmosphere.

## THE CONCEPTION

Humans are frail, and while they can take minor cuts and blows, a direct hit from the Monster will almost always be the end of their journey.

Humans have four Stats that show their prowess in different ways. Each Stat has a Size that shows which dice is rolled when that Stat is used.

**Size 5**, average competence, means a twelve-sided (**d12**) die is rolled. **Size 4** means a ten-sided (**d10**) die is rolled. **Size 3** means an eight-sided (**d8**) die is rolled. **Size 2** means a six-sided (**d6**) die is rolled. **Size 1**, the strongest humans can be, means a four-sided (**d4**) die is rolled.

**Size 6** means the human is especially weak in that aspect, and will use a twenty-sided (**d20**) die.

**Body** shows how trained and maintained one's physical state is. From how fast they can run, to how much they can hold their breath, to their ability to punch.

**Mind** shows the acuity of one's intelligence and wisdom. It is needed to scheme, to predict, and to out-manuever.

**Voice** shows the charisma and bravery of one's self. To lie, persuade and not be intimidated, Voice is needed.

**Tool** shows one's ability to use complicated objects, from weapons to computers to improvised tools.

A human will have 6 **Inventory Slots** on their body to carry Items. **On-Body Inventory** can be accessed and used at any point.

Bags, backpacks and some clothes can extend this by adding more Inventory Slots, however those are slower to access. Wearing them occupies an On Body Slot or more.

**Items** are tools of the human to alleviate their luck and get an advantage in the situation. They are typically limited in how much they can be used by their Usage limit and must be used creatively.

When Items reach their Usage limit, they are either broken and must be repaired, or perhaps they need to be refilled, recharged, or something else. Some, usually less important items, simply break and cannot be used again.

Some Items add or subtract from the roll of a human or the Monster, others will multiply, or divide. Some affect specific digits or create situations with bonuses.

**Duties** are missions that a human may have undertaken and will try to bring to completion. When a human acts according to a Duty, they move their die a Size lower when rolling. If they act against the Duty, they gain a +1 modifier to the roll.

Duties change often, whether because they are completed or abandoned.

**Knacks** are very specific skills that a human can use to get out the final bit of advantage to survive. When a Knack applies to a roll, it adds a -1 modifier to the roll.

Finally, **Terror** is something natural to almost all humans when faced with pretty certain death. The more Terror a human accumulates, the more drastic their options get, to the point where they will even fight back.

Keep in mind that in this system, the lower a roll is, the better.

To create a human, start by lowering either two Stats by 1 Size, or 1 Stat by 2 Sizes. You may choose to place a Stat at Size 6 and lower an additional Stat by 1 Size.

Then, decide a starting Duty and find a Knack for the human.

Finally, talk with the Game Master and acquire 2 starting Items.

And then, there's the **Monster**.

The Monster is simple, and straightforward. With every move, it will perform an unspeakable act of gruesome violence. Forcing the human to pool every strand of resources to live another minute.

Monsters have a **Terror Die** that they will use to roll whenever they threaten the humans. This die changes only when a Monster is in a greatly different position or has taken a severe blow. Terror Dice are almost always dice that cannot be physically rolled, like d44, d153, d9999, to represent how inhuman and terrible they are. Terror Dice may also have constant modifiers to them, like +15s or +66.

Monsters will also usually have supernatural abilities to challenge the humans in tense and narrative ways.

## THE WIND-UP

The 'calmer' part of Terror will happen in this phase of play. Humans will go about, advancing the story through role-play and the occasional **Risk**.

Risks happen when a human attempts to do something that would be **difficult** for them and would **have consequences**.

Asking a Risk for an action that would be effortless, like opening a simple door, will slow things down too much.

At the same time, a Risk when there is no consequence for failing—like having to pick the correct key out of a bundle of thirty to unlock the door, where you can simply try again if you fail—is pointless.

Each Risk comes with a **Difficulty Rating (DR)** that shows how, well, difficult the Risk will be to successfully accomplish.

DR 10 will be something of moderate difficulty.

DR 6 will be a hard task that requires some skill.

DR 2 would be something near impossible for humans to do on their first try.

And every Risk comes with a Stat next to it that the human must roll to try to overcome it. The human must roll equal to the DR or lower in order to be successful.

Some humans will be strong enough, smart enough, brave enough, experienced enough to accomplish Risks with no effort while others will have to struggle.

In a Risk, when a human can automatically pass it regardless of their roll, they can choose to put themselves in a more dangerous spot and **Help** another human that may fail the Risk.

The **Helper** will receive Terror equal to the Size of the **Helped** human's Stat and the Helped human will receive a negative modifier to their roll equal to the Helper's Size.

As humans wander around and push on towards fulfilling their duties in the Wind-Up, they will end up discovering **Marks** of the Monster. It is there, it is close, and it is waiting for something.

With every Mark discovered, humans will receive 1 to 3 Terror, but they may also have the opportunity to learn something about the Monster with it, via Risks.

A human that reaches 10 Terror will be immediately consumed by the Monster.

When a Risk occurs, humans may spend Terror to decrease the DR, therefore making it a harder risk. For every Terror, the DR decreases by 1. With this they can make tasks that would be trivial, become almost impossible as their fear gets out of control, but perhaps this is the thing that will keep them alive.

And finally, they get too close to it.

## THE HUNT

Most of the rules of this system come into full power when the actual encounter with the Monster begins. Up until now, we were just preparing for disaster.

When a **Hunt** begins, one or more humans are face to face with a Monster. From here on out, the way the story flows will depend greatly on dice and Player ingenuity.

A Hunt is split into **Rounds**. In each Round, the Monster will attempt to brutally slaughter the humans, then the humans will try to react to this, and finally Terror will be dealt out.

At the start of a Round, is the **Monster Phase**. The Narrator will describe what the Monster does to hurt the humans or put them in a worse situation. Then, the Terror Die is rolled.

Now that the roll of the Monster is known, it is time for the **Reaction Phase**. Players will describe what their humans do and the Narrator will say what Stat to roll and what Duty or Knacks apply. With this description, the humans will try to get better positions or discover more tools to use against the Monster.

Then comes the **Salvage Phase**, where Players can extend their narration so that Items apply, their Usage is marked, and the bonuses are gained from such.

Once a Player decides their roll is good enough, they can **Lock In** to immediately compare their roll to the Monster's and take Terror.



The Monster's roll is long divided by the human's roll and based on the remainder, we get to see how successful the human was in their action.

**Massive Success** happens if the remainder is 0, the human succeeds with flying colors, somehow avoiding all harm and fulfilling their action.

**Moderate Success** happens if the remainder is from 1 to 3, the human succeeds partially and will face a consequence for it.

**Moderate Failure** happens if the remainder is from 4 to 6, the human fails the action, but they get something out of it.

**Massive Failure** happens if the remainder is 7 or greater, the human utterly fails and usually makes regress too.

Humans also gain Terror equal to the remainder.

Some options for **Rewards** of successful actions are:

- **Discovery** - The human finds an item in the environment or understands something about the Monster;
- **Staggering the Monster** - Increases the Monster's Terror Die for one Round;
- **Advantageous Position** - Gain -1 Size to your rolls for 1 Round;
- **Aid** - Lower the Terror another human will receive this Round by 3.
- **Gift** - Safely pass an Item to another human nearby.

Some options for **Horrors** of failed actions are:

- **Jammed** - An Item becomes unusable for 1 Round or takes 1 Usage;

- **Frenzy** - Decreases the Monster's Terror Die for one Round.
- **Disadvantageous Position** - Gain +1 Size to your rolls for 1 Round.
- **Scare** - Increase the Terror another human will receive this Round by 3.
- **Bound** - One of the four Stats become unusable for 1 Round;

These are just examples and the Game Master is advised to improvise and create new Rewards or Horrors that will fit the situation that the humans are in.

On Massive Successes, the Game Master will give 2 Rewards to the human that are related to their action.

On Moderate Successes, the human will receive 1 Reward related to their action and 1 Horror.

On Moderate Failures, the human will get 1 Horror and 1 Reward that has nothing to do with their action.

And on Massive Failures, the human is given 2 Horrors.

After everyone has Locked In the Round comes to an end.

Terror continues accumulating as Rounds pass until it gets too hard to bear and crushes the human. If a human has 10 or more Terror at the end of a Round, they become too afraid to continue, usually being killed by the Monster immediately.

But Terror is more than a counter to doom. It is also a resource that pushes the human to act.

During the Salvage Phase, there are two ways to spend Terror.

- 1) **Burrow** - Spend a number of Terror to divide the Monster's roll by that number and take Terror equal to the remainder.
- 2) **Deviate** - Spend a number of Terror to remove a digit of the same value from the Monster's roll.

After Locking In, if a human receives Terror, they may choose to transform a part of it and take a **Wound** instead. The first time this is done, reduce 5 Terror, the amount is lowered each time until taking Wounds no longer reduces Terror.

For each Wound, the human receives a +1 to rolls with one of their four Stats. Wounds remain after a Hunt is over and require either a Mind Risk or a Tool Risk depending on what Item is used too. The Item used for healing Wounds also expends usage regardless of success.

Wounds are terrible and will make a human's situation worse, but a broken arm is better than a dead body.

If, at the end of a Round, a human took no Terror, they may be ready to **Advance**. Advancing lets a human get a step up on the Monster. Finally attacking back, figuring its intent, or getting away from it.

Humans need a certain amount of Terror to be able to Advance that depends on the Stat they end up using.

If they run away, or attack the Monster, they may use Body. If they outwit the Monster, or find a weakness in it, they may use Mind. If they stand their ground with the Monster or challenge it back with words, they will use Voice. If they use some kind of weapon or machine, they will use Tool.

The amount of Terror needed to Advance for each Stat Size is:

- d20 [Size 6] = 7 Terror
- d12 [Size 5] = 6 Terror
- d10 [Size 4] = 5 Terror
- d8 [Size 3] = 4 Terror
- d6 [Size 2] = 3 Terror
- d4 [Size 1] = 2 Terror

On a successful Advance, the Monster enters a new Phase, and the Terror Die is lowered, becoming more deadly. When enough Advances have happened, the Hunt will be over and the humans will get out alive. Different Advances can have varying degrees of success, depending on what would work against the Monster better.

The real narrative battle begins now. Because the human needs to narrate *how* they Advance. Some ways will greatly impact the Monster, while others will barely budge it.

For a Monster stuck in a fixed location, running away will put humans way closer to escaping the Hunt than directly attacking it. For others, just showing bravery will gain an advantage.

Each Monster has different weaknesses that the humans must observe and discover as they face them.

## THE EVOLUTION

With every difficult struggle, comes many important lessons. As humans go through Risks and Hunts and Duties and more, they change and grow, becoming something more adapted to it, becoming something more resilient.

Humans will gain **Evolution** after:

- Important narrative or character moments;
- Achieving a Duty;
- Surviving a Hunt;

When a human reaches 5 Evolution, they can **Evolve** and become stronger.

They may choose one **Improvement**:

1. Lower a Stat by 1 Size.
2. Gain a Knack.
3. Gain an extra On-Body Inventory Slot.
4. Gain an Item that does not have a Usage limit.

## APPENDIX

Here you will find examples of Items and Monsters.

### Items:

<b>Shotgun - Usage: [2/2]</b>
Adds +5 to the Monster's roll

<b>Trekking Backpack - Usage: [-]</b>
Occupies 2 On-Body Slots, has 5 Inventory Slots.

<b>Bandages - Usage: [3/3]</b>
Heal a Wound with a Mind Risk.

<b>Flashlight - Usage: [6/6]</b>
Remove Frenzy from Monster.

<b>Map - Usage: [2/2]</b>
Lower your roll by 1 or 3 when performing a movement action.

<b>Knife - Usage: [5/5]</b>
Multiply the Monster's roll by 2.

## **Monsters:**

### **The Savage Monkey-Man - d155**

He roams the forests and leaps from tree to tree with impossible strength. Fire makes him afraid.

### **The Carnivorous Manifestation - d898**

It appeared from radiation and is over eight feet tall with eyes and plant-like teeth. Its poison controls simple animals.

### **The Tentacle Nightmare - d11111**

Mortals tremble in front of its mere sight, for it does not come from Earth. It can turn the imagination of who it is looking at into reality. That is its weakness too.

### **The Immortal Killer - d7**

The town hasn't been the same since the new guy moved in, someone wanders the streets every night with a bloodied knife and a hockey mask. Guns seem to have no effect on him, but he is quite slow.