



ACTION HORROR FOR 3 TO 5 PLAYERS

TOWER OF DREAD

It's the not too distant future and simply having a job puts you at the top of an ivory tower. That tower is literal now. The cityscape is awash with lights, but cast your eyes down to ground level and you'd notice the point at which light stops. Lights don't shine for ground dwellers.

Genre: Action Horror

Number of players: 3 to 5

Run time: Approx. 2 to 3 hours

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WORLD BRIEFING:

Tower of Dread is set in a post-apocalyptic world where the apocalypse was a financial collapse. You are one of the lucky few who still have a job and a place in

society. You work at Harper Mills in the advertising and marketing department. There are many benefits to this life. Each day a helicopter picks up employees from their skyscraper apartments and flies groups of them up to the top of Harper Mills tower. It isn't safe in the lower levels of the tower – everything below the 10th floor has been sealed off for employee safety.

You rarely think of the masses of people living in the ruins of the world below at ground level. The ground dwellers have been abandoned and the skyscraper society is simply waiting for them to die off.

Note on tone: This story is going for the vibe of a fun action/horror movie that also happens to be making social commentary in between the dark humour and bloody carnage.

SETUP:

To run Tower Of Dread, you'll want to have the following set up your players.

- Printed character sheets
- A Jenga tower or similar
- Device for referencing the games notes on this webpage
- Pens/pencils
- Speaker system for running sound effects (optional)
- Stickers and sharpies so people can make name badges (optional)

RULES:

Dread is a role playing game that is played with no dice and no numbers. Instead, we use a Jenga tower resolve player actions.

- The tower starts with 3 blocks missing.
- Whenever players make an action they must pull blocks from the tower.
- The GM will tell you how many blocks to pull. Simple actions may only need a single block pull, but riskier actions require more block pulls.
- Normal Jenga rules apply: only pull with one hand, blocks get stacked back on top of the tower, the block being pulled must be from beneath the topmost
- complete layer, etc.
- Risk-free actions (like searching a suitcase) may require no pulls, but the game master may offer things like asking players if they want to do a thorough search. For example pull 1 block to search the suitcase – and find the hidden compartment!
- If the tower topples, then that means the end for that players character – usually via a grisly death.

- Player death will only ever occur from a tower falling over – but that doesn't mean the player characters' can't get seriously hurt.
- Players can choose to sacrifice themselves by smacking down the tower. This is their "go on without me" moment as they face the zombie horde with only a baseball bat. They allow the rest of the players to move to the next point of safety, but at the cost of their life. Make this spectacular.
- After a tower collapses, the tower is rebuilt, minus 3 blocks and then minus an ADDITIONAL 3 blocks for EVERY player character that has died/left the game. In this way the longer the game goes, the closer to another tower collapse you get.
- That's basically it, but [the full rules for Dread can be purchased here for \\$12.](#)

CHARACTER CREATION:

Tower of Dread is a game for 3 to 5 players. Print out as many character sheets as you'll need:

> [Download character sheet as PNG](#)

> [Download character sheet as PDF](#)

During character creation, you should play [this ambience track](#) to set the mood.

MUSIC:

There's a music track at the start of the game, but after that track here several Youtube playlists I recommend playing at appropriate points to set the mood.

- [Unnerving ambience music \(Gravity\)](#)
- [Action sequences \(Dredd\)](#)
- [General tense background music \(Concentration Programming Mix\)](#)



OUR STORY BEGINS...

*This section is for the game masters' eyes only.
Spoilers ahead for players.*

ACT 1

In which the characters and the main conflict are introduced.

[Play this soundtrack](#) to get the game started.

Though you can barely hear each other over the roar of the helicopters engines, you're laughing and joking with your co-workers. The helicopter is a retrofitted military model that comfortably carries all of you towards your usual after-work watering hole.

It's the not too distant future and nowadays simply having a job puts you at the top of an ivory tower. That tower is literal now. The cityscape is awash with lights, but cast your eyes down to ground level and you'd notice the point at which light stops. Lights don't shine for ground dwellers. People who have money never go to street level. It's not safe for people like you. Which is why you fly from place to place – and right now why you are flying in company helicopters from your office to a trendy bar on the top of a skyscraper.

INSIDE THE BAR

The bar is awash in lurid neon colours, casting everyone's faces in shades of pink and green. You've barely stepped in when someone with a camera on their shoulder gets up in your face:

"Heya buds! Hey pals! We're shooting a video for the bar's website. Tell us your name, your favourite drink and something nice about one of your friends here."

> This is basically an opportunity for the players to introduce their character in-game. However, there's also an extra character who flew in with them: Damon. He's an NPC who is also a part of their team.

Damon is the marketing assistant to your team. He's charming, friendly and loves whisky. The GM should give him a character introduction along with everyone else.

After that feel free to let the players dance, flirt and party for a little bit if they're keen. Otherwise you just describe how they party hard all night and then you can jump ahead to the next scene.

NEXT DAY AT THE OFFICE

It's after 9am the next day. You're all a little tired or even hungover depending. Look at the clock and it dawns on you that Damon hasn't shown up yet.

> Hopefully players will talk a little, share concerns or joke around

Have the players notice Kayleigh from HR comes out of the office of the senior marketing manager – your' boss' office. Kayleigh is a Scottish woman with a broad, imposing figure. She tells the players your boss (whose name you know is Michael) wants to talk to you all.

THE BOSS

You all file into the boss's office. Even though you were invited in to speak to Michael, he seems preoccupied by the giant arm farm that take up the entire back wall. You've always found his fascination with the creatures a little strange. Michael begins to monologue:

“Did you know that these ants can't see red light? It's there all the time, but their little ant eyes can't perceive that part of the spectrum. They could not tell whether the red light is off or on.

To them it's immaterial. Damon is that red light. Whether he's working or taking yet another sick day, his impact was immaterial. Head office told me they ran the numbers and found his contribution to be negligible, so we had to let him go when he came into work early this morning.”

See the thing about ants is that on their own they are insignificant, but as as a colony they can build wonders. I hope you'll keep this in mind. Head office tells me they will be looking into this matter of excess personnel. Have a productive day.”

> Players may well interject or have questions. As long as Michael is vague about what will happen to Damon (“you'll find out soon enough”) and things are unsettling then this scene serves it's purpose. Afterwards' Michael will dismiss the players from his office.

YOUR OFFICE SPACE

You exit the room and step back into your area. While your boss gets a private office, you have to share an open-plan office space with another department. There are two sides to the area – on one side is the rows of admin department and on the other side are your desks: the marketing department.

The admins are where the young entry level workers who start out as paper pushers. While your side is decorated with hipster flair, their side is devoid of decoration save for a single motivational cat poster.

> Give players a moment to reel from Damon's termination. Then proceed to the new plot point.

ANNOUNCEMENT: THE GAMES BEGIN

A chime rings out through the office, getting the attention of you all.

“May I have your attention employees of Harper Mills. I trust you are having a productive day. As you know, times are tough – and in order to survive as a company we must be tough in kind, which means layoffs.”

Every screen in the room suddenly flicks to the foyer security feed!

It's Damon is flanked by security guards who push him towards the door on ground level. You all know that it's incredibly rare for the 10th floor seal to be broken – yet here are people down on the ground floor level! The feed is silent, but you know Damon is screaming as security drags them along. Security quickly unlocks the door, tosses Damon outside and swiftly re-locks the front doors.

The perspective changes to an outside security camera. Damon looks desperate. Figures appear atop the giant concrete slabs that litter street level. A swarm of half naked folk surround and pounce Damon. You see one naked man beat another to death with Damon's shoe. Damon himself is lost from sight.

The announcement continues to explain: *“We are downsizing; By the close of business today, we must reduce personnel by 80%.”*

“Of course, firing people is such a messy, impersonal business. This is why we are implementing a creative solution that will allow employees to take charge of this situation. Under every desk is a safe locked with a fingerprint scanner. Anyone can open any safe – but your finger can only open one safe. Once you make a scan, you will be locked out of the system.”

“Speaking of locks, the front foyer doors and open with the push of a button from the inside. Anyone who wants to volunteer for redundancy may exit that way. We trust you will use this opportunity to make vacancies where you see fit. Work hard and win.”

> This is a good time to play [this music track](#)

All around the office there is a moment of stillness. Someone asks: “We’re not really doing this are we?”

Another responds by snatching a pair of scissors and stabbing them in the neck.

Everyone backs up from the twitching corpse. “You idiot. What do we gain by killing another admin?”

One by one teams of admins turns to you.

“What was it they said?”

“Make vacancies where you see fit?”

The pack of admins are realise that they outnumber you 5 to 1.

The players are faced with a hoard of admins willing to kill and the players have some choices to make. Behind them is Michael’s office. To the left is the stairwell and the right leads to the accounting department.

Player Options:

- [Run to the stairwell:](#) If they make a run for it, have the person at the lead and tail make a 1 block pull each. (2 pulls total)
- [Run to the accounting department:](#) If they make a run for it, have the person at the lead and tail make a 1 block pull each. (2 pulls total)
- [Run to Michael’s office:](#) It’s a short distance, so only a 1 block pull.
- If they fight it’s 2 pulls disable a single admin, and there’s 20 of them. Basically they can take out a couple, but it’s impossible to take them all on.
- Before they run, players can choose to make 2 pulls (per person) to quickly get to their safe and get their weapon. Starting weapon suggestions include: staple gun, screwdriver, pistol with no bullets, etc.

RUN TO THE STAIRWELL

Players run to the stairwell and wrench the door open. As you’re piling inside you

notice that Kayleigh from HR has joined the fray. She's been lucky enough to get a submachine gun and is firing wildly into the mob of admins. You notice that she has someone's finger on a lanyard around her neck. You shut the stairwell door and race down the stairs – and almost run right into a young man with a revolver. His face is almost familiar...but you can't recall his name. He raises the gun with trembling hands and fires a couple warning shots before leveling the gun at you: "Back off!"

This is the players' first moral test. The young man is edgy and sweating. He addresses all players by name. He should get frustrated that players don't recognise him. He tells them that he brings them their mail every day. He's tired of feeling lonely and left out.

Players have a few options here, including:

- **Disarm/attack the young man.** Ask for 3 block pulls here. The gun should go off and that player is left with a leg injury that will slow them down until it's bandaged
- **Talk the young man down.** How many block pulls this takes will depend on how well the players' make their argument.

Note, if the player manages to acquire the revolver, it should only have 3 bullets in it. It's up to the players' if they dismiss the young man, tell him to go somewhere safe or bring him along to protect him.

> From here jump to [Act 2](#)

RUN TO THE ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT

Entering the accounting department you hear screaming suddenly cut short. Up ahead you can see the backs of three figures all in brown suits. All three are wielding machetes and are making a blood mess of some hapless colleague. The head accountant is Teresa and you can see she has tied her hair back in a ponytail for the occasion.

Player Options:

- Sneak around and find a dead person's finger to open a safe like Kayleigh did
- Sneak past the accountants
- Attack the accountants

Whatever players choose, be sure to add stages to each challenge. Don't just ask for a few pulls and say they've snuck past the accountants. Have them come upon a dead body and have to stifle a scream into a whimper with a block pull. Then have an accountant hear the whimper and go check it out – requiring another 2 block

pulls. Players scurry around the corner just in time and the accountant, who assumes the dead body was making the whimpering noise, hacks into the corpse for good measure. Now you get to tempt the players into making a stealth kill – or moving on and leaving the area for good.

It doesn't have to be that verbatim, but this is a good example of how you can construct interesting scenarios.

> From here jump to [Act 2](#)

RUN TO MICHAEL'S OFFICE

Michael is in here – except he's looking very distressed. He seems to have been taken aback that even he could be victim in this game. His safe is open – and he's armed with only a bottle opener. The admins' are bloodthirsty and begin furiously founding on the door.

Depending on how the players' handle Michael there are several options you can play out.

- Players might barricade the door. Have them struggle against this for a bit – until gunshots ring out. When players open the door they will see Kayleigh from HR chasing away the last of the admin people armed with a sub-machine gun. You'll note that Kayleigh is also wearing someone's severed finger around her neck on a lanyard
- Players might wrestle and toss Michael out to the admins' as an offering to placate them
- Players might talk to Michael and calm them down – or provoke Michael into becoming hostile and attacking them. If combat occurs in this room make use of the ant farm on the far wall!

> From here jump to [Act 2](#)

ACT 2

The game opens up and players have free reign to explore, kill and survive as they sit fit. This section arms the GM with several tools and examples of how to create an exciting story.

Environment Design:

An office building makes for a great environment to set a game in it. You can easily create different rooms and levels as needed. Most areas should be open-plan to

allow players the option to sneak around if they choose to. But in order to avoid environments being too samey, give the departments clear visual identities. Accounting has charts and whiteboards filled with notes. HR has bright yellow walls and pictures of peoples' holidays.

The players have several means of moving around:

- Stairs or elevators at the end of the room
- Bathrooms for hiding places
- Meeting rooms and offices to the side
- Make use of signage! Give players a couple of local options to pick from: "One arrow points to reception and the other points to the server rooms"
- If people look for objects, provide flavour to the descriptions and provide a human touch. For example the kitchen knife set on somebody's desk has a happy birthday note on it from a co-worker. Look for opportunities to remind players that these are regular human beings.
- Create balcony areas – the kind you might see in a shopping centre that allows you to look down and see the floor beneath you. There's no stairs here, but it lets you see downstairs. This is an especially great way of showing dangerous people without them spotting you. This is especially good for extra dangerous characters' like Kayleigh. Try and keep Kayleigh alive and an active threat for a good while. She should be someone the players' dread seeing.

Progress Updates:

Give the feeling that time is passing by giving players occasional announcements. "Good work everyone, you've already terminated 7% of staff. Keep it up!" This is important is players are probably just going to try to survive until we hit the magic 80% and this nightmare can end.

Bring in NPCs from the player's character sheets:

Question 3 asked players to describe someone at the office who annoys them. Bring these people into the game, either as someone who is hunting that player – or as someone who is wounded and needs their help.

Keep things moving:

Allow players to have some quiet moments in between all the fighting and running and action. But here are some good ways to ramp things up after a quiet moment:

- An announcement comes on over the PA system: "We thought you should know that the front door has been breached. No employees

have left the building, but people sure are coming inside. Better hurry up. Ground dwellers are on the 3rd floor right now. Who knows how high they'll climb. Lockdown will only resume once you've completed your task."

- Kayleigh from HR is the biggest, baddest employee around. She's an almost unstoppable force who will chase the players to a new area. Have the players' hide from her – or have her get distracted by easier prey to hunt.
- Another announcement comes on: "Some employees seem to think they can find a quiet corner and wait it out. Well, we know how to make sure employees mingle at this party." Looking around someone will notice a gas haze around the fire sprinklers. Fire bursts erupt from the sprinklers – which will either get players moving, or shunt fleeing NPCs into their area.

Allow time for talk:

If players are going for a pacifist play, allow them space to talk with NPCs about why they shouldn't kill each other. Feel free to let them try and develop a non-violent group, but always look for ways that a single violent spark might send a group of peaceful workers into a riot.

Next Area:

With all that in mind, here's a good couple of options to kick off Act 2.

There's a server room up ahead and a gender neutral toilet block on the right.

- **Server Room:** It's a dark room filled with a deep hum of a thousand machines whirring away. This space gives players chance to catch their breath – before they start hearing the sounds of someone skulking around. If they try the door to get out, they find it has been electronically locked. Inside the server room is Sruthi from IT. She wields throwing knives and will stalk players in the darkness.
- **Toilet Block:** Muffled laughter can be heard from the bathroom. You find a Non-Player Character giggling madly and listening to music through headphones. (This is a good opportunity to bring someone in from question 3 of a players' character sheet.) They took drugs to space out and avoid the whole ordeal. Will players try and keep this person safe, steal their drugs or do something else altogether?

Play out various scenes until you're ready to turn up the heat and bring in new elements in Act 3.

ACT 3

It's time to really turn the heat up and hit the players with everything you've got.

Bring in the following elements in the third and final act. Feel free to have these events happen simultaneously to really put the players between a rock and a hard place.

GROUND DWELLERS are filling up the building. A crowd of hungry, desperate people swarm through the offices. Some of them are wearing blood stained suit pants or coats taken from some poor coworker, but no one is fully clothed.

The windows shatter and wind rips through the building. In fly a fleet of **QUADCOPTERS** with laser guns slung underneath who indiscriminately start shooting. A moment of joy when you see them gun down ground dwellers, but then you see a drone and take aim at one of you. It's getting late and the quadcopters are here to speed things along.

KAYLEIGH FROM HR continues to be the biggest, most dangerous staff member around. By now she has dozens of severed fingers having from the lanyards around her neck. She's well armed and physically powerful. Players might just be able to outsmart her though if they work together.

Possible Endings:

Depending on how players choose to play, there are several possible endings to this game. Here are the most common ones:

- **STEALTH/PACIFIST:** Survive until 80% is reached. Surreal moment as office tries to return to normal.
- **HUNTER/OPPORTUNIST:** Kill until 80% is reached. Reap the rewards of your bloody doing.
- **ESCAPE:** Make way to the ground floor and abandon your old life
- **SUBVERT:** Stop the mayhem by hacking the system to display fake numbers
- **ONLY ONES LEFT:** The announcement chimes in. "We are at 77%"
Players may find they are the only ones left in an area and may need to kill another player. But how much is that last 3%? One person...or more?

EPILOGUE

>> Play this instrumental version of Working Class Hero as background music for the epilogue

“Congratulations on being the 20%. Lockdown is active. Those floors too burned or bullet ridden will be locked down in time. Those remaining will be moved to top few floors.

New roles will be allocated by 9am tomorrow. Also note that all salaries are also are being cut by 20%. Thank you for your cooperation. You may go home early.”

Give an appropriate wrap up description. Talk about how the new few days are spent in a haze as employees deal with making small talk around the water cooler with people who they once tried to dismember. There’s a blood soaked elephant in the room and no one wants to talk about it. No one wants to shatter the illusion that every last one of them is disposable and easily replaceable...

CREDITS:

Thanks for playing!

Story by Kyle Evans

The Dread system was created by The Impossible Dream.

Just as a quick note, this game was originally written in June 2016. Several months later, The Belko Experiment premiered – a movie with a co-incidental similar premise.