

Scene 3

Hazy wisps of smoke drifted lazily around the crowded basement. Ventilation had always been poor and the room was often uncomfortably cool in the winter and warm in the summer. For that reason an assortment of mis-matched blankets and electric heaters had made their way down the creaking wooden stairs to the basement and found homes on seat backs and crammed into random corners. Fortunately, this Halloween night was comfortably pleasant outside, cool and clear with wispy clouds slowly rolling across the kind of bright, almost-full moon that lights the sidewalks for safe trick-or-treating while creating inky-black shadows that must surely be filled with clutching hands and sharp teeth, or worse.

The group of friends gathered around the coffee table in Seth's basement were perfectly comfortable, however... stoned and laughing, setting aside the ash-filled bong and reaching for the game set up and ready before them.

"It's called *Downward Spiral*." Seth proclaimed using his stage voice, loud without shouting, perfect for getting a chattering audience to settle down and direct their attention to the performance about to begin. He held up the game's box, made from dark wood and featuring a spiral design similar to the game board.

"That's a cool box." commented Jonesy. "You don't see a lot of wooden game boxes anymore. It must be old, but all the cards and game pieces look brand new. Whoever donated this didn't get much use out of it."

"Yes, it's very cool. I'm a savvy shopper" Seth replied with a small grin. "I was originally thinking it would make an interesting prop for *Enemies Abound*. You know, that scene where they visit Hannaman's Antique Store. It hardly even looks like a game. You know how most board games have a picture on the box where an implausibly happy family is playing the game with huge smiles on their faces, having a great time? This box just has that creepy spiral on top. At first I thought it was a puzzle. Now shut up and listen while I explain the rules.

"Everybody choose one of the four game tokens and place it in the starting square with the matching color. Starting with the player sitting closest to North, each player rolls the die and moves their token the indicated number of spaces. Follow the instructions on the space where you land. When complete, the next player takes their turn. The order of players proceeds in a clockwise direction. Players may not change the turn order after the game has started. The game is over when all players reach *The Void* at the center of the spiral.

"That's it for the rules. I expect more will be revealed as we land on the different squares. Oh, and then there's this note at the end. It reads,

Downward Spiral is a journey into the unknown. Choose your players carefully. For best results, begin playing after dark but no later than midnight. Once begun, your journey must continue until

all players reach The Void.

and finally,

TRUTH IS FREEDOM

"This game doesn't exactly sound... fun." Francine stated, her eyes downcast. Travis was nodding.

"Oooh, scared already, and the game hasn't even started! Just what I was hoping for." He glanced around the room, thinking. After a moment he pointed toward the stairs over her left shoulder.

"That's north, more or less. Good news, Franny. You get to go first!" He placed the single white die in front of her with a broad smile. "Let the game begin!"

Revision #3

Created 2025-10-15 13:10:43 UTC by Matt

Updated 2025-10-16 14:48:14 UTC by Matt