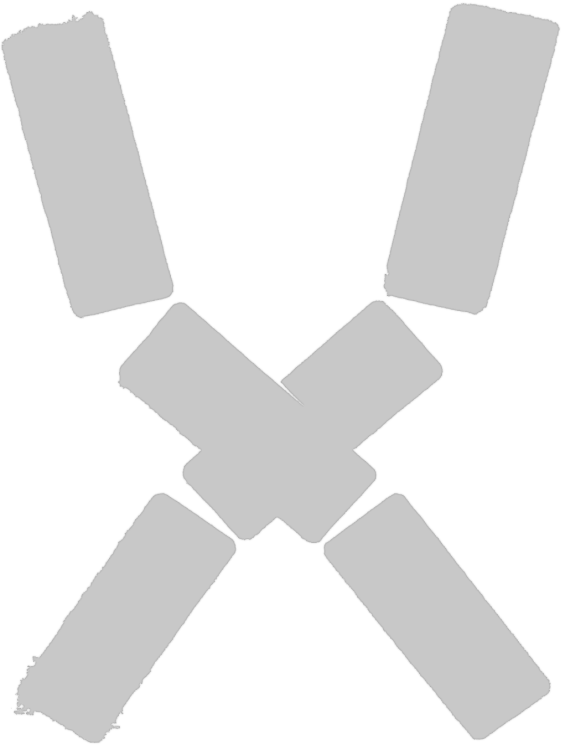
a lucky lockdown life sim

Hikikomori

s a m p l e r

by Derek Schraner



Also by Derek Schraner*

Operation CanCon:
the Canadian Music Shopping Gamebook series:

- *Eighties*
- *Nineties*
- *Classics*
- *Holiday Special*

the Break system series:

- *The Spring Break*
- *The Summer Job*
- *The Fall Affair*
- *The Winter Mission*
- *The Break System*

* See the end of this book for more details...

Credits

Hikikomori Sampler
derived from Hikikomori:
a lucky lockdown life sim

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All game design, development, and writing by Derek Schraner; original photo of Derek Schraner by Walter Schraner; all other images, design, and layout by Derek Schraner.

For information and printable sheets,
please visit LockdownLudonaut.com

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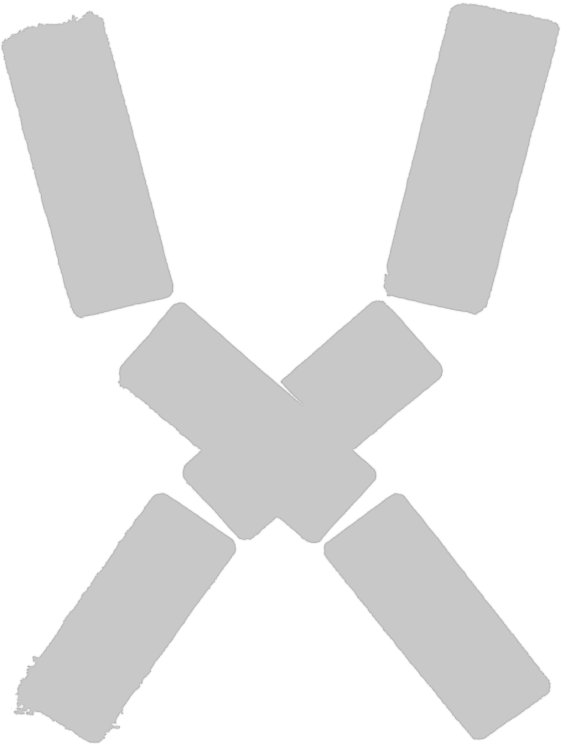
The her in hermit
speaks to me in Japanese.
Tell Tanya hello.

Dad, Emily, Myk:
They may not agree with us,
but they've indulged us.



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Also by Derek Schraner...

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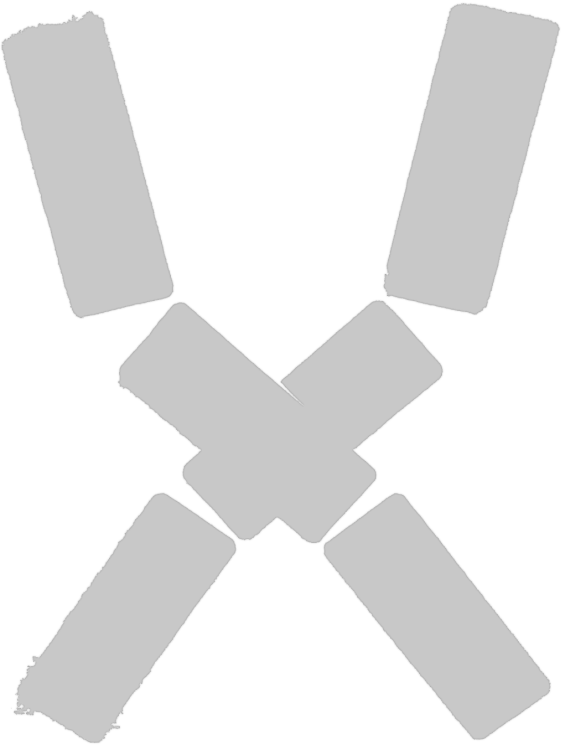


Introduction

From time to time, my father has recounted checking on me, in the basement of our family home. I was young, probably under ten, playing quietly with LEGO. Apparently my solitude concerned him.

Wasn't I lonely? No.

Wasn't I bored? No.

Didn't I want to go outside? Heck no. (I didn't say "Heck".)

Nearly five decades later, not much has changed. I currently live two doors down from that very same childhood home and, for most of my professional life, I have worked off-site, remotely. In my view, one of the few good things to come of the COVID pandemic has been a wider recognition of such practices. (We certainly learned precious little about health.)

On Saturday, March 14, 2020, our household locked down indefinitely. We have done so voluntarily, to protect a vulnerable member, but I also do so gladly, because I am still that little boy.

As if to gift us a more romantic label than "recluse" or "shut-in", we learned the new-to-us word "*hikikomori*". Applied to a person or their behaviour, it involves the avoidance of contact, or even withdrawal from society.[1]

Now my waking hours are often alike, with little distinction between days on or days off. My daily schedule has gradually evolved into a comfortable routine so consistent that any change has deleterious effects.

I hope to share this "lucky lockdown life sim" as a meditation on balance. It combines addressing multiple – even conflicting – obligations with the seeking of fulfillment in routine. It's the "days in the life" of me, but gamified.

And does it need me to go outside? Hell no.

---

[1] Trust the Japanese to coin a perfect term with no English equivalent, as they have done with *fuubutsushi, ikigai, irusu, kaizen, karoshi, kintsugi, majime, shibui,* and *tsundoku,* among others.

Overview

Hikikomori is the name of a campaign, an extended simulation of day-to-day life, and all its constituent **activities**. Each activity is, in turn, represented by a simple minigame called ***Ino***. However, what distinguishes each activity is that *Ino's* common rules will change slightly from time to time.

As such, before embarking on the main campaign, be sure to learn the basic rules of *Ino* in the following section. Once those rules are clear, then move on to the subsequent section, which explores the different ways that they may change. Navigating those **variations** is key to the *Hikikomori* experience.

When you play *Ino,* you will need something to write with, in order to keep notes and draw your own play area, usually in the form of a **3x3 grid**. You will also need at least one six-sided **die**, usually abbreviated as **1D6**. (Multiple **dice** are represented in other ways, such as **9D6** for nine six-sided dice.)

Hikikomori will need the same basic components but, because it involves numerous connected minigames, the sheets are shared in the Appendices, each associated with a specific time of **day**, **month**, or particular variations.

The sheets may be used as reference, or copied, as you may need more than are provided here. Which specific sheet to use will be shared as appropriate.

You will be guided through the process by a "branching paths" structure, so there are no rules to learn upfront, aside from *Ino* and its variations. To be clear, however, the structure is not intended to present a narrative in the traditional sense of a hero's journey, or similar; it is a mechanism to guide you through an experience of day-to-day activities, and their variations. Some "flavour text" will share how game elements relate to my own experiences, but isn't strictly necessary in engaging with *Hikikomori.*

Different decisions – referred to as **approaches** – result in different rules variations and combinations. Complete a day's worth of *Ino* in a specific way, before moving on to the next day's approach. Over time you may find preferred combinations, leading you to choose branches for their particular approaches.

In truth, it's unlikely that any one approach will be "better" or "worse" than another. Each is a different combination of factors you'll become familiar with, and may leverage depending on your strategy.

As in life, no single path remains consistently successful. One must constantly choose, try, and adapt. On some days, working carefully is more important than doing so quickly; on other days, the opposite may be true. As much as I'd like predictability and consistency, things don't always work that way...

In any case, there are eight activities (minigames) per **phase**, and two phases (**AM** and **PM**) per day; there are five days per week, an optional **skill** upgrade between weeks, four weeks per month, and three months in the campaign. As a result, with hundreds of such activities, you may wish to spread out your campaign, not unlike the actual experience of a lockdown routine.

Save up points to pay the **overhead,** at least 100 points per month. If you can't pay this **expense** for three months, then the game is lost. However, if you have earned at least 300 points by the end then, notwithstanding expenses, the remainder is your score. Just remember, you may have spent additional points along the way, for example, upgrading skills, to help you vary the rules.

Other optional **modes** (**Daydream** or **Nightmare**) are also available, to make the experience easier or more difficult (respectively), as well as "**New Game Plus**"

(sometimes called **NG+**) to continue the challenge after three months. More information about them follows in the variations section.

Also note that any terms which first appear in **bold type** may be found in the Glossary section for later reference. To begin, however, start by learning the *Ino* minigame rules...

Ino, the Minigame

Components

To play the *Ino* minigame, you'll need the following:

- Something to write with
    - Some may use paper and pencil. Others may prefer a more high tech solution, such as a tablet and stylus, or similar. Each has pros and cons. Use whatever you prefer but, keep in mind that, when you introduce variations, and follow the full *Hikikomori* campaign, you may need to erase and update your notes.
- 1D6 (one die, six-sided)
    - This component should be readily available in many common games. As with writing materials, you may prefer a digital tool, which can be found by searching app stores for a "dice simulator", "die roller", "random number generator", or just googling "1D6". Also keep in mind that the campaign and variations will increase the number of usable dice (all six-sided) to as many as nine (9D6).

General Description & Goal

As part of the initial **setup**, you will draw a 3x3 grid. Then, you will roll 1D6 to generate one random number (from 1 to 6) at a time. Choose any empty **space** in the grid to place the number. Repeat the rolling and placing process until all nine grid **squares** have been filled with a single number each. (It's fine that the same number will appear multiple times.)

When setup is complete, you will begin **selection**, rolling 1D6 for as many times as there are distinct values in the grid. Each time you roll, circle all placed numbers which match the latest roll result. Once a number is already circled, you need not circle it again.

The goal of the basic *Ino* minigame is to form at least one straight **line** connecting any three circled numbers, whether diagonal, horizontal, or vertical. If you manage to form at least one such line, you win.

Basic Rules (Steps)

A. Begin setup by preparing a 3x3 grid of nine spaces (blank squares); sketch a play area, as in a game of tic-tac-toe, or similar.

B. Continue by rolling 1D6 (one six-sided die), or otherwise generating a random number from 1 to 6.

C. Place the result rolled in any single space of your choice.

D. Repeat Steps B and C until all nine spaces have been filled with one number each. (Some numbers will be repeated.)

E. End the setup process by counting the number of distinct values placed.

    - An example: if you roll at least one of each number, then the count would be six.

    - Another example: if you roll nine of the same number, then note a count of one.

F. Continue with the selection process by rolling 1D6.

G. Deduct one from the current count (originally noted in Step E).

H. Does the result rolled in Step F match the value of any numbers placed in the setup process?

- ➢ If so, then continue to Step I.
- ➢ If not, then go directly to Step K.

I. Circle all matching numbers on the grid (possibly as many as nine at once) and continue to Step J.

J. Do any of the circles form at least one straight line of three circles, whether vertically, horizontally, and/or diagonally?

- ➢ If not, then continue to Step K.
- ➢ If so, then go directly to Step L.

K. Has the remaining roll count (Steps E and G) been reduced to zero?

- ➢ If so, then continue to Step L.
- ➢ If not, then go back to Step F.

L. Gameplay ends when all allotted rolls have been used (Step K) or the victory conditions have been satisfied (Step J). If you were able to form at least one valid **pattern**, then you win.

Example

1. For the setup process, I sketch a new 3x3 grid. (See Basic Rules, Step A.)

2. I roll 1D6 and get a 6, which I place in the centre space. (Steps B, C)

3. I continue rolling eight more times, getting 2, 5, 5, 1, 2, 1, 5, and 1, which I arrange in a clockwise order around the outer ring of the grid, from the "one o'clock" location (in the top-right) to the "twelve o'clock" location (in the top-middle). (Step D)

4. I count four distinct values: 1 (three 1s), 2 (two 2s), 5 (three 5s), and 6 (one 6). This will allow me up to four rolls during the selection process. (Steps E, G, L)

5. I use my first of four selection rolls; I roll 1D6 and get a 3. (Step F)

6. The result rolled does not match any of the placed numbers, so I do not circle any of them. (Step H)

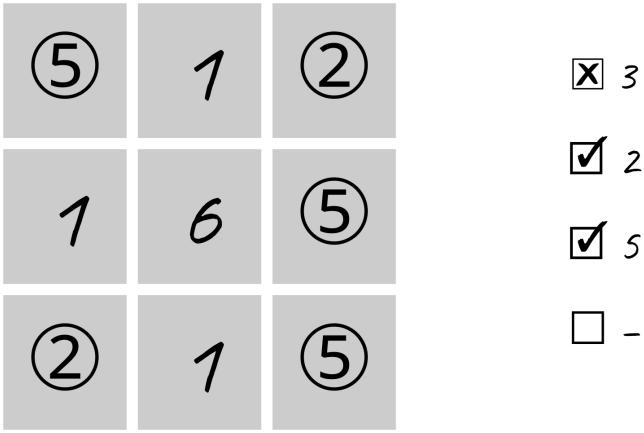
7. I still have three rolls remaining. (Step K)

8. I roll 1D6 again and get a 2. It matches two placed numbers, in the top-right and bottom-left corners, so I circle them both. (Steps F, H, I)

9. The circles do not form a valid pattern (a complete line of three circles), but I still have two rolls remaining. (Steps J, K)

10. I roll 1D6 again and get a 5. It matches three placed numbers, in the top-left and bottom-right corners, as well as the right-middle square. I circle all three of them. (Steps F, H, I)

11. A valid pattern is formed along the right edge of the grid: by the top-right 2, the right-middle 5, and the bottom-right 5. Even though I still have one roll remaining, I stop, having already won. (Steps J, K, L)



Included in *Hikikomori*

Thank you for trying the *Ino* minigame! The sampler ends here, but the full version of *Hikikomori* is available for sale now, and includes the following:

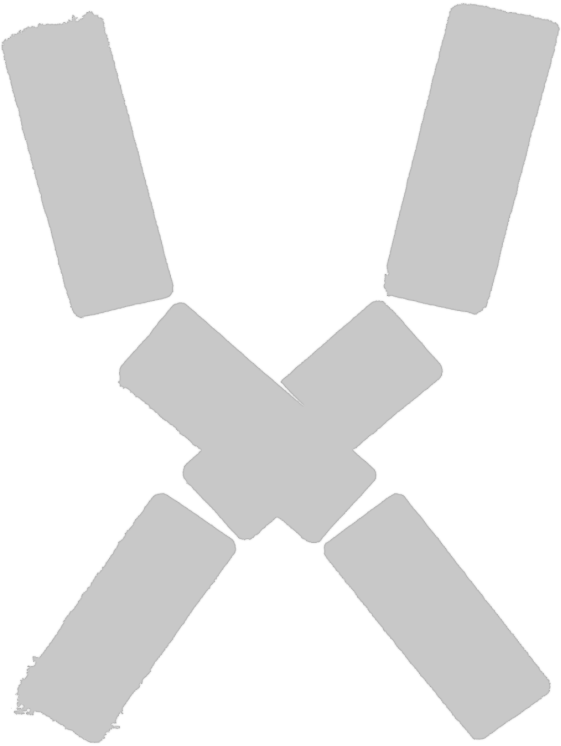
- **From Ino to Hikikomori**:
  Evolve the basic game, with variations and their combinations: patterns, positions, skills, mitigation, scoring, and other modes... building to the ultimate campaign.

- **Hikikomori, the Campaign**:
  Hundreds of sections supply an entire three-month experience, and even beyond, if you reach the New Game Plus mode.

- **Eighty peeks inside**:
  Excerpts from my recent ramblings, surveying a lockdown life.

- **Movies & Music for a Lockdown Ludonaut**:
  An audio/visual journey through the world of Hikikomori

For more information, please visit:
LockdownLudonaut.com



Also by Derek Schraner...

Operation CanCon: Canadian Music Shopping Gamebooks

Relive the history of Canadian music in this flashback trilogy. The ***Operation CanCon*** series blends nostalgic storytelling, solo gaming, and retro treasure hunting. Your mission: recover lost Canadian Content hidden in iconic shops, across the twentieth century and beyond.

Grab something to write with, three six-sided dice, and roll through branching paths, strategic choices, and bin-diving minigames. You'll leap through decades and destinations, each standalone instalment forming part of an epic journey through the culture that shaped a nation.

Ideal for fans of roll-and-write games, interactive fiction, and Canadiana, ***Operation CanCon*** is more than nostalgia; it's a quest to preserve a musical legacy, one hit after another.

*Operation CanCon: The Canadian **Eighties** Music Shopping Gamebook*

A Mission to Save the Music and the Future of a Nation

In ***Operation CanCon***, your mission is to collect Canadian Content. Navigate Eighties music stores in search of iconic songs. The hope of a country's future depends on preserving its cultural artifacts.

Using dice and a checklist, take your chances with the Sweep minigame, a treasure hunt where every roll reveals another hit. It's not all random chance, however. Your decisions really matter. Whether you play a single game or a multi-day campaign, you'll discover opportunities for tactics and strategy. Advanced modes, tweaks, and New Game Plus provide even more challenges.

Perfect for gamers, music lovers, and fans of Canadiana, ***Operation CanCon*** is a new take on nostalgia. With an interactive narrative, flexible gameplay, and customizable goals, it's more than a game, it's a retro celebration.

Operation CanCon: The Canadian Nineties Music Shopping Gamebook

It's Time to Take "Shopping Local" to the Next Level!

Welcome back to the Nineties. Canada's music scene is rocking, and the store shelves are packed with winners, if you're ready to roll. In ***Operation CanCon***, you're not just flipping through dusty bins, you're chasing priceless cultural artifacts. As a lone collector on a mission, your goal is to target a checklist of tracks scattered in iconic Toronto shops.

Part interactive fiction, part solo roll-and-write game, every visit is a gamble, whether for ten minutes or a campaign. All you need to play is three six-sided dice and something to write with.

Operation CanCon is your passport to an era of gone-but-unforgettable Canadian Content. The music that inspired a generation is ready to rise again, but it needs YOU to bring the decade back to life. Fully steeped in nostalgia, this standalone sequel to the Eighties original lets you relive a time when finding the right album seemed like fate.

---

*Operation CanCon: The Canadian **Classic** Music Shopping Gamebook*

Drop the Needle on One Last Flashback… It's Game Time Canada!

It all comes down to this: the final verse in ***Operation CanCon***. Leap between two capitals, across two centuries, on a mission to recover dozens of Canadian Content classics.

All you need is something to write with and three six-sided dice to roll your way through record stores in search of national treasures.

Equal parts branching-path adventure and bin-diving minigame, this interactive journey is a nostalgic tour of Canadian music. Whether you play for the memories or simply to know the score, this gamebook is your ticket to the past and, hopefully, a future.

Operation CanCon: Canadian Music Shopping Holiday Special

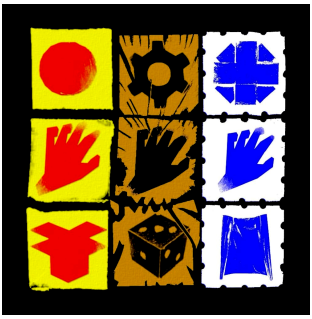
A Very Festive Flashback!

Celebrate the holidays in this ***Operation CanCon*** expansion. This festive adventure sends you back in search of true north classics, seasonal songs from throughout Canadian history.

This supplement adds new variants to the original trilogy's gameplay. You'll search for dozens of elusive tunes, attempt a scavenger hunt, and earn deeds to mark your holiday achievements.

For a limited time, download this booklet as a free PDF at LockdownLudonaut.com or purchase a physical copy as a keepsake.

Bundle up! 'Tis the season for bin-diving!



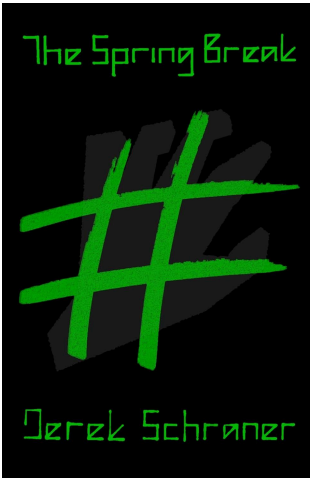
the ***Break*** *system* gamebooks

In *the* ***Break*** *system* series of interactive gamebooks, you don't just read a story, you also play it.

Each book is a standalone heist adventure, yet they all connect to form an overarching narrative that follows your journey as an evolving thief.

This series ramps up progressively, to turn you from a passive reader into an active player.

Upon completing the gamebooks, you'll be ready for the ultimate challenge: ***The Break System***. This master rulebook -- which includes an annotated version of ***The Spring Break*** prequel as its tutorial -- will provide all the tools you'll need to create and play your own ongoing heists!



*The Spring Break: a **Break** system prequel*

Spring Break in Hawaii is no vacation!

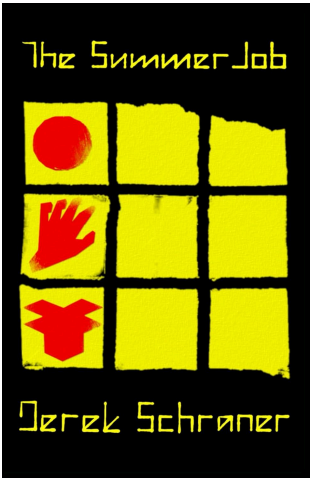
You think it's just another job. It isn't.

You're a small-time thief in paradise, chasing a fresh start, when a pawn shop heist goes sideways and drags you into a more challenging score.

This is where it all begins. Before the Alps, before the casino, and even before Kyoto, this prequel to the Break system series follows the run that started everything... the one that nearly broke the game before you made a move.

Spring into action. *Break* the system.

Your epic adventures start here.



*The Summer Job: a **Break** system gamebook*

Summer in Kyoto.
The city is alive...
with danger!

An international syndicate has set its sights on a heist in the heart of Japan, and YOU are the fledgling thief at the centre of it all. It isn't just their mission; it's your adventure.

As the Gion Matsuri festival pulses through the streets, you'll face unexpected twists that could change everything for your future. Every decision made affects the world, your path... and the end. Dozens of different stories are waiting for you.

Set against the vibrant backdrop of Kyoto's most famous festival, ***The Summer Job*** is the first ***Break*** *system* gamebook. Accessible, fun, and full of surprises, the unexpected is waiting. Ready to roll? The heat – and the heist – is on!

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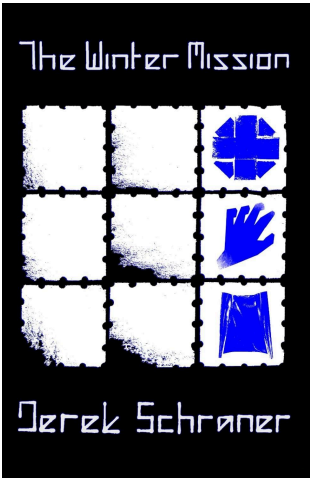
*The Fall Affair: a **Break** system gamebook*

Unfinished business at an unfinished casino!

Your mission takes you away from the bustling streets of Kyoto to a long-abandoned casino in Ontario. It's the weekend after Halloween, and the chill isn't from the autumn. Your target: a doomsday device with a secret link to your past. Its lingering effects make even the simplest things terrifying. With the stakes now higher than ever, success may cost more than expected.

The Fall Affair is a standalone trip in *the **Break** system* series. A six-sided die is recommended, but not required for your journey. The gamebook also includes several additional activities, from bonus mini-games to a curated musical playlist.

The heist is on and, this time, it will haunt you!



The Winter Mission: a Break system gamebook

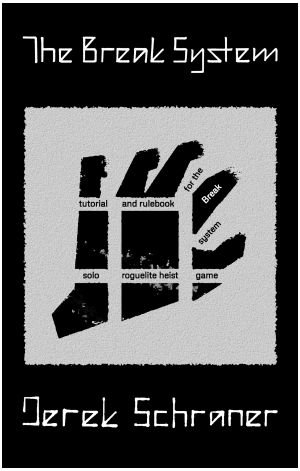
The math says no.
The season says yes.

An impossible opportunity lures you from the streets of Toronto to the treacherous peaks of Switzerland in mid-December. You can't resist the target – something you thought was lost forever – but traps await. The enemy knows you're coming.

Surviving alone may be possible, but it would take a miracle. Success demands more than skill and luck. You're going to need some allies.

The Winter Mission marks the conclusion to *the **Break** system* gamebook series. With branching choices, dice-based challenges, and new crew management, this adventure tests every lesson you've learned, with every move you make.

The dead of winter. The heart of Helvetia.
A holiday heist to remember.



The Break System: tutorial and rulebook for the solo roguelite heist game

Some plans were made to be broken…

Claw your way from low-level operative to master strategist in ***The Break System***, a solo heist adventure. Scout, negotiate, infiltrate, and escape! Every decision shapes your approach.

You won't be without resources. *The Spring Break* prequel story is included with new annotations to guide your early steps. Key moments reveal their mechanics and show how chance and choice shape a mission. You don't need to study the rules upfront; they're introduced gradually. Take it slow or jump ahead. In this heist, you call the shots.

Beyond the tutorial, the full ***Break*** *system* offers a roll-and-write campaign of increasing challenge. Six-sided dice and tactical decisions keep you on your toes, while you track your progress, building your reputation. Even failure isn't the end; here, learning beats luck. Adapt your plans and carry on…

In ***The Break System***, the end is just a beginning.

Continue the Heist Online!

Free downloads, bonus content, and more gamebooks

Download printable playsheets, reference tables, and other full-sized materials for this book, and many more

Lockdown Ludonaut is the official home of Derek Schraner's gamebooks, including *the **Break** System* series, ***Operation CanCon***, and other interactive titles, featuring the latest news, updates, and extras.

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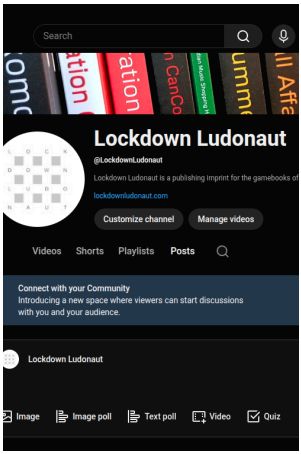

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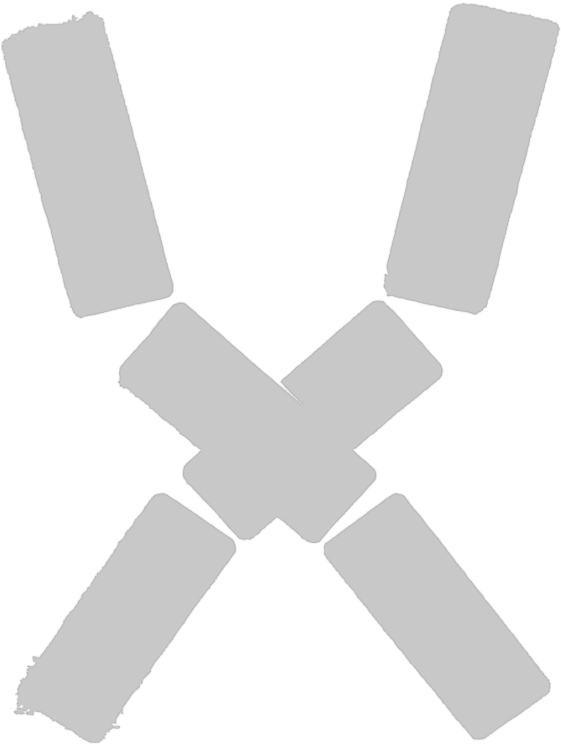
About the Author

In 1979, Derek Schraner didn't know the word *"hikikomori"* yet, but he did know he didn't want to go outside. He was happier making his own fun, like a styrofoam spaceship, a crankable scroll-based television, or games cobbled together from whatever he could find. So, not much has changed.

Between then and now, he has obtained undergraduate degrees in Cinema Studies, English and Philosophy from the University of Toronto, as well as Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Media Production from Ryerson University.

He has been a writer, producer, instructor and, circumstances permitting, a musician, a blogger and, perhaps unsurprisingly, a gamer.