

## ELDRITCH WORLD

AN APOCALYPSE WORLD HACK

BY MATT WALL

*You are alone.*

*The darkness within these walls is as pervasive -as impenetrable- as the fog outside.*

*You've been alone for so long, you wonder if you've ever seen another human being before, or if your memories of people are nothing more than the fantasies of a delusional mind.*

*Perhaps the shapes slinking in the corners of your peripheral vision are also mere symptoms of a mind deprived of sleep, food, and company.*

*The torchlight casts a shadow on the stone wall, and its outline is a mockery of human form.*

*You smile.*

*You're not really alone, after all...*

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### LEGAL STUFF

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APOCALYPSE WORLD and TRAIL OF CTHULHU are both great games, which you should buy and play immediately. I don't intend to make a dime off this game, but you still need my permission to distribute or publish it.

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## INTRODUCTION

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ELDRITCH WORLD is a 24 Hour RPG written on August 10th 2014. Its purpose is emulate the genre of creeping, cosmic horror. It is inspired in equal parts by APOCALYPSE WORLD and TRAIL OF CTHULHU. ELDRITCH WORLD is meant to give a group of friends an evening of deliciously dark and twisted storytelling.

Actors take on the roles of Investigators who will uncover some terrible and ancient mystery perhaps better left undiscovered. They will search for and find Clues, wrestle with their own Sanity, and flee from unspeakable Horrors.

One player, of course, will take on the role of the Keeper. The Keeper's job is to know the mystery that the players are trying to unveil, as well as challenge them with obstacles, and unleash hideous creatures on them when they're getting too close to the truth.

Most importantly, the Keeper is in charge of the rules. The Keeper will be the judge of what happens in the story, as dictated by the way he interprets the rules. **What the Keeper says goes, no arguments.** A wise Keeper listens to his player's complaints, but does not let whining derail the story.

### Player

Anyone playing ELDRITCH WORLD, either Actor or Keeper.

### Actor

A player portraying an Investigator.

### Investigator

A character that is one of the protagonists of the story.

### Keeper

A player who portrays non-Investigator characters and presents the challenges in the story.

You will need:

- 3 to 6 humans. You can play with more, or less, but these options tend to be less engaging or too confusing, respectively.

- At least 2 six-sided dice. Pirate them from your Monopoly game. There's no need to go into what 2D6 means, since these are the only kind of dice you will roll in this game. You only really *need* two, but players may want to bring their own, personal dice.
- Tokens of some kind, like poker chips or beads. Around 20 should suffice.
- Printouts of the character records found at the back of this book.
- Pencils for each player.
- (Optional) Scratch sheets would be good for drawing out maps or quick sketches of what the players are seeing.
- A copy of these rules.

#### THE CENTRAL PROBLEM OF HORROR ROLE-PLAYING

Horror, in the vein of the Lovecraft Mythos, involves two things: isolation and helplessness. It is terrifying because you are alone. Every shadow, every sound, becomes some kind of malevolent agent in your imagination. You cannot turn to your friend and say "What was that?" You have no friends. You are alone.

In the stories of H.P. Lovecraft, the protagonist is often an outsider, separated from his peers by his terrible knowledge of unspeakable things. Sometimes, Lovecraft's characters will relate their trials to a confidant, but even this serves contrast them from their friends and thereby to isolate them all the more from the mass of humanity.

Role-playing, in the classical sense, is a team effort. Players have to work together to solve problems and defeat monsters. Also, it is meant to give the players the opportunity to play characters that are in some way more powerful, more dramatic than their everyday personas. In a certain sense, roleplaying in this paradigm is the very antithesis of horror.

ELDRITCH WORLD acknowledges this seeming contradiction, and attempts to strike a balance between these two paradigms. In ELDRITCH WORLD, characters will indeed work together to solve a mystery, and they will be empowered with abilities beyond the ordinary man, to fight the evil that mankind is too fearful to acknowledge the existence of. However, they must come to realize, over the course of the story, that no amount of help will protect them from the darkness, and that despite their minor victories their ultimate fate is either madness or death.

It takes a special kind of player to enjoy horror role-playing, and it is best that everyone knows this going in. Players of this variety should know that true heroism is not about slaying the dragon, receiving fame and fortune, or getting the girl. True heroism is about facing insurmountable odds despite the terror that freezes your heart, and doing the most good you can before your time, inevitably, runs out.

## BASIC RULES

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### MAKING A MOVE

Usually, ELDRITCH WORLD is a game where players and the Keeper go back and forth, collaborating to tell a story. The players describe what their characters intend to do, and the Keeper describes the outcomes of those actions. However, there are times when what a character intends to do invokes what is known as a Move, and the rules of the game intervene to dictate what the outcome of that action will be.

A Move is the basic unit of storytelling in ELDRITCH WORLD. They serve to mediate between the intentions of the players and the need for outcomes to be uncertain, thus keeping everyone guessing as to what will happen next in the story. Moves happen when they are invoked by a character's actions. **They cannot happen without being invoked, and they cannot be invoked without happening. A Move cannot be invoked unless an Investigator has access to it.**

There are a few different kinds of Moves: General Moves, Special Moves, Basic Moves, Advanced Moves, and Keeper Moves. But these all operate under similar principles and ought to be self-explanatory. There is not much more to tell of Moves, other than to give examples of them. The rules for each Move will tell you when and how to use them.

### ROLLING THE BONES

Some Moves will tell you to roll dice. Dice serve to add an element of chance to the story and thereby ensure that Actors and Keeper alike will stay on their toes. When dice are rolled, there will always be consequences, and the dice will dictate which of the possible outcomes occurs, and therefore which fork in the path the story will take. Do not take rolling the dice lightly, for there will always be the possibility that doing so could spell your doom.

Whenever a Move tells you to roll dice, roll 2 six-sided dice and add them together. **Unless explicitly stated otherwise, only Actors can roll dice in ELDRITCH WORLD.** Dice rolls are usually modified by a character's Skills, and sometimes are modified by external circumstances. Modifiers either subtract from or add to the number rolled on the dice.

**In ELDRITCH WORLD, when a move says roll +STR, it means roll and add your Strength modifier.** Likewise, +AGI means roll and add Agility, +WITS means roll and add your Wits modifier, and +WILL means roll and add your Will modifier. Once you have the modified total, compare the number to the table below. Often, the Move that required you to roll will tell you what the numbers mean, but the following table is a general guideline:

#### WHOSE TURN IS IT ANYWAY?

It can be difficult for veterans of other RPGs to know who should go and when. Other games have complicated rules about rolling for initiative to determine turn order. Veterans may find themselves justifiably confused when told that there are no turns to speak of in ELDRITCH WORLD.

“What, you mean I can just go when I feel like it?”

Not exactly.

The Keeper dictates the pace of the story. The Keeper will describe the scenes and present problems in the form of questions to individual Actors or to the group at large. Actors should wait to be prompted by the Keeper for a response. A response could reasonably be to ask further clarifying questions, but Actors should always respond to the problem the Keeper is presenting.

Some examples of questions the Keeper might ask:

- “The lock is stuck. How are you going to get it open?”
- “The study is empty. What now?”
- “OK, so you’re searching the room... Where are you looking, exactly?”
- “The rotting corpse is now shambling toward you. What are you doing?”
- “The creature swipes at you with its long, sharp talons. What do you do?”

A wise Keeper knows when to let this rule slide for a while, and when to rein the Actors back in. Sometimes an Actor interjects with something interesting, and some of the best role-playing can occur when Actors are allowed to banter back and forth with one another. Good Keepers know when to get out of the way of the characters. They also spread the spotlight

around, giving each Investigator a chance to shine. As long as the above guidelines are kept, and the focus stays on the story, turn order should not be an issue.

#### Scene

The smallest unit of story. A scene takes place in a single time and location.

#### Act

A single session of play, however long or short that may be. Acts are comprised of one or more Scenes.

#### Chapter

A story arc comprised of one or more Acts. Three Acts is considered standard, but a one-shot Chapter of a single Act is possible.

### SCENES

In ELDRITCH WORLD, play is structured into Scenes. Multiple Scenes strung together make up an Act (a single session of play), which make up a Chapter (a story arc). The most important of these to understand is the Scene.

A Scene is, in essence, a single time and place in the story, say at the docks around midnight, or in a forbidden underwater temple around noon. When either the place changes, or the time changes significantly, say, after the Investigators have slept, or after they return to consciousness from being drugged, the Scene has changed.

At the beginning of a Scene, the Keeper will narrate the opening of the Scene, and present the initial problems the Investigators face. Investigators will then respond to the problems the Keeper introduces until one of two things happens: an Investigator uncovers a Clue, or a Conflict occurs between the Investigators and a mundane or Mythos foe. The Actors will not know which is going to happen until it is already too late. When either of these things occurs, the Scene must change, either to a new time or a new place, as the story dictates.

Clue Scenes will make up the bulk of play, but Conflict Scenes are also important, as they illustrate the very real dangers the Investigators face. When the Investigators uncover a Clue, the Keeper receives a Dread token, signifying the mounting tension in the story.

### Clues

What constitutes a Clue? It could be anything, really, as long as it moves the story along to the next Scene, and provides some hint as to the nature of the unspeakable horror that is terrorizing the Investigators. It could be a cryptic note inside a library book, a bloody footprint left at a crime scene, a whispered hint given by a drunkard, or a tell-tale silver-grey hair on the collar of a gentleman's jacket.

The Keeper should know in advance what the evening's horror will be, and have a list of possible Clues written out to drop as need be. He should also be able to create Clues on the fly as the story may dictate, as well as omit certain Clues if they just don't come up.

### DREAD POOL

The Keeper has a reservoir of tokens called the Dread Pool. Dread tokens represent the rising level of danger and drama building in the story from scene to scene. The Keeper uses Dread to bring havoc onto the Investigators.

At the beginning of a Chapter, the Dread Pool starts at the number of players (including Keeper) multiplied by two. The Keeper receives an additional Dread token each time an Investigator uncovers a Clue. Also, he has the option of taking a Dread token when an Actor rolls a 6 or below, if he chooses to forego any additional consequences (for the time being, at least). The Dread Pool carries over from Act to Act. After a Chapter, the Dread Pool is wiped out, and at the beginning of the next Chapter, it begins again at the number of players multiplied by two.

## CREATING AN INVESTIGATOR

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Creating an Investigator is as easy as printing out the character records, passing them around, picking one you like, and filling it out. Only Actors get to create Investigators, so take that, Keeper! The following rules explain how to fill out your character record.



## PROFESSION

The defining aspect of a character is his Profession. Profession dictates what Drives and Moves the Investigator has access to. In this version of the rules, only the Detective Profession has been provided. Hey, 24 hours means 24 hours. The rest of the Professions in the list may be available in supplemental material depending on interest. Or you could create them for yourself!

- Archaeologist
- Criminal
- Detective
- Doctor
- Journalist
- Student
- Therapist
- Writer

For example:

Jack looks through the character records and finds the Detective Profession. This looks like just the kind of character he'd like to play. He imagines an aging, hard-boiled Private Eye named Charlie Yarbrough, and explains his vision for his Investigator to the Keeper and other Actors.

## DRIVE

An Investigator's Drive is his *raison d'être*, specifically the reason that the character is involved with the Mythos at all, whether or not he has yet become aware of its existence. Each Profession has a list of 2 or 3 Drives to choose from. A Drive gives an Actor advice on how to play his Investigator, and a way to earn Experience at the end of each session by fulfilling it. Here are the available Drives you will find on the character records:

- Adventure

- Ancestry
- Avarice
- Bad Luck
- Knowledge

For example:

Jack gives some thought to what possible motivation could have brought his Investigator, Charlie, into contact with the Mythos. He decides that Charlie has just had a run of plain ol' Bad Luck, but a particularly vicious strain of it. He hasn't had a case in weeks, and is looking at closing down his Private Eye business. Then, he took a case that lead him into some dark territory, and now he's learned things he can't unlearn. Worse, they know that he knows, and they're coming for him.

### SKILLS

There are four Skills each Investigator possesses that help him meet the challenges, and find the clues, needed to solve a case. These are: Strength, Agility, Wits, and Will. Assign the following values to each of the four Skills as you wish: -1, 0, 1, 2. The -1 is the thing you're the worst at, while the 2 is the thing you're best at. Choose wisely, or you may not survive to improve your abilities.

- "Strength" is an Investigator's brawn, and is used to meet challenges requiring muscle or stamina.
- "Agility" is an Investigator's speed and dexterity. It is used to perform challenges where coordination or quickness are vital.
- "Wits" is a measure of the Investigator's quickness of thought, and is used in situations where alertness or memory are required.
- Finally, "Will" is how stalwart a character's resolve is, and therefore how well he influences others, and how well he resists the terror inherent in confronting Mythos creatures.

For example:

Jack thinks his Investigator, Charlie, relies on his perceptiveness and quick-thinking more than anything else, so he puts his 2 in Wits. Charlie has to squeeze his informants sometimes, so the 1 goes in Will. Charlie isn't a born fighter, but he's been in a scrape or two, so the 0 goes in Strength. Finally, Charlie's getting older and isn't as spry as he used to be. The -1 goes in Agility.

### BASIC MOVES

Each Profession has 2 or 3 Basic Moves that the Investigator can begin play with. As play continues, you may have the option of taking additional Basic or Advanced Moves as your Investigator becomes more competent. For now, select one of the Basic Moves associated with your Profession.

For example:

Jack looks through the Detective's Basic Moves and ultimately decides that Charlie gets most of his information by leaning on informants in the criminal underworld. He chooses the "Interrogate" Move for Charlie to begin with.

### GEAR

Each Investigator will have starting equipment that they begin play with. Some of these are options that will require a choice, and others are automatic (after all, what is a Detective without a sidearm?). During play, the Investigator may find other items that are useful to the case. Rather than making complex rules about carry weight, simply follow the rule of thumb: could I reasonably carry all this stuff on my person? If so, where does it go? It is reasonable to have a couple of pistols in holsters, but is not reasonable to carry three shotguns. The Keeper, as always, is the final arbiter of what is reasonable.

## BONDS

This is where you will truly breathe life into your Investigator, and into the fictional world where he resides. BONDS are an Investigator's connection to other Investigators, as well as to Keeper characters. You'll use your BONDS to influence other characters, as well as to gain Experience at the end of a session. Each Profession's BONDS are slightly different, and you can make up BONDS of your own once you get a feel for them. Fill out one Bond relating to another Investigator, and one Bond that relates to a Keeper character. This helps create cooperation and history between Investigators, as well as backstory for the Investigator. For Keeper character BONDS, you'll have to also come up with a character that relates to your Investigator's backstory.

### For example:

Jack thinks his Investigator, Charlie, might have history with Erik's Investigator, John. He picks the Bond "I think (John) is up to something. I'm watching him/her." Erik agrees that his Investigator, John, a Criminal, might well be up to something, and suggests that Charlie might have been tailing John for some time.

Jack also wants some underworld contacts for Charlie, so he chooses the Bond "(Dead Big George) is someone who can get things for people. I can always count on him." Jack explains to the Keeper that Dead Big George is a Mafia tough working on becoming a made man, and the Keeper agrees that's just the sort of character that would fit in with his idea for the story.

## HEALTH & SANITY

Health indicates your character's current level of physical well-being, and Sanity indicates his current state of mental and emotional well-being. Each of these start at 20. Health receives a modifier equal to your total physical Skills (Strength, Agility), and Sanity receives a modifier equal to your total mental Skills (Will, Wits). Mark your Max Health and Sanity in their appropriate boxes, and put the same numbers under the Current Health and Sanity.

Health and Sanity will come under fire throughout the game, so the Current number will change, while the Max number shows the maximum value Health or Sanity can return to. If all your Health is gone, your Investigator is dead. "Roll up a new one!" as they say. If all his Sanity is gone, he has succumbed to madness and is therefore no longer playable. On the plus side, he'll make an interesting Keeper character!

Make sure to roleplay your current level of Sanity. If you have a lot of Sanity left, act mostly sane. If you have lost a little Sanity, act a little paranoid. If you have lost most of it, go off the deepend. It's worth some Experience at the end of each Act (see the Special Move "End of Act").

For example:

Jack looks at Charlie's physical Skills (0 Strength, -1 Agility) and subtracts 1 from Charlie's Health. He then looks at Charlie's mental Skills (1 Will, 2 Wits) and adds 3 to Charlie's Sanity. Charlie's final Health is 19 and Sanity is 23.

That's it! The rest of the details are made up as you go along. Your Investigator should be mostly fleshed out already, but if he still feels unfinished, fear not. Many of the Moves serve the dual purpose of learning more about the Investigators, and building the world in which they live.

#### CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

At the end of each session, you will earn Experience according to how well you played your BONDS and Drive (see the Special Move "End of Act"). At the end of the Chapter, this Experience can be spent to improve your Investigator's abilities (see the Special Move "End of Chapter").

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### GENERAL MOVES

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These are Moves that apply to all Investigators, regardless of Profession. In practice, they amount to the basic kinds of things that the protagonists of mysteries and horror stories might want to do. Remember, on a 6 -, the Keeper may decide not to apply any consequences to the Investigators, but instead receive a Dread token.

## FLEE

This is a good idea. The creatures you will encounter are staunch, and well-entitled to inspire the kind of fear that they do. Then, too, you might be running from more mundane foes, perhaps a mugger who doesn't think you've been as cooperative as he would like, or perhaps the locals don't cotton much to your kind and figure they'll run you out of town.

Roll +AGI

- ◆ On a 10+, you have escaped, the Scene changes.
- ◆ On a 7 to 9, you have escaped, but only by the skin of your teeth. The Scene changes.

Choose one:

- ◆ You have left behind an important item. The Keeper will decide which item.
- ◆ You escape, but are wounded in the process. The enemy applies its Threat rating as damage to your Health.
- ◆ Out of the frying pan, into the fire. You flee into an even worse circumstance, but otherwise suffer no penalty.
- ◆ On a 6-, you did not escape. Also, your attempts to flee have made your position that much worse. The Keeper will decide what to do with you. A reasonable possibility is that the enemy has done damage to your Health according to its Threat rating.

## FIGHT

So, you think you can take a Shoggoth? Very well. Sometimes that can seem like a good idea when you're cornered. If you choose to fight with your hands, feet, or some hand-held weapon such as a bat or pitchfork, you're rolling Fight.

Roll +STR

- ◆ On a 10+, you strike a telling blow. Add your Strength to the weapon's damage (if any) and apply that to the enemy's wounds.
- ◆ On a 7 to 9, you trade blows with the enemy. Add your Strength to the weapon's damage (if any) and apply that to the enemy's wounds. The enemy will also apply its Threat rating as damage to you.
- ◆ On a 6-, the enemy has landed a telling blow on you. Its Threat rating is applied as damage to you.

## SHOOT

If you're going to fight Shoggoths, best to do it at long range, where they can't ooze all over you. Shoot is for times when you're using a crossbow, a pistol, or even a throwing knife to attack an enemy. Mark off one Ammo for your weapon each time you use this Move.

Roll +AGI

- ◆ On a 10+, you've scored a direct hit. Apply your Agility rating plus the weapon's damage to the enemy.
- ◆ On a 7 to 9, you have an opportunity to hit the enemy, but you're going to have to make a hard choice. If you hit, apply your Agility rating plus the weapon's damage to the enemy and choose one:
  - ◆ You hit, but they're still coming and you've engaged with them at close quarters. You won't be able to Shoot again until you escape close quarters, and will have to Fight in order to attack them.
  - ◆ You have to fire multiple times and expend more ammunition than you intended to. Mark off an additional Ammo.
- ◆ On a 6-, the Keeper will choose:
  - ◆ Your weapon jams (if applicable), and you must spend some time repairing it before you can shoot again. If you choose to repair it in the heat of battle (it might only need to be racked again, after all), you'll still miss a beat, during which you may very well be over-run.
  - ◆ Not only did you miss your target, but you hit something you didn't want to hit, say a gas line, or another Investigator. The Keeper will tell you what you hit.

## SEARCH THE SCENE

This is an Investigator's go-to Move in any Scene, and one of the primary means by which they will uncover Clues. This is more than mere poking about. You have to take your time and carefully comb over the scene. Needless to say, you can't do this when you're not able to focus your full attention on the act of searching, say, when a Shoggoth is chewing off your leg.

### Roll +WITS

- ◆ On a 10+, the Keeper will ask you to describe exactly what you're doing, where you're looking, what you think you might be looking for. You'll then be able to ask three of the 7 to 9 options.
- ◆ On a 7 to 9, choose one question to ask the Keeper:
  - ◆ "What here is out of place or not as it seems?"
  - ◆ "What here is valuable or useful to me?"
  - ◆ "What should I be on the lookout for?"
  - ◆ "Who was here recently?"
- ◆ On a 6-, you cannot ask any questions, and the Keeper has an opportunity to do something heinous to you. It is quite possible that you may find something you can't unsee (see the General Move "Keep It Together").

Even on a 10+, the answer to your question may very well be negative. For example, if there was no one here recently, or no way of knowing who was here recently, the Keeper cannot very well tell you who was here. Otherwise, the Keeper must answer truthfully.

### NEGOTIATE

This is the other main way for Investigators to uncover Clues. Often, Clues will come in the form of a hint dropped by a Keeper character, rather than a physical piece of evidence. Negotiate can also be used to convince Keeper characters to do something you want them to do, but which they may have reason to refuse.

### Roll +WILL

- ◆ On a 10+, choose three of the 7 to 9 options.
- ◆ On a 7 to 9, choose one:
  - ◆ "What can I do to get you to \_\_\_\_"
  - ◆ "Do you know someone who \_\_\_\_"
  - ◆ "What do you know about \_\_\_\_"
  - ◆ "Where can I find \_\_\_\_"



- ◆ “What is the average air speed of an unladen swallow?” (We admit that this question may have limited utility, but have included it for the sake of completeness).
- ◆ On a 6-, the other will not tell you what you want to know, or give you what you want them to, and likely has become offended that you had the nerve to ask.

As with Search, the answer to your question may very well be a negative one. If the character doesn't know anything about ancient Egyptian cosmetology, he may simply shrug. The trick is asking the right questions of the right characters.

### KEEP IT TOGETHER

In ELDRITCH WORLD, you will eventually encounter something that no amount of brain bleach can cleanse from your mind. When this happens, you will have to try to Keep It Together, in other words, resist the madness that knowledge of the unknowable invariably causes. This could be something as basic to human nature as encountering a dead body where you did not expect to find one, or something as eldritch as looking an elder god straight in the tentacles. Mythos creatures will almost always trigger this Move, and it must be resolved before any further action, like Fight or Flee, can take place. Mythos creatures can only trigger this once per encounter, but will do so each time you encounter them.

Roll +WILL

- ◆ On a 10+, you keep it together. Bully for you!
- ◆ On a 7 to 9, you must Flee. Consult the Flee Move for this option.
- ◆ On a 6-, you are frozen in terror. If this was triggered by a Mythos creature, lose Sanity equal to its Terror rating. Otherwise, lose 1 Sanity.

### SPECIAL MOVES

These are Moves that are only invoked at certain points in the story.

### END OF ACT

At the end of each session, the End of Act Move is automatically triggered. This is a great time to talk about what happened in the story, and to get feedback from the other Actors,

and the Keeper. If your BONDS or Drive didn't come up at all, you may be more proactive in future about playing them in future.

Each Actor must answer the following questions:

- Did I play my Investigator Bonds? Verify this with the Actors whose Investigators yours has the Bonds with. If yes, gain 1 Experience for each Bond that came up.
- Did I play my Keeper Bonds? Verify this with the Keeper. If yes, gain 1 Experience for each Bond that came up.
- Did I play my Drive? Verify this with the Keeper. If yes, gain 1 Experience.
- Did I play my Sanity? i.e. did you act a little kooky when you lost a few Sanity points, and a lot crazy when you lost most of them? Verify this with the Keeper. If yes, gain 1 Experience.

The Keeper will then address the following questions to the Actors:

- Did we learn anything new and interesting about the Mythos? The answer should be yes, if you weren't making a total mess of things. At any rate, the Actors should discuss what they learned. Each Actor gains 1 Experience.
- Did we thwart any notable Mythos entity? Thwart doesn't mean kill, necessarily. It simply means, "prevented from doing nasty things". The Keeper will verify this. Each Actor gains 1 Experience.

Each Actor now has the chance to use his Experience to do the following:

- Recover loss of Sanity at a rate of 1 Sanity per Experience. Yes, this is rough. You're playing a horror game. Sanity takes time to heal, and Experience represents time in this context.
- Recover loss of Health at a rate of 1 Health per Experience. Again, there's the brakes. There are Moves that recover Health, so do this as a last resort.
- Save whatever Experience you can for the End of Chapter Move, which will allow you to improve your Investigator.

### END OF CHAPTER

This Move is invoked automatically following the End of Act Move of the final Act of the Chapter. During End of Chapter, you have the opportunity to spend your Experience in the following ways:

- Improve a Skill by 1 at the following rates:
  - From -1 to 0: 3 Experience
  - From 0 to 1: 3 Experience
  - From 1 to 2: 5 Experience
  - From 2 to 3: 10 Experience

Skills may not be improved beyond 3, and only one Skill may ever reach 3.

Check to see if your Max Health or Sanity have been increased due to increase in Skill.

- Purchase a Basic Move for 3 Experience.
- Purchase an Advanced Move for 5 Experience.

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### KEEPER MOVES

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These are Moves that only the Keeper can invoke, either when an Investigator rolls a 6- on a Move, or when the Keeper spends Dread. Keepers should use these to add teeth to the threats the Investigators face.

### BUILD DREAD

This is a Keeper's go-to Move. It allows the Keeper to add 1 token to the Dread pool instead of imposing whatever consequence a die roll of 6- would have. The consequence does not occur, but tension builds. It can get a little silly for an Investigator to constantly fumble when he rolls a 6- on a roll that does not have any reasonable consequences. Investigators are heroes, of a sort, and should not go around shooting their toes off every other roll. The Keeper is advised to be judicious in the use of this Move. Use it when you need the Dread to build, but use the consequences the roll would provide just as often.

### IMPOSE A PENALTY

The Keeper can impose penalties to a die roll at a rate of -1 per Dread spent. The Keeper must also narrate a reason that the task is more difficult. For instance, shooting a gun at long-range might be more difficult because the wind is high. Or, picking a lock might be more difficult because the Investigator's hands are trembling after finding a dead body in their wardrobe. Each point of Dread spent in this way requires a unique reason. The maximum penalty that can be applied to a single roll is -3.

#### INTRODUCE A CONFLICT

The Keeper must use his Dread pool to introduce a Conflict to a Scene. The cost for this is the lower of the enemy's Threat and Terror ratings. This means that if an enemy's Threat or Terror rating are 0, the enemy is free to introduce (these are usually mundane threats, or creatures with a lot of bark and little bite). This ensures that staunch enemies will only ever show up when the tension is truly high. If there are multiple enemies, take the highest possible cost and add 1 for each additional enemy.

#### ESCALATE THREAT/TERROR

Whenever an Investigator would lose Health or Sanity due to a Move, the Keeper can increase that loss by 1 per Dread token spent. The Keeper may not increase damage or Sanity loss to the point that it would kill or drive an Investigator insane. In other words, the Keeper can take them all the way to the brink of death or insanity, but may not push them over the edge through the use of this Move. Now, if the Investigator dies or goes mad thereafter due to other rules, well that's another matter...

#### EXHAUST RESOURCES

A Keeper may choose to exhaust an Investigator's resources in lieu of whatever result would occur on a roll of 6-, if it seems reasonable to do so. For instance, the Keeper may decide that instead of a creature doing damage during the Fight Move, it instead rips off the Investigator's back-pack. This is also useful for knocking the weapon out of an Investigator's hand. In general, try to limit the resources you take from the Investigators to one item, unless, of course, that item contains other items. For the Shoot Move, one item translates to one point

of Ammo. Use this Move when you want to illustrate the fact that, whatever the Investigators possess, you can take it away.

#### DEAL DAMAGE

A Keeper may choose to deal damage in lieu of whatever result would occur on a roll of 6-, but only if it seems reasonable that the Investigator may be hurt. This is useful for representing the consequence of, say falling off a fire escape. If this damage is due to an enemy, use its Threat rating as the damage. Otherwise, the Investigator suffers 1 damage. Bear in mind that any damage can be increased through use of the Escalate Threat/Terror Move.

#### TERRORIZE

Instead of whatever result a 6- may have had, the Keeper can instead elect to cause an Investigator to lose Sanity, if such a thing seems reasonable. Mythos creatures, especially, are more often frightening than they are deadly (though they are definitely deadly, in case you thought otherwise). The threat to Sanity need not come from a creature, however. Everyday life holds its own terrors. Finding that your creepy neighbor has hung himself in his closet holding a cryptic note, during a routine Search Move, is sufficiently terrifying to cause Sanity loss. If the cause of the Terror is an enemy, use its Terror rating to reduce the Investigator's Sanity. Otherwise, Sanity loss is 1, though, of course this can be increased through the Escalate Threat/Terror Move.

## MONSTERS & MADMEN

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What follows is a compendium of the kinds of creatures an Investigator may encounter through the course of following a case to its end. The list is not exhaustive, and in fact represents only a brief sample of potential creatures. Creature and Keeper character stats were kept intentionally minimalistic for ease of creation on the fly by the Keeper. It is hoped that by referencing the entities here recorded, the Keeper will be able to get the idea of creating his own, and eventually create new eldritch beings not yet seen in the Mythos as we know it. They are listed in alphabetical order for quick reference.

## FIGHTING MONSTERS

Monsters and Keeper characters can take damage equal to their Threat rating. If this number is met or exceeded, one of two things can happen:

If it is a Monster, it can either die or flee as the Keeper wills. Mythos creatures may or may not be susceptible to damage from mortal weapons, but they are not so easily killed as mortal men. Each time the monster appears thereafter, its Threat rating will be reduced by 1 for each time it was defeated. Its Dread cost is likewise diminished if this would make its Threat rating the lower of the two stats. If its Threat rating has been reduced to 0 or less, it cannot appear again this Chapter.

If it is a human Keeper character, it is dead.

Monsters and Keeper characters have Moves that the Keeper can use in lieu of a 6- result on a die roll.

## COMMON THUGS

This entry is included to give a baseline for dealing with human Keeper characters that may accost our Investigators throughout the course of the mystery. These are easy enough to figure out on the fly. Thugs are generally cowardly, but usually menacing, and therefore have a Terror rating of 0 to 3. They can, however, be quite tough to deal with physically, and will have a Threat rating of 1 to 5. Incidentally, most Mythos creatures start at 6 or above on the Threat rating, as a basis of comparison. Thugs can be tricky to deal with, since they are mostly found in groups due to their cowardly natures. Remember, each additional thug will add 1 to the Threat and Terror rating. Rules for thugs can be extrapolated to create other human obstacles such as police.

## CTHULHU

*“A monster of vaguely anthropoid outline, but with an octopus-like head whose face was a mass of feelers, a scaly, rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws on hind and fore feet, and long, narrow wings behind.”*

—H. P. Lovecraft, *Pickman's Model*

There are no stats for elder gods and titans. You cannot fight them. Full stop.

## GHOUL

*“The madness and monstrosity lay in the figures in the foreground—for Pickman’s morbid art was preëminently one of daemonic portraiture. These figures were seldom completely human, but often approached humanity in varying degree. Most of the bodies, while roughly bipedal, had a forward slumping, and a vaguely canine cast. The texture of the majority was a kind of unpleasant rubberiness. Ugh! I can see them now! Their occupations—well, don’t ask me to be too precise. They were usually feeding—I won’t say on what. They were sometimes shewn in groups in cemeteries or underground passages, and often appeared to be in battle over their prey—or rather, their treasure-trove. And what damnable expressiveness Pickman sometimes gave the sightless faces of this charnel booty! Occasionally the things were shewn leaping through open windows at night, or squatting on the chests of sleepers, worrying at their throats. One canvas shewed a ring of them baying about a hanged witch on Gallows Hill, whose dead face held a close kinship to theirs.”*

—H. P. Lovecraft, *Pickman’s Model*

THREAT: 6

TERROR: 7

### THERE’S MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM

The worry with Ghouls is that they do not always appear alone, and are known to congregated in cemeteries and underground spaces. Following the rules for multiple enemies, the Threat rating should be increased by 1 for each additional Ghoul. Likewise, the Terror rating should be increased.

However, if an Investigator rolls a 6- when dealing with one, the Keeper can cause another Ghoul to appear for free. Threat and Terror increase by 1 accordingly. Yikes!

## NIGHT-GAUNT

*“Shocking and uncouth black beings with smooth, oily, whale-like surfaces, unpleasant horns that curved inward toward each other, bat-wings whose beating made no sound, ugly prehensile paws, and barbed tails that lashed needlessly and disquietingly. And worst of all, they never spoke or laughed, and never smiled because they had no faces at all to smile with,*

*but only a suggestive blankness where a face ought to be. All they ever did was clutch and fly and tickle; that was the way of night-gaunts.”*

—H. P. Lovecraft, *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*

THREAT: 7

TERROR: 8

TICKLE

This Move allows the Night-gaunt to pick up an Investigator and fly away with him when the Investigator rolls 6- on a Fight Move. While carrying the victim away, the Night-gaunt will attempt to “tickle” the Investigator with its long, barbed tail.

Roll +AGI

- ◆ On a 10+, squirm out of the Night-gaunt’s grasp, and the Keeper will land you somewhere “safe”, we promise. This probably means a body of water, a pile of hay, or grabbing onto a tree branch.
- ◆ On a 7 to 9, squirm out of the Night-gaunt’s grasp, and take 1 damage, subject to the Escalate Threat/Terror Move.
- ◆ On a 6-, remain in the Night-gaunt’s grasp and suffer damage equal to the creature’s threat rating. That tickles, huh?

SHOGGOTH

*“It was a terrible, indescribable thing vaster than any subway train—a shapeless congeries of protoplasmic bubbles, faintly self-luminous, and with myriads of temporary eyes forming and un-forming as pustules of greenish light all over the tunnel-filling front that bore down upon us, crushing the frantic penguins and slithering over the glistening floor that it and its kind had swept so evilly free of all litter.”*

—H. P. Lovecraft, *At The Mountains of Madness*

THREAT: 8

TERROR: 9

ENSNARE



This Move allows the Shoggoth to ensnare an Investigator in its vast, formless mass. The Investigator is stuck, and unable to take action other than to try to free himself. The Investigator must roll to free himself until he is successful. Each time he fails to do so, move on to another Investigator who is able to act, unless there are none. The Shoggoth will only release Investigators when it is defeated.

Roll + STR

- ◆ On a 10+, you are free.
- ◆ On a 7 to 9, you remain trapped, but take no damage.
- ◆ On a 6-, you remain trapped, and suffer damage equal to the creature's Threat rating.

## PROFESSIONS

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PROFESSION: Detective

DRIVE: (*choose one*)

- Adventure: You're not in this line of work for the cash. You do it for the thrill. Problem is, thrill-seeking can land you in trouble awful fast. *Gain Experience for daring deeds and death defiance.*
- Bad Luck: Times are hard and you're in a bad way. You need the money, and you're willing to do most anything to get it. You knew you were dealing with the wrong sort of people, you just didn't know *how* wrong. *Gain Experience for getting into and out of tight spots.*

SKILLS: (assign the following modifiers: -1, 0, 1, 2)

Strength: Agility: Wits: Will:

BONDS:

“\_\_\_\_\_ is up to something. I'm watching him/her.”

“\_\_\_\_\_ can get things for people. I can count on him/her”

“I would love to know what skeletons are in \_\_\_\_\_'s closet.”

“I've got dirt on \_\_\_\_\_ that they'd pay dearly to keep secret.”

“I can read \_\_\_\_\_ like a book. Not sure I like their story.”

GEAR:

- ◆ Revolver (DAM 3, AMMO 6/6)
- ◆ Cash (\$50)

*(choose one)*

- ◆ An extra 6 rounds
- ◆ A dusty tome you got instead of payment
- ◆ A matchbook with a dame's number written on it
- ◆ A First Aid Kit (2 uses)

BASIC MOVES: *(choose one)*

#### INTERROGATE

When you use violence or intimidation to question a Keeper character,

Roll +WILL

- On 10+, choose three from 7 to 9 list.
- On 7-9, choose one:
  - He will give you whatever item you want that he has.
  - He will tell you what he thinks you want to hear, just please stop!
  - He will name names.
  - He will not clam up/go into hiding when you're done with him.
  - He will not seek revenge once he's able to.
- On 6-, the Keeper will decide.

#### FIRST AID

When you attempt to minister to an ally's wounds (not your own) and you have access to medical supplies, mark off a use of the supplies and,

Roll +WITS

- On 10+, you actually managed to help. The character heals 5 points of Health.
- On 7 to 9, the character heals 2 points of Health at the beginning of the next Scene.  
Choose:
  - You wasted medical supplies (-1 uses).
  - You exposed the character to infection (-1 to STR until healed)
  - You took too much time, and have gained unwanted attention
- On 6-, you made it worse. The character takes 1 damage.

#### ADVANCED MOVES

##### CRACK SHOT

Re-roll a Shoot Move once per Conflict. Ignore any consequences of hitting the wrong target on a Shoot Move. You can still miss, however.

##### BRAWLER

Treat your fists as a 1 damage weapon.

##### IT'S JUST A SCRATCH

Ignore damage from an attack once during a Conflict. The Keeper gets a Dread token.

### IMPROVED FIRST AID

*(requires First Aid)*

Add your Wits to the amount of Health you heal with First Aid if this would not subtract from your roll. Ignore the consequence of 1 damage to the character. Of course, the Keeper may figure out other ways to punish you.

### OPEN BOOK

Re-roll a Negotiate or Interrogate Move once per Scene on a character that you have a Bond with.

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### AFTERWORD

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This was my first 24 hour RPG, and it was, in a word, grueling. Yet, even though I worked through the day, into the night, and almost into the next day again, much was left unfinished.

I only had time for one Profession, and I feel as though the combat system is not yet fully workable as it stands. I hope that the reader has the gist of my efforts enough to fill in the gaps that I could not. There are bound to be some inconsistencies in the rules, and for this I apologize.

That said, there were a couple of really great ideas that came out of this. I really like the Dread mechanic, and I'd been meaning to try something like that for a long time. I would love to see how that would work out in a play-test, so if you play this game, be sure to leave a comment and let me know how it went.

Good luck and happy gaming!