

ひきこもり

(Hikikomori)

A Solo RPG Thing

(And a 24-Hour RPG)

By Ewen Cluney

*Cause I'm busy with me, myself and I
Can't be understood by someone I don't know to well
So I'm shutting out the whole world just to play Nintendo
I've got these games but I'm afraid you can't join me
- Millencolin, "Bullion"*

Introduction

The term *hikikomori* refers to a phenomenon that's become a problem in Japan, where adolescents and young adults (mostly but not entirely guys) start seeking social isolation, shying away from normal human contact as much as possible in favor of hiding in their rooms. Some of them have hobbies that keep them busy, while others just stare at the ceiling. I could try to go into detail about this, but (1) this is a 24-hour RPG and as of 2:20 p.m. PST on Monday, June 12, 2006 I'm on the clock, and (2) I'd probably screw it up, especially since a lot of my sense of what a *hikikomori* is like comes from the novel *NHK ni Youkoso* ("Welcome to the NHK") by Tatsuhiro Takimoto (which I recommend reading for reference... if you happen to be able to read Japanese). For some info on the subject that's somewhat better than anything I could write, either do a Google search, or look here:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hikikomori>

Jhonen Vasquez' comic *Jhonny The Homicidal Maniac* probably played into this a little bit too, especially with the imaginary friends.

Anyway, this game is a "solo RPG," which admittedly is kind of an oxymoron. But I figured that if I'm going to make a game about antisocial shut-ins, it ought to be a game you could play by yourself. In this game you'll be rolling dice (you'll need plenty of ten-sided dice) and following instructions to generate events, making some choices about those and rolling a few more dice, and then writing a fictional diary entry based on the results. Out of necessity it's not as open-ended as a normal RPG, but then it's mostly a writing exercise. You can write on paper, type them up, or put them in a blog. Needless to say I'm curious what the results will be like, but you can do whatever you want with them.

By default, the game ends after your character goes through seven unusually eventful days. One of the ways in which it's like a typical RPG is that there isn't any particular way to "win." If you want your character to get out of his rut and rejoin society, or stay the same, or kill himself, or whatever, you can try to steer him that way, but a lot of stuff will come down to how the dice fall. The real game is turning all this nonsense into coherent writing.

Hikikomori Creation

The first step is to come up with your hikikomori character as a starting point. While the hikikomori phenomenon is most common in Japan (there's supposedly at least 50,000 there), similar things are happening in South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, and it's not unthinkable for it to happen in any post-industrial country. So, your character doesn't have to be Japanese if you don't want him to be.

"He" also doesn't necessarily have to be a guy, though hikikomori are mostly male in real life. Hell, have him be an androgynous alien with psychic powers if that's really what you want. Whoever, whatever he is, come up with as many or as few biographical details as you wish; you're the one who has to write about this guy.

You start with a stat called **Hope**, which begins at 3d10. Write it down wherever you're planning to write things down, but like everything else, you should write it down in such a way that you can erase/change it later.

Next, you need to get some **Traits**. These are various "things" that affect your character's life, and they're the meat of the game. Some are good, some are bad, and some are a bit of both, depending. Look at the table below; pick one that you like, and then roll 1d10 twice to get two more. If you wind up with the same one twice, roll again until you get one that isn't a duplicate. Refer to the Traits section for instructions on what you do to initialize each Trait. Most traits start with a rating of 3d10.

1-2	Obsessive Hobby
3	Rescuer
4	Imaginary Friend
5	Perversion
6	Suicidal Thoughts
7	Vice
8	Delusion
9	Health Problem
10	Real Friend

You can gain additional Traits and have your existing Traits change their ratings and such over the course of the game, though you have little control over this. Although you can't have more than one of the same Trait at the start of the game, you can if you gain them during the game, though they have to be different instances. If you have an Obsessive Hobby and gain another Obsessive Hobby, they should be for two different hobbies.

Gameplay

In this game you go through seven days in the life of your hikikomori. Each day you get to pick three actions to attempt, and three of your Traits will be trying to exert some kind of influence over you.

Rolling Dice

Throughout the game you' ll be rolling lots of ten-sided dice to see what happens. Sometimes the game will ask you to simply roll a d10 and look at the result. Other times it will ask you to roll the dice of your Hope or of a Trait. And sometimes it' ll ask that you roll the dice of two different things and compare them; this is called an "opposed roll," and the margin by which one exceeds the other is usually important.

Their Actions

Go through your Traits, roll their dice, and organize them from highest to lowest. The three with the highest rolls are the ones that act during that day. For each of these, look at the **Trait Actions** section of their entry in the Traits section. If you have more than ten Traits, get rid of the ones in excess of ten that roll lowest.

Your Actions

Each day, you get to try to do three things. You can pick **Generic Actions** or Trait-Specific Actions, in any combination. Generic actions are listed below, and Trait-Specific Actions are listed in the Traits section under the "**Player Actions**" section of each Trait description. In both cases, some of these can be used to counter actions brought against you by your Traits.

Also, a given action can only be used once per day. The only exception is if you have two or more of the same Trait. If you have two Imaginary Friends, you can use the Placate action twice in one day, once on each of them.

Narrating

Once you have all your actions and results figured out for that day, it' s time to write your diary entry. The system is just meant to give you an outline and some cues; it' s up to you to flesh things out and give narrative weight and so on to what comes out of all the charts and numbers and rolling.

I haven' t actually tested this out yet (it being a 24-hour RPG and all), so it' s hard to give much in the way of tips, but one thing I

will point out is that when you erase a Trait and later wind up gaining another of the same kind of Trait, you can treat it as though whatever it was went away and came back. So, say that Izumi, the girl who keeps bugging you to go outside (a Rescuer), finally got scared away by your *lolicon* fetish. If you go with the Do Nothing action you wind up getting a new Rescuer trait, in the story you can treat it as though Izumi decided to come back. (And if the Rescuer archetype is different, well, it means she's changed her attitude, and maybe something happened to her in the meantime.)

Also, while you have to determine the actions of your Traits first and then those you take yourself, you can narrate them in any order you like.

The End

At the end of your seven simulated days, look at your character's Hope.

If it's gotten down to zero dice, he's lost all hope and will never recover. If you want him to commit suicide you can go that route, but any remaining Rescuers and Real Friends have a chance to intervene as usual. Otherwise he'll just waste away until he runs out of relatives to leech off of.

If it's gotten up to ten or more dice, he's "cured" of being a hikikomori, and moves on with his life.

If it's between 1 and 9, roll your Hope dice and look at the following table.

1-9	Nothing changes, and you feel thoroughly hopeless do to anything about it.
10-19	Nothing changes.
20-29	Nothing changes, though it might some day.
30-39	You're able to take some baby steps out of that door, and some day you might get further.
40-49	You're still a very unsocial person, but you've found a way to live that suits you.
50-65	Being around people still bugs you a bit, but you can manage a relatively normal life as long as you can have some quiet time now and then.
66-79	You feel completely lost, but you now know that the answers lie outside your room.
80-89	You can finally move on. You're not sure what you want to do with your life, but you're not about to give up.

90+	You can finally move on. You figure out what you want to do with your life, what will make you happy, better than most people do, and you go do it.
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Once you have all that figured out, write an epilogue. Once you've done that, take a moment to pull yourself back into reality as thoroughly as you can. Even if you've been thinking about things you might not have ordinarily, you are who you were before you started. Now think about how you can make your life better. It's in the rules of the game so you have to do it.

Generic Actions

Do Nothing

You decide to do nothing at all. You lie on the floor and stare at the ceiling. Or the wall. Or some other convenient inanimate object. It's boring. Roll 1d10:

1	You gain a new, unpleasant Trait. Roll 1d10: 1-4 Delusion 5-8 Imaginary Friend 9-10 Suicidal Thoughts
2-9	Yup. Nothing happens.
10	Someone knocks on the door. Roll 1d10: 1-5 You hide until they go away. 6-8 You open the door and have a very awkward conversation. 9 Gain a Rescuer. 10 Gain a Real Friend.

Go Outside

Somehow you decide to try going outside, albeit at a time when there aren't too many other people around. This action refers to specifically going outside in order to go outside; you do not have to use it in order to use other actions that send you outdoors. You have to make a Hope roll and get a result of at least 25 to make it outside. Once you're outside, roll 1d10, add the number of your current hope dice (i.e., if you have 4d10 Hope, roll 1d10+4, not 5d10), and check the table below:

1-2	You encounter someone you knew from before you became a hikikomori and flee in terror. Lose one die of Hope.
3-8	At most you're able to go stop by a store or two to buy some things while avoiding eye contact before you head back home.

9	<p>You encounter someone you knew from before you became a hikikomori, and manage to hold an actual conversation.</p> <p>Roll 1d10:</p> <p>1-4 You talk for a little while and go your separate ways.</p> <p>6-7 It turns out you have some common interests; gain a Real Friend.</p> <p>8-9 That person decides to be a nuisance. Gain a Rescuer.</p> <p>10 That person somehow makes you feel better about yourself, even if it's only though how pathetic they are themselves. Gain a die of Hope.</p>
10-11	<p>You buy a few things you need and are surprised to find yourself enjoying walking around the shopping district. If you have a Delusion, Imaginary Friend, Perversion, Suicidal Thoughts, or a Vice, you can choose to reduce one of these by one die.</p>
12-15	<p>You spend some pleasant time outside of the house, and, surprisingly, the fresh air does you some good. If you have a Health Problem, reduce it by up to two dice.</p>
16+	<p>You experience something transcendent about the stars in the sky. Or whatever. Gain a die of Hope.</p>

Suicide Attempt

You decide to try to kill yourself. If you have any Rescuers and/or Real Friends, roll the trait dice for each of them. If any get a result of 14 or more, they discover your attempt and try to get you to stop it.

Make a Hope roll. If any of your Rescuers or Real Friends manage to intervene, add their trait dice to the roll.

- If the result is 4 or less you actually go through it and the game is over.
- If the result is 5-10, you hurt yourself but don't actually die.
- If the result is 11-16, you get the means to kill yourself ready but don't actually do it.
- If the result is 17 or higher, you can't bring yourself to do it at all, even if you're not sure what it is that's holding you back.

Waste Time

You indulge in pointless activities of some kind. You play video games, read manga, watch TV, masturbate, or something equally unproductive. Make a Hope roll:

1-4	You're severely depressed by the meaninglessness of it all. Lose a die of Hope.
5-8	You get a little too entranced by the thing you're using to waste time. You gain either an Obsessive Hobby or Perversion, or add a die to an existing one (your choice).
9+	Yep. You kill some time, and maybe think about where your life is at. That is all.

Traits

This section is in some ways the meat of the game; it gives you all of the various Traits, and everything that they can do and everything that you can do with them.

Delusion

Your mind is starting to get messed up, and you've begun to believe things that aren't real, dangerous things.

Initialization

If the nature of your Delusion was specified by some other rule, you have to go with that. Otherwise you can pick whichever of the three you like, which in turn determines its starting trait dice:

- **Paranoid (3d10):** You're convinced that someone or something is out to get you.
- **Messianic (4d10):** You're convinced that you're destined for some kind of greatness.
- **Illogical (2d10):** You're convinced of something that's just screwy and nonsensical, which leads you to acquire some odd habits.

Player Actions

Attempt to Overcome

You have a sneaking suspicion that something is wrong, and you try to do something about it. Make a contested roll between your Hope and your Delusion.

Hope wins by 12+	You get over it, and feel better for doing so. Eliminate your Delusion trait, and gain a die of Hope.
Hope wins by 8+	Back to sanity, but you're still kind of depressed. Eliminate your Delusion trait.
Hope wins by 4+	Sanity takes hold somewhat. Reduce your Delusion trait by one die.
Tie	You remain ignorant. Nothing changes.
Delusion wins by 4+	You're still a nutbar, and that's all there is to it.
Delusion wins by 8+	You're out there, and the way events are unfolding makes your tiny little mind a depressing place to be. Lose a die of Hope.
Delusion	It backfires; you wind up getting even deeper into crazy

wins by 12+	town. Your Delusion gains a die.
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Trait Actions

When your Delusion tries to act on you, it tries to get you to do something crazy. Make an opposed roll between your Hope and your Delusion. If your Hope wins by 10, the Delusion is destroyed. If your Hope wins by 5, the Delusion loses a die. If the Delusion wins, things get interesting:

Hope Wins by 10+	Sanity takes hold; eliminate this Delusion entirely.
Hope Wins by 5-9	Sanity has a say in what's going on. Reduce the Delusion by one die.
Hope wins by 0-4	You decide to hold back.
Delusion Wins by 1-4	You go do something crazy. People mock you, and you go home.
Delusion Wins by 5-9	You go do something crazy. People mock you, and you get discouraged. Lose a die of Hope.
Delusion Wins by 10-14	You go do something pretty out there, and someone notices and gets worried. If you have a Rescuer, she gains a die. If you don't have a Rescuer, you do now.
Delusion wins by 15+	You go outside and do something so completely insane that it winds up in the newspapers... and you get away with it and it feels great. Your Delusion gains a die.

Health Problem

Staying in your room all the time just isn't good for your health, in any number of ways, and you're starting to show it in some fashion. Maybe you've got an actual illness, maybe it's psychosomatic, maybe it's malnutrition, or maybe some hereditary health condition has kicked in and is being made worse by your lifestyle. Regardless, it's here and it's a problem.

Initialization

Decide what the health problem is, and then decide what your character *thinks* it is (assuming he even notices it). It starts with 3 dice.

Player Actions

Seek Help

If you're smart you'll go see a doctor. Except that means leaving the house and going to a hospital, where there are always lots of people. Sick people no less. Make a Hope roll; if the result is less than 8, you decide to stay home. If it's between 8 and 14, you go to a drug store and get some medicine, reducing the Health Problem by one die. If the result is 15 or higher, you're able to actually go see a doctor, and the problem gets fixed (remove the Health Problem trait entirely).

Suffer

You give in to the pain your condition is causing and sit there suffering. Make an opposed roll between your Hope and your Health Problem. If your Health Problem wins, it gains one die. If your Hope wins, your Health Problem loses a die.

Trait Actions

A Health Problem will attempt to do one of two things, depending on how many dice it has.

If it has 4 or fewer dice, it will **Cause Pain**. Roll the trait dice; if the result is 14 or higher, the

Health Problem gains a die. If the result is 20 or higher, you also lose a die of Hope.

If it has 5 or more dice, it will **Cause an Emergency**. This means that your condition has become serious enough that you wind up being rushed to the hospital. The emergency takes up all of your actions for that day, both the ones you specify and the ones that come from your Traits. The next day your Health Problem is gone, but you lose a die of Hope.

Imaginary Friend

There's someone who likes to talk to you, and they aren't quite real. It might be something purely out of your imagination, or it might be that your home appliances have begun talking to you.

Initialization

Write "Imaginary Friend 3d10" and a brief description of what your Imaginary Friend is like. Roll 1d10, and re-roll anything above a 6, to determine your imaginary friend's starting Demeanor.

What follows is the scale for Demeanor, a value that determines an Imaginary Friend's general attitude towards you. Certain actions can influence the Demeanor, pushing it up or down, which in turn influences how the Imaginary Friend it acts when it tries to influence on you. The higher the Demeanor value, the nicer they are. If it gets too low... you could be in trouble.

1	Murderous	6	Indifferent
2	Furious	7	Pleased
3	Angry	8	Productive
4	Paranoid	9	Happy
5	Depressing	10	Ecstatic

Player Actions

Attempt to Banish

Make a Hope roll, then roll the Imaginary Friend's trait dice. If your Hope roll is higher by at least 4 points, erase the Imaginary Friend and gain one die of Hope. If the Imaginary Friend's roll is higher by 5 points or more, lose one die of Hope, and reduce the Imaginary Friend's base Demeanor by 1, or by 2 if its roll is higher by 10 points or more.

Conversation

You decide to hold a conversation with your imaginary friend. Not a good sign. Go to the "What It Does" section to figure out what it says to you.

Placate

You attempt to make your Imaginary Friend play nice with kind words (“You know Mr. Toaster, the toast you make really is the best toast I’ ve ever had!”). Roll 1d10:

1	He’ s not buying it. In fact he’ s mortally offended! Your imaginary friend’ s Demeanor goes down by 2, and it gains one trait die.
2-5	Your imaginary friend ignores your supplications and continues going about its business.
6-9	Make a Hope roll and a trait roll. If the Hope roll exceeds the trait roll, the Imaginary Friend’ s Demeanor goes up by 1. If the trait roll is higher, it goes down by 1.
10	Your Imaginary Friend listens to you attentively. Its demeanor either goes up to 7, or rises by 2 points, whichever is higher.

Trait Actions

An Imaginary Friend can only influence you by talking to you. What it aims for depends on its current Demeanor.

1	Tries to get you to commit suicide. Make a Hope roll against the Imaginary Friend’ s trait dice. If it gets a better result, perform the Suicide Attempt Generic Action. If it gets you to try but the suicide attempt fails, you lose a die of Hope.
2-3	Starts making threats, really gruesome stuff that
4	Starts whispering about bad people who want to hurt you, or that the water contains evil chemicals, or something. Make an opposed roll, your Hope against the IF’ s trait dice. If it wins, you gain a Delusion (Paranoid) and it gains another die.
5	Your imaginary friend seems to want to get you down.
6	Still talking to you, and not necessarily when you want it to, but not saying anything that messes with you. Roll 1d10; on a 1-5 its Demeanor goes down by 1, on a 6-10 it goes up by 1.
7-8	Surprisingly, your IF starts encouraging you. Make a trait roll; if the result is 16 or higher, you gain a die of Hope, and your IF’ s Demeanor goes up by 1.
9	Your IF just loves you for some reason, and is actively trying to put you on the right path. Make a trait roll; if the result is 10 or higher, you gain a die of Hope.
10	Your IF loves you a little too much. Make a trait roll; if it’ s 16 or higher you gain a new Delusion (Messianic).

Obsessive Hobby

You have some weird little hobby that you're completely obsessed with, and which lets you take up lots of time and possibly a decent amount of your parents' money.

Initialization

Decide what your hobby is. If you're really lost, roll on the table below. Note what the hobby is, and its starting rating of 3d10.

1	Anime
2	Manga
3	Hentai Games
4	Plastic Figures
5	Plastic Models
6	Trains
7	Military Simulation
8	Drawing
9	Video Games
10	Music

Player Actions

Resist

You try to get away from this hobby, and get rid of the stuff around your room that's so tempting. Make an opposed roll between your Hope and your Obsessive Hobby.

Hope wins by 12+	You get over it, and feel better for doing so. Eliminate your Obsessive Hobby trait, and gain a die of Hope.
Hope wins by 8+	You get over it, but miss it sometimes. Eliminate your Obsessive Hobby trait.
Hope wins by 4+	You wind up deciding to ease off of it. Reduce your Obsessive Hobby trait by one die.
Tie	You hem and haw about it. Nothing changes.
Hobby wins by 4+	You decide to keep at it after all.
Hobby wins by 8+	You decide to keep at it, and feel helpless to stop. Lose a die of Hope.
Hobby wins by 12+	You decide to keep at it, and wind up becoming more mired in this hobby. Your Obsessive Hobby trait goes up by one die.

Share

You decide to try to share your Obsessive Hobby with someone you know; this person has to be represented by a Rescuer or Real Friend trait. Make an opposed roll between the two traits.

Person wins by 12+	They think your hobby is stupid, and tell you as much. It's depressing. Lose two dice from your Obsessive Hobby trait.
Person wins by 8+	They think your hobby is stupid and say so. It's a little discouraging. Reduce your Obsessive Hobby trait by one die.
Person wins by 4+	They think your hobby is uninteresting.
Tie	They think your hobby is okay, but aren't personally interested.
Hobby wins by 4+	They think your hobby is kind of neat, but aren't personally interested.
Hobby wins by 8+	They think your hobby is awesome, but something they couldn't do themselves. You gain a die to your Obsessive Hobby trait.
Hobby wins by 12+	They're won over by your hobby's charms. If the person was a Rescuer, they become a Real Friend instead. Regardless, you gain a die to your Obsessive Hobby trait.

Use For Good

Indulging in your hobby or trying to get others interested is much easier than trying to use it for something that benefits others, but it's worth a try. Roll your Hope and trait, and *add them together*. Then check the following table.

You can only use this action once for a given Obsessive Hobby.

1-10	You get really discouraged; reduce your Hope by one die.
11-20	It doesn't work out. You get discouraged; reduce both your Hope and your Obsessive Hobby by one die.
21-30	It kind of works, but nothing that changes your life.
31-40	You make some orphans happy or something, and feel all warm and fuzzy inside. Increase your Obsessive Hobby by one die.
41+	You truly touch some lives, in a way that makes you reevaluate your life. Increase your Obsessive Hobby and your Hope by one die.

Trait Actions

The major problem with an Obsessive Hobby is that it takes up so much time. Whenever it tries to act on you, make a trait roll:

1-9	Nothing happens.
9-18	You indulge in it a bit; lose one of your regular actions for that day.
19+	You indulge in it a lot; lose two of your regular actions for that day, and the trait gains a die.

Perversion

You have an obsession with something at least somewhat unsavory. We'll leave it up to your imagination what exactly it is, but if your character is Japanese, *lolicon* is a likely candidate. You scum.

Initialization

Decide what your character is perverted about. No, you can't be just generically perverted. It's *supposed* to be something that makes the player personally uncomfortable and induces self-loathing in the character. And something that can be indulged in alone. It starts off at 3d10, or if you come up with something you find particularly gross you can set it at 4d10 if you wish.

Player Actions

Indulge

You throw up your hands and give in to your perversion. Make a trait roll and look at the result on the following table:

1-4	You think perverted thoughts for a while, and get it out of your system.
5-8	You look at pictures on the internet for a while.
9-12	You look at pictures on the internet for a while, and feel guilty
13-16	You download several gigs of pictures off the internet, and feel like scum for doing it. Make a Hope roll; if it's less than the Perversion trait die result, lose one die of Hope and add one die to your Perversion.
16-20	You actually go outside with the intention of doing something relating to your Perversion for real. You fail, and get mildly depressed.
21-24	You actually go outside with the intention of doing something relating to your Perversion for real. You chicken out and feel ashamed. Lose one die of Hope.

25+	You actually go outside with the intention of doing something relating to your Perversion for real. You succeed, possibly more than you'd like. Add one die to your Perversion trait.
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Suppress

Knowing that what you want is perverted and wrong, you try to beat it down. Make an opposed roll between your Hope and Perversion. If your Hope wins by 5 or more, reduce your Perversion by one die. If it wins by 10 or more, remove the Perversion entirely. If it loses by 6 or more, use the Perversion die result on the Indulge table above.

Trait Actions

When your perversion rises to the fore on its own, you get the urge to do something related to it out of nowhere, possibly something problematic or dangerous. Choose whether you want to Indulge or Suppress the urge, and resolve the action as per the player actions above.

Real Friend

At least in terms of being a flesh and blood human being, you have a “real” friend, though this person is probably at least as much of a misfit as you are. They don't usually care about whether or not you're a hikikomori, except insofar as it affects them.

Initialization: Roll on the table below to determine what kind of friend you've made, which in turn determines the starting dice for the Real Friend trait.

1-3	Otaku (3d10): Your friend is someone who has an obsession with something. Anime/manga type stuff would be the cliché, but there are also otaku obsessed with trains, computers, military simulation, and so on.
4-6	NEET (2d10): This is short for “Not in Education, Employment, or Training.” In essence, your friend is just like you, but somewhat more sociable.
7-8	Freeter (2d10): Though ostensibly an adult, your friend hasn't really gone to college, and works an assortment of part-time jobs to get by.
9-10	Loser (1d10): Your friend is just plain unpopular and inept. Maybe you have them around to make yourself feel better?

Player Actions

Abuse

Sometimes you just want to be mean to someone, and shove them away. Make a trait roll; if the result is 9 or less, reduce the Real Friend trait by one die, and if it's 4 or less eliminate it entirely.

Rely On

When you've got something that's causing trouble, sometimes you can call on a friend to help. While Rescuers do this automatically, getting it out of a friend is a little harder. Roll on your Real Friend trait dice; if the result is between 12 and 16 you can add half (rounded down) your Real Friend dice to a Hope roll. If the result is 17 or higher you can add all of the dice. In either case, if the Hope roll succeeds at whatever it was you were trying to do, the Real Friend trait gains a die.

Trait Actions

When a Real Friend acts on you, it means he has something he wants to bug about you. Roll the Real Friend's trait dice:

1-5	Your friend manages to do something that convinces him that he doesn't deserve to be your friend. Remove the Real Friend trait.
6-10	Your friend asks you for something trivial. He doesn't really mind if you refuse.
11-15	Your friend asks something moderately involved of you. You can accept or refuse; if you accept, the Real Friend trait gains a die, and if you refuse it loses a die.
16-20	Your friend is having a crisis of his own. Make a Hope roll; if you roll less than 12, you can't bring yourself to do anything and you lose the Real Friend trait. If you roll a 12 or more, you'll help out; Real Friend gains a die and your Hope gains a die as well.
21-25	You somehow manage to make your friend's life better. Your Real Friend trait and your Hope each gain a die.
26+	Your friend outgrows you. He gets a real job, finds a girl, or something similar. Lose the Real Friend trait.

Rescuer

Someone has taken it upon themselves to save you from your hikikomori-ness.

Initialization

First, roll 1d10 on the little table below to determine the rescuer's general archetype. This also determines the starting trait dice.

1-5	Coaxing (3d10): This person, who may be from one of those new volunteer organizations, is going to try to gently coax you out, and knows better than to push you too far.
6-9	Crusader (2d10): This person has some deep-rooted need to get you out of hiding at all costs, and doesn't want to take no for an answer.
10	Hypocrite (1d10): This person mostly just wants to associate with someone who's even more worthless and fucked up than themselves.

Player Actions

Ignore

You emphatically ignore your Rescuer, and hope they'll go away. Make a roll on your Rescuer trait dice:

1-7	She gets discouraged; reduce your Rescuer trait by one die.
8-16	She keeps at it. Nothing happens.
17+	She only gets more determined. Increase your Rescuer trait by one die.

Probe

You try to figure out why this person is doing what they're doing. This is where the archetype comes into play. Roll your Rescuer trait dice, and follow the instructions below. This action can only be performed once on a given Rescuer.

- **Coaxing:** If the result is 9 or less, she gets discouraged and loses one die. If the result is 10 to 14, she turns out to be a very nice person who's helping out of the kindness of her heart. If the result is 15 or more, her story is inspiring and you gain a die of Hope.
- **Crusader:** If the result is 8 or less, your Rescuer gets discouraged and loses one die. If the result is 9-13, she explains her intentions in no uncertain terms. If the result is 14+, she explains herself and gains one die.

- **Hypocrite:** If the result is 7 or less, your rescuer is revealed as a hypocrite. You can choose to either send her packing (get rid of this Rescuer trait) or convert her into a Real Friend trait (you pick the type; dice are as per the new Trait). If the result is 8 or more, she manages to deflect your questions or lie convincingly.

Rely On

When another trait is trying to do something that hurts you, you can choose to add your Rescuer's dice to your Hope, but this automatically adds one die to the Rescuer trait.

Scare Away

You deliberately try to do something scary and freakish to get your would-be rescuer to leave you alone. Pick one of your other Traits—anything except Rescuer or Real Friend—and make an opposed roll between this Rescuer's dice and that Trait's dice.

Trait wins by 10+	Your rescuer is terrified and leaves, never to return. Or at least she decides you're just not worth it. Emboldened by this victory, you raise the trait you used by one die.
Trait wins by 5-9	Your rescuer is disheartened, but doesn't give up just yet. The Rescuer trait loses one die. If this pushes it down to zero, then she really does go away.
Trait wins by 1-4	Your rescuer is a bit weirded out, but still just as determined.
Tie	Nothing happens.
Rescuer wins by 1-4	Your rescuer is nonplussed.
Rescuer wins by 5-9	Things backfire; your rescuer becomes that much more determined. Add one die to your Rescuer trait.
Rescuer wins by 10+	Things backfire badly; your rescuer becomes that much more determined (add another die to the Rescuer trait), and she shames you over the trait enough to force you to fix it somewhat (reduce that trait by one die).

Trait Actions

A Rescuer's goal is, of course, to get you out of hiding. Roll your Hope and Rescuer dice and add them together, and check the following table. No, you can't combine this action with a Rely On.

1-8	In her efforts to make you reform yourself, your Rescuer manages to make you feel like shit. Lose a die of Hope.
9-16	Your Rescuer manages to annoy the hell out of you, and you try to drive her off. Lose one die from your Rescuer trait.
17-24	Your Rescuer's efforts to cheer you up don't do a lot.
25-32	You feel a little better about yourself. Gain a die of Hope.
33+	You feel better about yourself, and your Rescuer is encouraged to keep trying. Both your Hope and your Rescuer trait gain a die.

Suicidal Thoughts

Something has you thinking about killing yourself. Granted, you hardly ever go outside of the house, and it seems more and more like no one would notice.

Initialization

Suicidal Thoughts' base trait level is 3d10. While you have this Trait, at the beginning of each day you must take some time to write down a possible method of suicide.

Player Actions

Cheer Up

You're going to try to convince yourself that life isn't that bad and you don't need to kill yourself. Make an opposed roll between your Hope and your Suicidal Thoughts. If Hope wins by 8 or more, Suicidal Thoughts loses a die. If Suicidal Thoughts wins by 10 or more, you lose a die of Hope.

Trait Actions

When your Suicidal Thoughts come to the fore, naturally you start seriously considering committing suicide. Make an opposed roll between your Hope and Suicidal Thoughts; if the Suicidal Thoughts wins, perform the Suicide Attempt general action as usual.

Vice

You've gotten into something that you probably shouldn't have, some kind of vice. As a hikikomori this means something you can do privately, which probably means some kind of drug, legal or otherwise.

Initialization

Come up with a vice, preferably something that is by all accounts a pretty stupid thing to do. It starts at a rating of 3d10, or 4d10 if you think you've picked something especially addictive.

Player Actions

Call It Quits

It takes a lot of strength to quit the habit, which makes that something very hard for you to do. Make an opposed roll between your Hope and your Vice.

Hope wins by 10+	In an incredible display of mental strength, you're able to quite your Vice, cold turkey. Remove the Vice and gain a die of Hope.
Hope wins by 5+	It's going to take some time to do this, but you're getting there. Lose one die from your Vice.
Either wins by 0-4	You're not getting anywhere, but at least you're trying.
Vice wins by 5+	You manage to get off of it for a little while before relapsing. Lose a die of Hope.
Vice wins by 10+	You can't bring yourself to stop, even for a few hours. Lose a die of Hope, and add a die to your Vice.

Indulge and Forget

You try to use your Vice as a way to blot out other things that are bothering you in your life. Pick any one trait, and roll that trait's dice against your Vice. If your Vice wins by 5 points, that trait loses a die. If it wins by 8 or more, your Vice also gains a die.

Trait Actions

Your Vice commands you to indulge, regardless of the cost. Make an opposed roll between your Hope and Vice.

Vice wins by 12+	You indulge your Vice way too much. Your Vice gains a die, and you get a Health Problem related to it. If you already have a Health Problem from your Vice, it gains a die instead.
Vice wins by 8+	You indulge your Vice a lot, and get even more hooked. Your Vice gains a die.
Vice wins by 4+	You indulge your Vice and it's really time-consuming. Lose one of your actions for today.
Tie	You indulge in your Vice, but at least you're taking it easy.
Hope wins by 4+	You resist your Vice, but you spend a long time being tempted.
Hope wins by 8+	You resist your Vice, and are on the mend. The Vice loses one die.
Hope wins by 12+	You resist your Vice, and are getting over it. The Vice loses two dice.

Afterword

I first heard about *hikikomori* from the manga version of *NHK ni Youkoso*, of which I've since read the original novel as well. As far as I can tell Takimoto is a moody writer (and in the afterword he complained that he got massive writer's block after he wrote it), but he is not himself a hikikomori. I have read some articles on the subject (and not just on Wikipedia), but this game definitely has more to do with the novel. A real hikikomori's week is probably much less eventful, and involves less insanity. I could try to engage in social commentary and other nonsense here, but as an American who's spent a whole two weeks on Japanese soil, I hardly feel qualified. From a thematic standpoint, I mostly wanted to make a game that could convey a sense of isolation and helplessness. And insanity. You get the idea.

I came up with the idea of trying this as a solo RPG-esque thingy before I'd heard of Jeff Moore's suggestion of doing solo RPGs that was posted to 1KM1KT, and messing around with the thing in the back of GURPS Basic Set Third Edition and a few Choose Your Own Adventure books is the extent of my experience with such things. This thing wound up having some of those in, and a tiny bit of... something else (CCGs maybe?). Is having gobs of tables normal for this kind of thing? Anyway, a friend of mine suggested doing a hikikomori RPG with multiple players that played different elements of the shut-in's personality. Aside from the fact that I liked the ideas I'd come up with already, I'm pretty sure that kind of thing has been done before. Maybe some other time.

Anyway, I made a point of not writing anything down as per the 24-Hour RPG's "no pre-planning" rule, except I think I wound up having a lot of it in my head before I started. It helps that I first came up the idea for a hikikomori game just over 6 months ago. Next time I think I'll try to start without even a concept in mind... In any case, I wound up finishing it fairly quickly, though I see plenty of room for working on it more, with more Traits and Actions, and given them new ways to interact. I had an evil thought about doing a similar game where you play a game designer, but that way lies madness.

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P. S. : Yes, the choice of fonts is intentional.

P. P. S. : Nyo.