

Based on Materials
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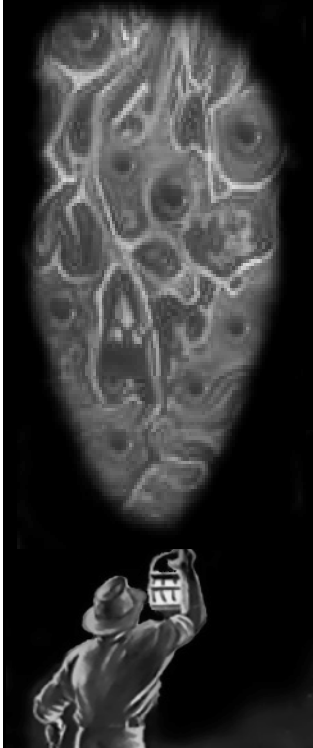
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World of Cthulhu

Lovecraftian Roleplay in the World of Darkness
Draft Version 0.05



Introduction

World of Cthulhu is an unofficial supplement designed to be used with White Wolf Incorporated's World of Darkness core rule book. World of Cthulhu is a homage to the supernatural horror of Howard Phillips Lovecraft and, as such, draws heavily upon public domain works written by that author. Finally, World of Cthulhu was also inspired by the Call of Cthulhu roleplaying game published by Chaosium Incorporated. Please, for the love of all things holy, don't sue me for making World of Cthulhu available to the public!

Characters

Characters in the World of Cthulhu are normal, everyday people - just like you and me. While some of these people may possess combat training (such as soldiers) or the legal right to arrest other people (such as FBI agents or local police officers), at the end of the day they're still human beings. They don't possess supernatural powers, they don't have some higher calling to fight evil, and they don't routinely kick supernatural evil in the face, either. In the World of Cthulhu, it's not the character who is unusual, but the circumstances that life or some more sinister force (such as the Storyteller) thrusts upon them.

New Skills

The World of Cthulhu rules add three new skills to the standard skill list utilized in the World of Darkness core rule book - Cthulhu Mythos, Diving, and Etiquette - all of which are explained directly below:

Cthulhu Mythos

"Beyond the stars lay boundless portals - the dark, the darkness, compensates in closed spaces - but I have gazed into those portals and I have seen the horrible things gazing back."

The fiction of Howard Lovecraft treats non-mythos related magic much as it does non-mythos related religions - such things are superficial constructs of humanity that serve no purpose other than to comfort people as they live out a meager existence in an uncaring universe. In the World of Cthulhu, only the magic and methods of the Cthulhu Mythos have any true power. You can slap down a ten-dollar bill at the local bookstore and buy a book of so-called Pagan 'magic', but the damnable sorcery of the Cthulhu Mythos comes at a much higher price. As such, the knowledge of these things is represented by this new skill.

Possessed by: Misguided individuals who don't know any better such as crazed cultists, sorcerers, savages, unfortunate investigators

Specialties: Alien Artifacts, Cosmology, Cult Practices, Sacred Tomes, Sorcerous Rituals

Roll Results:

Dramatic Failure: Your character has seriously misjudged some aspect of the Mythos, be it a ritual component or the intentions of a particular cult. Note that such a mistake may not become apparent immediately, but either way, the ultimate consequence of such a mistake will be very *bad*.

Failure: Your character simply makes no headway in his efforts to decipher a Mythos tome, call upon the power of a sorcerous ritual, deduce the origin of an alien artifact, or otherwise practically apply their knowledge of the Cthulhu Mythos.

Success: Your character successfully calls upon their knowledge of the Cthulhu Mythos to enact a ritual, identify the calling card of a particular cult, decipher a passage from the *Al Azif*, or discern the intended use of an alien artifact from beyond space and time.

Exceptional Success: Not only does your character's attempt to apply their knowledge of the Cthulhu Mythos succeed, but they also recall some niggling (and potentially very important) detail about the cult, spell, tome, artifact, or other abominable thing that they are explaining, investigating, or invoking.

Diving

"When I saw that horrible face hiding amongst the seaweed, I forgot all of my training, dropped my weights and sped toward the distant surface of the bay, bends be damned!"

Characters who possess the Diving skill are versed, not only in the basic principles of diving, but in their practical application as well. Such a character knows how to control their breathing, how to move with precision underwater, and how to avoid unnecessary risks while beneath the surface of the sea. Given the nautical nature of many Lovecraft short stories, the inclusion of a skill that expressly allowed for undersea exploration seemed prudent.

Possessed by: Marine biologists, pearl divers, pipeline welders, sailors, weekend warriors

Specialties: SCUBA diving, skin diving, spear fishing, underwater safety

Roll Results:

Dramatic Failure: Your character's effort not only fails, but they injure themselves in the process - and, obviously, diving accidents can have the potential to be lethal (see the rules for Holding Breath on Page 49 of the *WoD* core rule book).

Failure: Your character fails to achieve what they were attempting to do. They decide that exploring an underwater cave before going up for another air tank is a good idea, they clumsily bump into the rotten hull of a sunken vessel, triggering its collapse, etc.

Success: Your character accomplishes the action as planned. They surface to exchange air canisters before exploring the underwater cave, they deftly maneuver past the rotten hull of the sunken ship, etc.

Exceptional Success: Your character accomplishes the action with more efficiency or speed than expected. For instance, your character manages to spear an attacking sharp through the roof of its mouth, rendering it harmless.

Etiquette

"She was called Victoria because she had beaten us in battle seven hundred years before, and she was called Gloriana because she was glorious, and she was called the Queen because the human mouth was not shaped to say her true name."

Eccentric socialites and high society often play a role in Lovecraft's short stories, thus, a *specific* skill to deal with such elements has been implemented here. The Etiquette skill is essentially the inverse of the Streetwise skill - that is, a character

New Skills (Continued)

who possesses the Etiquette skill knows the ins and outs of high society and are adept at surviving by its often cutthroat rules. Characters who understand Etiquette can bend the ears of important socialites, broker items at exclusive auction houses, and otherwise make use of the unique resources available to the social elite. Like the Streetwise skill, Etiquette also comes in handy for avoiding the law and staying on the right side of wrong people, albeit in a different social circle.

Possessed by: Aristocrats, business magnates, celebrities, politicians

Specialties: Fraternal Orders, Gossip, Publicity, Pulling Strings

Roll Results:

Dramatic Failure: Your character completely misjudges a situation, making a blunder that could have fatal or, at least, financially devastating consequences. He might try to steal money from a powerful businessman, accidentally insult the head of a prominent fraternal order, or drop the name of an individual who doesn't wish to be associated with the character.

Failure: Your character has no luck rendezvousing with his high society chums, or convincing the local social elite that he is worth their time.

Success: Your character manages to arrange a rendezvous with a high roller who can provide him with what he seeks.

Dramatic Success: Not only does your character manage to arrange a rendezvous with an important socialite, but they also manage to put themselves in that socialite's good graces, perhaps allowing for easier future interactions.

At the moment, only one skill has been renamed (don't worry - it still works in exactly the same manner) - Brawling. In the World of Cthulhu, investigators are generally gentlemen and/or ladies, and such folk simply don't brawl - instead they engage in *Fisticuffs*.

Old Skills With New Names

New Advantage

Sanity

Traits: (Wits + Composure) - Cthulhu Mythos

Madness and sanity are vital staples of Lovecraft's fiction and, as such, it only seemed appropriate that characters possess a special advantage to represent mental fortitude in the World of Cthulhu, thus the Sanity advantage. In the World of Cthulhu, when a character loses points of Sanity it doesn't mean that they slide towards drooling catatonia or homicidal mania, but rather that they begin to blur lines between different levels of reality. In point of fact, so-called 'insane' characters in the World of Cthulhu have a better grip on the way things *really* work - they're simply labeled 'insane' by the rest of society who, as of yet, isn't privy to the horrible truths of the world (or is, but chooses to deny them).

Sanity is rated on a scale from 1 to 10 and has both an initial rating and a current rating. A character's *initial* Sanity rating is filled in on the dots under "Sanity" on your character sheet. A character's *current* Sanity rating is tracked in the corresponding boxes. As a character's Sanity deteriorates and they begin to lose points of Sanity, just check off a box. When dots and checked boxes are equal, your character is no longer able to distinguish between different levels of reality, confusing one for another and, as a result, is dismissed by those individuals with high Sanity as a simple madman. That said, you might be wondering how this works mechanically...

Madness Ratings:

Every potentially mind-twisting horror, every hidden truth that man was not meant to know, has a Madness rating that delineates the potential of that hideous thing to unhinge the human mind. Suggested Madness ratings follow:

- **10** Encounter with Outer God (Roll 2 Dice)
- **9** Encounter with Great Old One (Roll 2 Dice)
- **8** Reading from the *real* Necronomicon (Roll 2 Dice)
- **7** Encounter with a Greater Servitor/Independent Race (Roll 3 Dice)
- **6** Enacting a sorcerous Mythos ritual (Roll 3 Dice)
- **5** Reading from a copy of the real Necronomicon (Roll 3 Dice)
- **4** Encounter with a Lesser Servitor/Independent Race (Roll 4 Dice)
- **3** Reading from another greater Mythos tome (Roll 4 Dice)
- **2** Reading from a lesser Mythos tome (Roll 5 Dice)
- **1** Reading from a phony Mythos tome (Roll 6 Dice)

Whenever a character comes face to face with a horrible truth (or unholy creature), the player of that character makes a Sanity roll, as outlined below.

The Sanity Roll:

When a player finds themselves faced with horrible truth that man was not meant to know, a creature born beyond the realm of reason, or other such sanity draining thing, the player of that character rolls a number of dice as indicated by the Madness Rating of the force or situation being encountered. If this roll succeeds, the character's ability to distinguish between the different levels of reality remains unaffected, and their Sanity rating does not change. If the sanity roll fails, on the other hand, the character's ability to parse the different levels of reality suffers and they lose a point of their Sanity rating.

Derangements (Option):

As a character's ability to differentiate between levels of reality becomes impaired, their outward manner of expression usually changes accordingly. In the World of Cthulhu, this outward behavior is represented by derangements. When a Sanity point is lost due to the discovery of a horrible truth or confrontation with forces that mankind was not meant to know, roll your character's new Sanity rating as a dice pool. If this roll succeeds, your character manages to come to terms with their new understanding of the world. If this roll fails, however, a derangement manifests in your character.

Derangements in World of Cthulhu games work exactly as described on pages 96-100 of the World of Darkness core rule book. Do note, however, that in the World of Cthulhu, derangements are *only* an external manifestation of internal discord, not a symptom of moral decay or mental deficiency (it is, after all, quite possible for a lunatic to be both moral and intelligent).

Final Note On Sanity:

Do note that *sanity* is not the same thing as *willpower* - it is entirely possible for a raving lunatic to possess a force of iron will and, conversely, it is possible for a perfectly sane person to be a spineless coward.

Unused Advantage

Sorcery

In the World of Cthulhu, as in Lovecraft's short fiction, morality isn't typically depicted in shades of grey, but rather in simple black and white. Evil is evil, good is good, and in the end, neither is very relevant when compared to the unfathomable alien might of the Great Old Ones. As such, by default, games set in the World of Cthulhu don't make use of the Morality rules that appear in the World of Darkness core rule book. That said, if you want to implement these rules in your own World of Cthulhu game, feel free to do so (but be warned - when used in conjunction with the Sanity rules found here, it doubles the bookkeeping duties of the Storyteller).

Sorcery is a staple of many (but not all) of Lovecraft's short stories - from the damned cultists in thrall to their sleeping gods to the hapless detective that peruses a cursed text - anybody can delve (or stumble unknowingly) into the forbidden lore of sorcery. Sorcery isn't magic - magic is the art of using smoke and mirrors, slight of hand, and parlor tricks to impress for vanity's sake. Sorcery is the art of channeling damnable energy and invoking monstrous horrors to draw power to oneself. Magic is harmless. Sorcery, on the other hand, is unspeakably evil.

Casting spells in the World of Cthulhu has very little to do with skill. Any blasphemous cultist (or curious college professor) with access to the right tomes of forbidden lore can invoke a sorcerous spell merely by chanting words written upon a given page. That said, the cost of reading such works and invoking the power contained therein is paid for with one's sanity - but if you're willing to pay that price, sorcery has a lot to offer.

As a rule, enacting sorcerous rituals requires very specific components, be these components the chanting of certain unholy words in a long forgotten tongue, the use of specific eldritch symbols, the sacrifice of live animals, or even the alignment of certain planets and stars. Should any of the components be omitted, the ritual may not function at all - or it may have horrible unforeseen results of disastrous proportions (such is the risk that a sorcerer assumes).

Given the nature of sorcery as it is portrayed in the source material, casting a spell requires a player to make a Cthulhu Mythos skill roll on their character's behalf when enacting a ritual, determining whether or not they know how to intone the required unholy names, etch the eldritch symbols properly, ritually slaughter the animal sacrifice, and tell if the stars are right. If this roll is successful, the character manages to perform the ritual as prescribed in the vile text from which they are working.

Final Note On Sorcery:

Finally, note that the effects of sorcery in the World of Cthulhu aren't of the 'fireball' and 'lightening bolt' variety - they're of the 'summoning hellish alien creatures to do your bidding' and 'invoking otherworldly horrors to gain knowledge from' variety. Or theoretically, that's how sorcerous spells are supposed to work in the World of Cthulhu - as it turns out, hellish alien gods and otherworldly horrors don't like insignificant humans making demands on their time.

On the following pages are some common examples of Cthulhu Mythos creatures presented specifically for use with the Storytelling system and the World of Cthulhu. In the near future, I hope to append this document with some proper conversion rules that will allow you to use material from other games in your World of Cthulhu chronicles, but until then - this is what you get.

Bestiary

Byakhee (Lesser Servitor Race)

Description: The Byakhee are a hideous race of winged humanoids in thrall to Hastur, the Unnameable. Possessing the cosmetic qualities of a large, decomposing crow with arms and legs, the Byakhee is a horrible sight to behold. Often summoned by human sorcerers to serve as sentries or perform murderous deed, Byakhee are defining creatures of the Cthulhu Mythos.

Attributes: Intelligence: 2, Wits: 2, Resolve: 3, Strength: 2, Dexterity: 4, Stamina: 2, Presence: 3, Manipulation: 0, Composure: 2

Skills: Athletics (Flight): 3, Brawl: 1, Stealth: 2, Intimidation: 3

Willpower: 5

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 14

Size: 4

Weapons/Attacks:

| Type | Damage | Dice Pool |
|------|--------|-----------|
| Bite | 2L | 3 |
| Claw | 3L | 3 |

Health: 6

Chthonian (Greater Independent Race)

Description: Chthonians are immense, worm-like, creatures with mouths not unlike a lamprey's, but surrounded by masses of writhing tentacles. That said, the Chthonian's appearance is deceiving - for they are highly intelligent, possessing psychic abilities that allow them to probe the minds of humans in their immediate vicinity.

Attributes: Intelligence: 4, Wits: 2, Resolve: 3, Strength: 4, Dexterity: 1, Stamina: 4, Presence: 4, Manipulation: 2, Composure: 3

Skills: Athletics (Burrow): 3, Brawl: 2, Cthulhu Mythos: 2, Intimidation: 3

Willpower: 7

Initiative: 4

Defense: 1

Speed: 7

Size: 9

Weapons/Attacks:

| Type | Damage | Dice Pool |
|--------------|----------|-----------|
| Constrict | 6L | 6 |
| Dream Attack | Special* | 6 |

Health: 13

* The Chthonian's dream attack is an invasive and direct attack upon the psyche of an individual, in which the Chthonian plagues the dreams of a target with visions of things that man was not meant to know. When a character finds themselves the target of a Chthonian's dream attacks, they make sanity rolls as appropriate (with the Madness Rating of the roll based upon what images the Chthonian reveals to them in the dreams). And in case you were wondering - yes, it is quite possible that these dream attacks will drive a character mad.

Cthulhu (Great Old One)

Description: An impossibly massive humanoid *thing*, Great Cthulhu is draped with seemingly endless yards of translucent green flesh, boasts a pair of withered, leathery wings and the facial features of a cephalopod, including a sucker-like mouth that is ringed with writhing tentacles. To gaze upon the visage of Great Cthulhu is to stare madness itself in the eye. Sleeping in the sunken cyclopean city of ancient R'yleh, waiting for the day that He and His brethren will once again awaken to rule the cosmos and everything in it, the dread Cthulhu has a widespread cult and is, despite his imprisonment, still actively served by beast and man alike upon the Earth.

Attributes: Intelligence: 9, Wits: 7, Resolve: 7, Strength: 9, Dexterity: 5, Stamina: 9, Presence: 9, Manipulation: 7, Composure: 9

Skills: Athletics: 4, Brawl: 5, Cthulhu Mythos: 4

Willpower: 16

Initiative: 14

Defense: 5

Speed: 19

Size: 50

Weapons/Attacks:

| Type | Damage | Dice Pool |
|---------|------------|-----------|
| Grab | 10L | 14 |
| Devour | Special* | Special** |
| Visions | Special*** | 16 |

Health: 59

* If a character is unfortunate enough to end up in the gaping maw of a Great Old One, that character is no more for this world. Period. No die rolls. No chance to survive. Death of this nature is especially horrible and final.

** After Great Cthulhu grabs a character, the Storyteller need not roll any dice to determine whether or not the Great Old One devours said character, rather the dread god simply shovels the unfortunate character into his mouth.

*** Great Cthulhu's visions intrude upon the dreams of an intended target, slowly revealing the truth of existence to the dreamer, attempting to draw them into a life of servitude to the sleeping god. When a character finds themselves the target of Great Cthulhu's visions, they make sanity rolls as appropriate (with the Madness Rating of the roll based upon what images the sleeping god reveals to them in the dreams). And like the Cthonian's dream attack, yes, it is quite possible that these visions will drive a character mad.

Note that Great Cthulhu is, for all intents and purposes, a *god*. His eldritch might and alien intellect far surpass that of any mortal being upon the Earth and dwarfs that of most supernatural beings, as well. As such, direct physical encounters with the sleeping god should occur rarely - if ever. In the World of Cthulhu, pitting player characters directly against hideous, eldritch, gods in mortal combat is a good way to bring a chronicle to a screeching halt, transforming the protagonists into a pile of corpses. Great Old Ones and other such powerful beings are best utilized as plot devices rather than direct physical threats.

Deep One (Lesser Servitor Race)

Description: Deep Ones are amphibious hybrids birthed of an unholy union between human women and Father Dagon. Deep Ones begin their life as fairly normal looking people save for a few unsettling features such as bulging eyes and thin lips, but as the years roll by, their unnatural lineage asserts itself more prominently. Eventually, these foul disciples of Father Dagon and Great Cthulhu pass from amongst humanity's ranks and rejoin their father in the sea.

Attributes: Intelligence: 2, Wits: 2, Resolve: 3, Strength: 3, Dexterity: 2, Stamina: 3, Presence: 2, Manipulation: 2, Composure: 3

Skills: Athletics: 3, Brawl: 2, Cthulhu Mythos: 1, Firearms: 2, Melee: 2

Willpower: 6

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Size: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

| Type | Damage | Dice Pool |
|----------------|--------|-----------|
| Claw | 1L | 5 |
| Club/Bat | 2B | 5 |
| Small Revolver | 2L | 4 |

Health: 8

Note that Deep Ones often (but not always) find themselves engaged in a profession that has strong ties to the sea (fisherman, sailor, etc). As such, you may want to consider adding skills such as Diving and Drive (Sailing Vessel) to the suggested list of skills presented above.

Father Dagon (Greater Servitor)

Description: An ancient Deep One who has grown to monstrous size, Dagon roams the seas, a devout acolyte of Great Cthulhu. Spreading his vile seed amongst humanity, Dagon is the progenitor of the Deep Ones and tends to the needs of his inhuman children as only a father can.

Attributes: Intelligence: 3, Wits: 3, Resolve: 3, Strength: 5, Dexterity: 2, Stamina: 4, Presence: 5, Manipulation: 2, Composure: 4

Skills: Athletics: 3, Brawl: 4, Cthulhu Mythos: 3

Willpower: 7

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 12

Size: 12

Weapons/Attacks:

| Type | Damage | Dice Pool |
|------|--------|-----------|
| Bite | 7L | 9 |
| Claw | 6L | 9 |

Health: 16

Note that Dagon, while not a true godhead of the Cthulhu Mythos, is worshiped as one by his grotesque offspring - and *not* without reason.

Ghoul (Lesser Independent Race)

Description: These pale, animalistic, aberrations dwell in long-forgotten catacombs beneath many of mankind's major cities in the World of Cthulhu. Possessed by an insatiable hunger for cadaverous flesh, packs of ghouls are often encountered as they roam the cemeteries and other burial grounds of humanity looking for sustenance - or victims. Despite their animalistic appearance, ghouls are fairly intelligent, possessing the ability to wield rudimentary weapons (small rocks, jagged pieces of bone, and so on) in combat.

Attributes: Intelligence: 2, Wits: 1, Resolve: 2, Strength: 2, Dexterity: 3, Stamina: 2, Presence: 3, Manipulation: 1, Composure: 2

Skills: Brawl: 2

Willpower: 4

Initiative: 5

Defense: 1

Speed: 11

Size: 5

Weapons Attacks:

| Type | Damage | Dice Pool |
|---------------|--------|-----------|
| Bite | 3L | 4 |
| Claw | 2L | 4 |
| Simple Weapon | 1L | 4 |

Health: 7

Shoggoth (Lesser Servitor Race)

Description: The shoggoth are quite possibly the most feared lesser servitor race in the World of Cthulhu. A shapeless, ever shifting, mass of muscle tissue, the shoggoth is an insatiable, many-mouthed, amorphous eating machine. Apparently engineered by the Old Ones, the shoggoth rebelled against their creators and now lie hidden in the darkest corners of the Earth, waiting for unfortunate individuals to discover them.

Attributes: Intelligence: 1, Wits: 1, Resolve: 4, Strength: 4, Dexterity: 4, Stamina: 3, Presence: 4, Manipulation: 0, Composure: 4

Skills: Brawl: 4

Willpower: 8

Initiative: 8

Defense: 1

Speed: 18

Size: 10+ (up to 20)

Weapons Attacks:

| Type | Damage | Dice Pool |
|---------------|----------|-----------|
| Tendril Whip | 4L | 8 |
| Tendril Crush | 5L | 8 |
| Envelop | Special* | 8 |

Health: 13+ (adjusted by Size)

* The shoggoth envelops a victim in the folds of its amorphous body, depriving them of air and slowly devouring them. Treat as a suffocating attack, per the rules for drowning on Page 49 of the World of Darkness core rule book.

World of Cthulhu is by no means a beginner's guide to roleplaying in the worlds of Howard Lovecraft nor does it, by any means, convey a comprehensive overview of those dread realms. If you're new to the Cthulhu Mythos, I suggest that you pick up the following books and begin reading:

Anything by Lovecraft*
Cold Print by Ramsey Campbell
Shadows Over Baker Street (Compilation)

Note that there are also a good number of Cthulhu Mythos movies that one can find at the local video store. Avoid them. Most (if not all) of them stray from the source material in unforgivable ways, while others simply try to pass off men in rubber suits as unspeakable horrors.

*When purchasing a book of Lovecraft stories, be certain that you examine the contents before you shell out your hard-earned cash. Several publishers have released books that ostensibly contain never-before-published original works by Lovecraft, but upon close examination it is revealed that said stories are, in fact, merely authored by modern writers working from Lovecraft's notes.

Finally, note that the World of Cthulhu rules are not (and never will be) a standalone game - you'll need to pick up a copy of the World of Darkness core rule book to make use of them. That said, these rules have been designed around *only* the World of Darkness core rules and, as a result, they may not be 100% compatible with other World of Darkness products (Vampire, Werewolf, Etc). The new World of Darkness core rule book is both aesthetically and mechanically pleasing. If you aren't sure that it'll be worth your money, put those doubts aside - it is well worth every penny of the purchase price and then some. So go buy a copy already!

H.P. LOVECRAFT



BORN 1890
ABSCONDED 1937

Final Notes

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