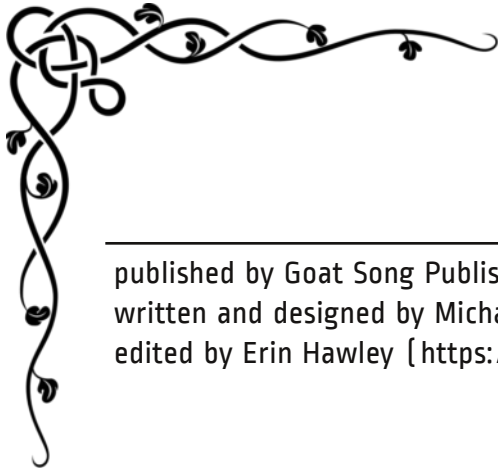


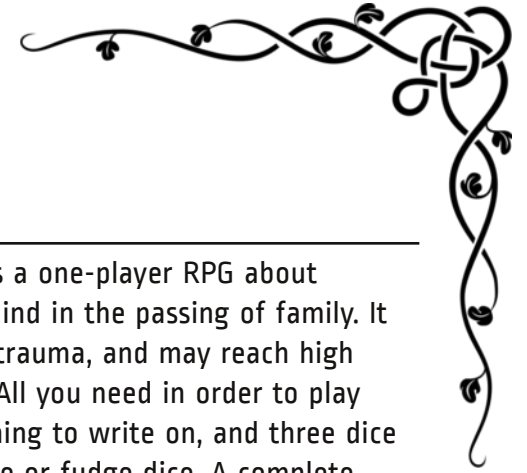
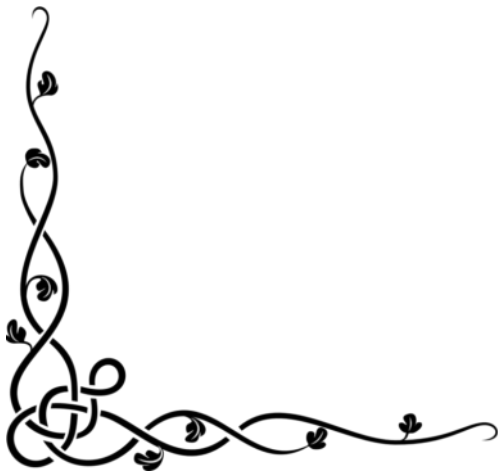
No One Lives Here Anymore

A Goat Song Publishing Game
By Michael Meinberg



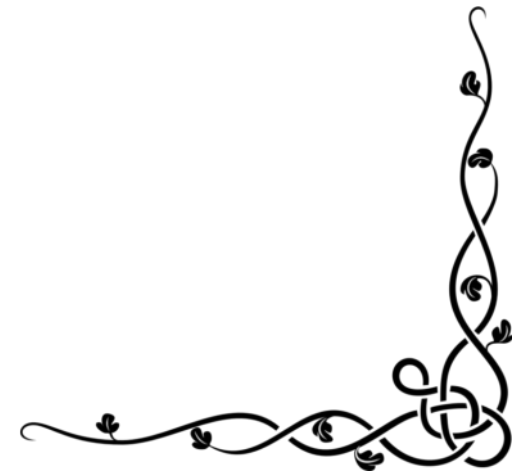


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No One Lives Here Anymore is a one-player RPG about exploring the wounds left behind in the passing of family. It discusses themes of loss and trauma, and may reach high levels of emotional intensity. All you need in order to play the game is this book, something to write on, and three dice - either standard six-sided dice or fudge dice. A complete game of *No One Lives Here Anymore* should take a few hours at most, depending on the level of detail that you go into.

Moving forward, information in plain text is presented to you, the player. Information in italics is presented to the character you're playing.





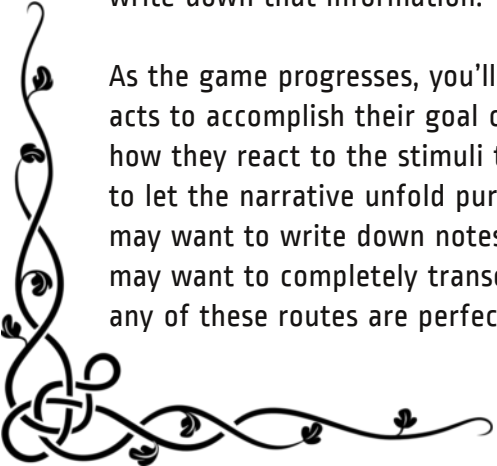
Introduction

Your mother has died, leaving your old family home empty. Your siblings and your more distant relatives don't have the strength or the time to come and clean out the belongings from the house, so that task falls to you. You have three days to box up as much as you can before control of the house shifts to your mother's creditors and you no longer have access.

You have just driven up to the house in your beat-up sedan and parked in front. The door waits for you and just beyond it lies the yawning gulf of history.

No One Lives Here Anymore is a game that you play with yourself; you are creating a narrative that flows from the dialogue between your imagination and the constraints of the game. You'll need to keep track of some numbers throughout the course of play, so you'll need something to write down that information.

As the game progresses, you'll imagine how your character acts to accomplish their goal of clearing out the house and how they react to the stimuli they encounter. You may want to let the narrative unfold purely in your imagination, or you may want to write down notes of what is happening. Or you may want to completely transcribe the story you're creating; any of these routes are perfectly fine.

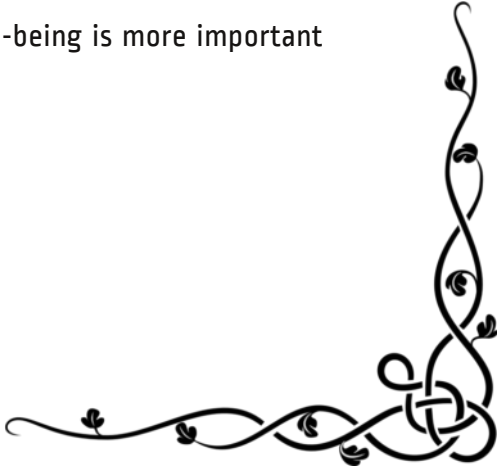


Emotional Safety

You're older now, and you can feel that age in your bones. Still no kids and no spouse; there's no time for those things. There's no one at home waiting for you besides some friends, maybe, that you can talk to over drinks when the time is right. But, for now, this is your sojourn alone. It's going to be a long few days, and part of you wonders if it's even worth the pains that will come with it. But if you don't try, all will be lost.

No One Lives Here Anymore can be emotionally intense for some players. Do not hesitate to stop the game if you need to. It might also be useful to have a friend on standby as you play through the game - someone you can safely rely on to explain your emotional state during the course of play. If you decide to make a record of your play, having someone to send it to once the game is over can be a welcome relief and a way of leaving the game behind.

Take care of yourself. Your well-being is more important than any game.



Rolls

It's been decades since you last came by here, and the memories are writ into every surface, into every mote of dust that floats through the sunbeams. Pictures of you and your siblings adorn the walls, capturing your youth in frozen precision and making your long journey away all the sharper in contrast. But even worse is the smell in the air - that mustiness, rich in mildew.

At various points in this game, you will be asked to roll the dice. Each roll will be presented in the format of X(), where X is the number of dice you'll be rolling, and inside of the parenthesis are the potential outcomes of that roll. For example, the most common roll you'll make is 3(Boxing, Pain, Exhaustion), meaning that you'll have three dice to roll with those three potential outcomes. Don't worry about what those outcomes mean - we'll get to that soon.

After rolling your dice, you'll assign one of them to each outcome. If you're rolling normal dice, you'll first need to convert the results to match a fudge dice. 1 and 2 are a Minus, 3 and 4 are a Blank, and 5 and 6 are a Plus. Pluses assigned to outcomes will have the best possible result for your character. Minuses assigned will have the worst possible result, and Blanks will be somewhere in the middle.

Rolling (cont.)

EX: You're rolling 3(Boxing, Pain, Exhaustion) and come up with 5, 6, and 3. Translated into fudge dice, this becomes Plus, Plus, Blank. Then, you can assign these results as desired to the outcomes of Boxing, Pain, and Exhaustion.





States

You're going to be here for three days, three long days, but not nearly enough. If you had a month, you could take your time; you could process things in a healthier way, and you could make sure that your back doesn't give out on you in the middle of the process. Unfortunately, you just don't have the opportunity to take your time.

You walk up the steps that used to seem so big, so looming, so ominous to a child's eyes; but to an adult, they're just stairs like any other - a little old, a little creaky, a little worn bare with the railing loose. In her final years, your mom wasn't able to keep up with things. You wonder if you'll fare any better as your time begins to run out.

As you spend your three days in the house, you'll need to keep track of some things, called States. These States represent progress in completing your task, as well as the emotional and physical toll of doing the work. Your character is not as young as they used to be, and there's only so much you can do.

As the game proceeds, these States will increase and decrease, but they have limits; with these limits come breaking points. Reaching that limit means different things for each State, but they have the common cause of stopping



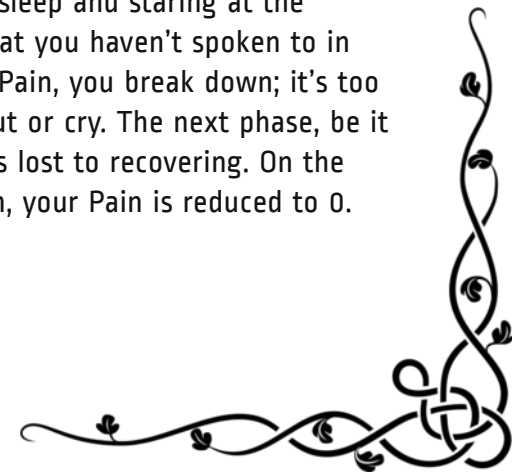
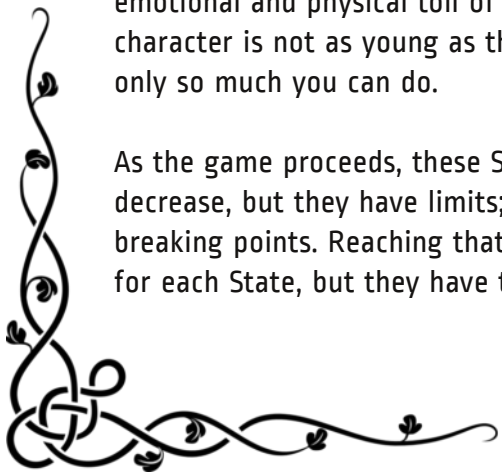
States (cont.)

the flow of play to address the breakage before moving forward.

The States, their limits, and what it means to cross that limit are as follows:

Boxing: Boxing represents how much content of the house you've boxed up, how many memories you've stored away to be shoved into a storage closet for decades, and how many things won't be left behind when the house is taken away. Once you've reached 6 Boxing, the game is done and you've completed your task. You can leave the house and move on with your life.

Pain: Pain represents the little bits of trauma and nagging memories that are dragged to the surface by your time in this house. It builds in every little thing you see, every little thing you do - even trying to sleep and staring at the ceiling, remembering those that you haven't spoken to in years. Once you've reached 4 Pain, you break down; it's too much, and you scream or shout or cry. The next phase, be it a day phase or a rest phase, is lost to recovering. On the plus side, after the breakdown, your Pain is reduced to 0.



States (cont.)

Exhaustion: Exhaustion represents the toll that the packing has taken on your body. It is the growing aches and pains, the creaking joints, the nights of troubled sleep from laying on beds that just don't smell right. Once you've reached 3 Exhaustion, you're spent, and you can't pick yourself up to do anything. During the next phase, you must perform the Rest action, even if it's during the day.



Outcomes

As you unpack your clothes into the bedroom dresser you'll be using during your time here, you wonder if it's even possible to do what you've set out to accomplish. So much time has been compressed into this space - not just your childhood, but the adult lives of your parents, and the childhoods of your siblings. It's all here, indelibly etched into the walls.

You trace your fingers along the scratches in a beam and remember the fights and the arguments, the shouting and the thrown flatware, and the bruises and the bleeding. There is an enormity here that you do not fully have the language to consider. You only know that the hurt is still as fresh in your scars as it was the day they were made - the ones in your flesh and the ones in your soul.

No One Lives Here Anymore has five potential outcomes, with different actions having different combinations of outcomes attached. These outcomes add or subtract to the States, and managing them can be quite important. Still, time is tight, resources are always limited, and being in the house is a weight that drags down everything. It is impossible to keep everything from bubbling over.

Outcomes (cont.)

The outcomes are as follows:

Boxing

Plus: Gain +2 Boxing State

Blank: Gain +1 Boxing State

Minus: No effect

Pain

Plus: No effect

Blank: Gain +1 Pain State

Minus: Gain +2 Pain State

Exhaustion

Plus: No effect

Blank: Gain +1 Exhaustion State

Minus: Gain +2 Exhaustion State

Comfort

Plus: Lose -2 Pain State

Blank: Lose -1 Pain State

Minus: No effect

Rest

Plus: Lose -2 Exhaustion State

Blank: Lose -1 Exhaustion State

Minus: No effect

Actions

Still, it wasn't all bad. For all of the decay that has sunk into the place, those smells do carry with them memories of good days, of breakfasts before school, of lazy summer days running through the halls or playing with the latest toys and gizmos. Youth itself had a kind of splendor to it, one that managed to survive all of the mangling.

As you wander the hallways, you catch a photo on a desk from your sister's graduation. She always seemed smarter and wiser than you would ever be, but here she is looking so young and bright, ready to face the world. You have no idea where her strength came from, but that strength is one that you can share, that you can make your own to propel you forward.

During the course of your time in the house, you will be working, resting, or finding some measure of comfort in the cold confines of the now-abandoned home. These are represented by the three potential actions that you can take, described below.

Work 3 [Boxing, Pain, Exhaustion]: You perform the Work action when you're doing your best to get things packed up, trying to get out of here as quickly as possible. You can only Work during the Morning and Evening.

Actions (cont.)

Rest 2 [Rest, Pain]: When you need to skip out on working to take care of your body by napping, sleeping, or watching television to relax, then you perform the Rest action. You can Rest at any time and at Night your only option is to Rest.

Comfort 2 [Comfort, Exhaustion]: When you indulge in comfortable things beneath the moonlight, when you drink and reminisce on the few happy memories you have, when you allow the trauma to be soothed by those pleasant memories, then you perform the Comfort action. You can only Comfort yourself in the Evening.



Structure

You can't waste any more time; your opportunities are few and you can only do so much. You have to make the best use of your time, at least while the sun is still bright enough. If you didn't have to sleep, it might have been easier, but you're going to have a hard enough time with a solid six hours of sleep and time for meals. Hopefully the dreams won't be too bad.

No One Lives Here Anymore takes place over the course of three days. At the end of the third and final Evening, the game ends, and what is left behind is lost forever. The days are divided into segments, starting with Morning, going into Evening, and ending with Night. As you progress through these segments, read the appropriate section below, along with the accompanying description. Each segment will also have a series of questions to consider as you think about how your character goes about their choice of actions.

During the Mornings, you can choose between the Work and Rest actions. During the Evenings, you can choose between the Work, Rest, and Comfort actions. At Night, you can only Rest. If you've passed the limit of any of your States, they override these rules and your choices.

First Morning

The work begins. You start in the den, the trophies on the mantle, the pictures on shelves, the mementos left to gather dust. It seems like every drawer has something that draws forth a memory, like every surface is electrified with that sense of razor-sharp nostalgia that threatens to tear you apart.

Is there anything you really want to find?

Why didn't your siblings come to help?

How far did you drive to get here?



First Evening

It's hard to say what keeps you going. It's hard to say what force can drive you forward, but you keep going. You probably should have been hitting the gym, working the muscles of your arms and your back, but this is what needs doing - this is the work that lies before you. The den is handled eventually, leaving so many rooms behind. At least the kitchen goes quickly, the plates and flatware that had not accrued the day to day wear and tear being tucked away into boxes.

What kind of food did you bring? Do you order out?

What debt will this house repay?

What colors pop the most in the twilight hours?



First Night

Night brings memories: memories of arguments muffled by closed doors, of people coming home late, far less quiet than they imagined, the scent of alcohol thick in the air. It brings to mind long hours studying or failing to study, of your mother reading you stories when you couldn't sleep. Eventually, you find one of those old children's books, and it feels so small in your hands - but it's enough.

Do you sleep in your old bedroom or in the master bedroom?

What memories spark your worst dreams?




Second Morning

Morning brings with it a fresh surge of energy, though the soreness lingers. Coffee helps, coffee always helps, if only to get the body going and the mind a bit sharper. The sharpness isn't all good, as it brings to mind the crisp cold of the day, and the sun hanging in the sky, striving slowly for its peak. Your work today takes you to the bedrooms, the spaces left behind by your siblings, and finding their detritus that they left here to accumulate.

Why does the sun look so pale as it crests over the horizon?

How cold is it in the house with the heat off?

Were you with your mother when she died?





Second Evening

And then it comes time to pack up the master bedroom, the very space where your mother had died so recently that you can practically see the imprint of her still on the sheets. She had seemed immortal for so long, holding on despite all the wounds that seeped into the space, that had warped everything, but now she's gone and that void is an eternity.

Do you draw the curtains and let the darkness seep in around the edges?

How does the house sound as it settles?

What is your worst memory of your time here?



Second Night

You can't sleep. How could you have ever slept here? Why did you come back? It makes no sense. This place is too much, existence is too much, everything is too much and you were never enough. You were never enough for them, not for your parents and not for your siblings. And now you're their cleanup crew, as if that's all you were ever good for. You find your way back to bed and, eventually, you find some rest, some quiet, some peace in the storm that rages inside you.

How long do you spend pacing the halls in the middle of the night?

What is your last thought before you finally drift to sleep?






Final Morning

Morning brings with it no relief to your emptiness. All you can do is attempt to fill it with curious trinkets, with meaningless things. People always hurt, people always push, and people always sting to get too close to. But there's so many pictures of you smiling, of you happy, of the time before the pain got so deep that you never thought you'd be happy again.

When did you get so old that getting out of bed makes your joints creak?

Will you ever settle down with anyone? Why haven't you yet?

What is your best memory of your time here?




Final Evening

This is it, the final curtain call. Tomorrow morning, all of these lingering memories will be swept away, churned in the inexorable grip of avarice. It's time to bury what you can't take, to leave it all to its rest. The past behind you is a tomb, and all that lies before you is the road and the long journey home.

What do you leave behind intentionally?

What memories linger with you as you prepare to leave?

What stories will you tell when you get back home?



The End

Your apartment seems tiny as you collapse onto your bed, staring up the ceiling. The minutes tick by as the those echoes of memories begin to fade like a dream hit by morning's light.

When it's over, either by you reaching 6 Boxing or by you running out of time, the game is over. Take some time to reflect on the journey that you and your character have gone on together; be kind to them as you put them away, be gentle to yourself as you put the game away, and turn back to the days to come.

