

# CTHULHU GREY

A *Cthulhu Dark* hack by Aaron M. Sturgill (v. 1.0)

## INTRODUCTION

I developed these rules to meet the needs of my specific play group. There are two main issues with *Cthulhu Dark* that I will attempt to address:

- ▶ A realistic, intuitive mechanic for Harm as well as Insanity. (Rolling with your current Insanity as the target number is neither.)
- ▶ Mechanical differentiation between characters, based on their particular skills.

I have reprinted nearly all of the rules from *Cthulhu Dark* with my own additions, so this document should represent a playable game. I have removed all examples for the sake of brevity. No infringement on Mr. Walmsley's copyright is intended.

## YOUR INVESTIGATOR

Choose a Name, Occupation, and three Skills or Talents that will be unique to your Investigator. Take a green Insanity Die, and a red Harm die.

Your Skills & Talents must be specific, and they must define your character beyond the confines of his Occupation. It is unlikely (not recommended) that anyone else in your playing group will have an identical Skill or Talent.

## INSANITY AND HARM

Your Insanity and Harm both start at 1.

When you see something disturbing (or when you are injured), roll your Insanity die (or your Harm die). If you get *lower than the target number* for that particular trauma, add 1 to your Insanity (or Harm) and roleplay the trauma.

### EXAMPLE SKILLS & TALENTS

- ▶ Sword fighting
- ▶ Historical research
- ▶ Firearms
- ▶ Criminal Investigation
- ▶ Cooking
- ▶ Martial arts
- ▶ Spell-casting
- ▶ Running
- ▶ Putting others at ease
- ▶ Seeing the truth of a matter
- ▶ Questioning/interrogation

Remember that these target numbers are for Insanity and Harm rolls, not for tasks or conflicts.

TARGET/DIFFICULTY	INSANITY EXAMPLES	HARM EXAMPLES
▶ 3 (Easy)	Gruesome, but mundane	Fist; grapple
▶ 4 (Moderate)	Horrific; light Mythos contact	Knife; falling short distance
▶ 5 (Difficult)	Significant Mythos contact	Sword; firearms; falling moderate distance
▶ 6 (Hard)	Great Cthulhu	Explosives; falling great distance

## DOING THINGS

To know how well you do at something, roll:

- ▶ One die if the task is *within human capabilities*.
- ▶ One die if it's *within your Occupational expertise*.
- ▶ One die if it's *within the purview of one of your Skills or Talents*.
- ▶ Your Insanity die, if you *will risk your sanity to succeed*, or if *the Keeper tells you to*.
- ▶ Your Harm die, if you *will risk your physical well being to succeed*, or if *the Keeper tells you to*.

If your Insanity (or Harm) die rolls higher than any other die, make an Insanity (or Harm) roll, as above.

Then your highest die shows how well you do. On a 1, you barely succeed. On a 6, you do so brilliantly.

## FAILING

If someone thinks it would be more interesting if you failed, they describe how you might fail and roll a die or several. (They can't do this if you're investigating and you must succeed for the scenario to proceed).

If their highest die rolls higher than your highest die, you fail, in the way they described. If not, you succeed as before, with your highest die showing how well you succeed.

### DIFFICULTY FOR OPPOSED ROLLS

- ▶ 1d6: Simple actions; minor opposition.
- ▶ 2d6: Complex actions; significant opposition.
- ▶ 3d6: Heroic actions; mythic opposition.

## REROLLING

If you included your Insanity (or Harm) die in the roll and you're not happy with the result, you may reroll (all the dice). If you didn't include your Insanity (or Harm) die before, you may add it now and reroll. If your Insanity (or Harm) die came up high on the first roll, you must make an Insanity (or Harm) roll before rerolling.

Afterwards, look at the new result. As before, the highest die shows how well you do. If your Insanity (or Harm) die rolls higher than any other die, make an Insanity (or Harm) roll, even if you made one after your previous roll.

You can only reroll once.

## COOPERATING AND COMPETING

To cooperate: everyone who is cooperating rolls their dice. The highest die, rolled by anyone, determines the outcome.

To compete: everyone who is competing rolls their dice. Whoever gets highest wins. If it's a tie, the person with highest Insanity wins. If Insanity is tied, reroll.

As before, if your Insanity (or Harm) die rolls higher than any other die you roll, make an Insanity (or Harm) roll. And, if anyone is not happy with their roll, they may reroll, using the rules above.

## SUPPRESSING KNOWLEDGE

When your Insanity reaches 5, you may now reduce it by suppressing Mythos knowledge: for example, burning books, stopping rituals, destroying yourself or impeding investigation.

Each time you do this, roll your Insanity Die. If you get less than your current Insanity, decrease your Insanity by 1. And you may continue suppressing Mythos knowledge when your Insanity drops below 5.

## HEALING

Any time your Harm is higher than 1, you may spend *an appropriate amount of in-game time* to heal your character. How much this is depends on the type of injuries sustained, and the quality of treatment available. Talk to your Keeper about this.

## GOING INSANE

When your Insanity reaches 6, you go incurably insane. This is a special moment: everyone focuses on your character's last moments as their mind breaks. Go out however you want: fight, scream, run or collapse.

Afterwards, either make a new character or continue playing, madly, but retire the character as soon as you can.

## DEATH

When your Harm reaches 6, your character is dead. This is a special moment: everyone focuses on your character's last moments as their soul passes. Go out however you want.

Afterwards, either make a new character or continue playing as a ghost or similar apparition (at the Keeper's discretion), but retire the character as soon as you can.

# MAGICK

In some instances, your Investigator will have to perform a Magickal action, such as summoning or binding an otherworldly creature, or cooperating with others to perform a spell. To know how well you do, roll:

- ▶ Your Insanity die *only*, since Magick is *outside human capabilities*.
- ▶ At the Keeper's discretion, one die if Magick is *within your occupational expertise*.
- ▶ At the Keeper's discretion, one die if Magick is *within one of your Skills or Talents*.

Then (to represent the Investigator's finite amount of Magickal energy) add 1 to your Magick. You do not make Magick rolls - every time you use Magick, successfully or not, you check off a box of Magick.

# OTHER CLARIFICATIONS

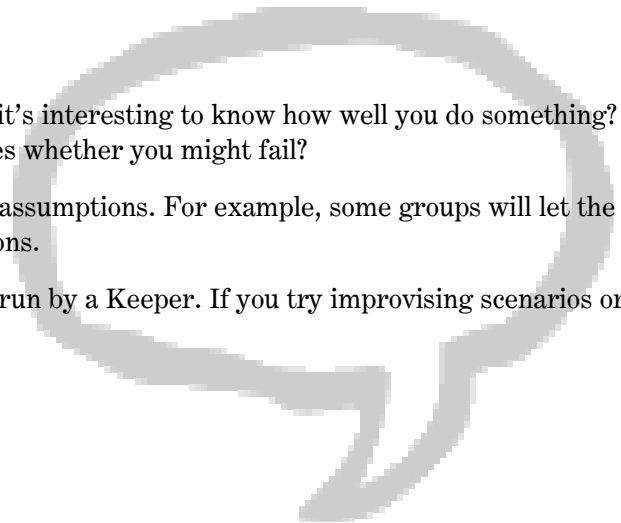
- ▶ You cannot fight greater Mythos deities such as Shub Niggurath, Hastur, or Cthulhu. If you try to fight them, your death will be meaningless.
- ▶ Things within human capabilities include: picking locks, finding Ry'leh, deciphering carvings, remembering something, spotting something concealed, rationalizing something horrific.
- ▶ Things outside human capabilities include: casting spells, understanding hidden meaning, doing things in dreams. You can try such things if you have the opportunity: for example, if you sense patterns, you can try to follow them. However, you won't get the "within human capabilities" die, and might just roll your Insanity die.
- ▶ A high success never short-circuits the investigation: That is, it never takes you to the end of the scenario, skipping everything in between. Thus, in the example above: even if you rolled a 6 while searching your great-uncle's personal effects, you would not find the coordinates of Ry'leh, where Cthulhu sleeps.
- ▶ When you make an Insanity Roll and succeed, this means you keep it together, not that you are fine. When you fail, getting higher than your Insanity, you fail to keep it together.
- ▶ To play without a character sheet, use your Insanity Die to keep track of your Insanity, by keeping its highest face turned to your current Insanity.

# UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Who decides when to roll Insanity? Who decides when it's interesting to know how well you do something? Who decides when something disturbs your PC? Who decides whether you might fail?

Decide the answers with your group. Make reasonable assumptions. For example, some groups will let the Keeper decide everything. Others will share the decisions.

These rules are designed to play prewritten scenarios, run by a Keeper. If you try improvising scenarios or playing without a Keeper, let me know.



# FINALLY

If you write Cthulhu scenarios and you'd like to turn them into standalone products, by including Cthulhu Dark free of charge, email me at [graham@thievesoftime.com](mailto:graham@thievesoftime.com).

Let me know how these rules work for you. My email is [graham@thievesoftime.com](mailto:graham@thievesoftime.com). On [www.thievesoftime.com](http://www.thievesoftime.com), you'll find more *Cthulhu Dark* rules.

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## P.S.

You can also get in touch with the hacker, if you want.

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