

CTHULHOID MONSTERS IN SHADOWRUN

Or: "Do we Ft'haghn, Chummer?"

By Doktor Falco

Legal Disclaimer

I wish to thank Chaosium Inc. for the background provided in their Call Of Cthulhu RPG (fifth edition), which is a good game, great fun, and very well presented. I suspect many of the people reading this already own a copy, but if you don't, you probably won't understand many of the rules of this section if you don't buy the CoC rulebook. Go for it! It's a great, deadly game! If I did violate any legal rules, it was not meant! No oh no don't sue me... I got Sue-o-phobia! ©

Introduction And Roleplaying Notes

Many of us have been wondering all time: *If Cthulhu is Yesterday and Now, why shouldn't it be Tomorrow too?* And, of course, what cyberpunk game could better host the strange, cute and beautiful creatures of the Mythos than Shadowrun, with its big Orks, its nice and polite Trolls and its Dragons and spells? Well, of course, the answer is "none". The only problem with Mythos creatures is that in CoC they are *unbelievably deadly*, and of course, you need some way to stop them from dying by the thousand after having been hit my malevolent grenade crossfire, which is not an easy thing to do in a game where, after all, "*you only have 10 hit points*"... Many of the creatures below will seem *too big*, therefore, maybe even just *grossly overpowered*, and a little outrageous too. They have nonetheless the tendency to die, like all critters in Shadowrun, no matter how big, when hit by multiple explosive Armor-piercing shells at once. Well, I have used them in my adventures, and I assure you that when viewed in a "CoC" kinda way, they work well. As I once read, Call Of Cthulhu is the only game where "the nearer you get to the real baddie the more you realize how far you should stay away from him". Don't let your players be misled by the fact that they have huge guns and solid pieces of cyberware, and play the adventures in which Cthulhoid monsters are used as dark, depressing crusades against blasphemous Street Samurai-Killers, creatures which leave no trace but yucky pools of goo and blood and bones and decomposing acid. Give your players every possible hint that what they are running against is *WAY* bigger than them, has tentacles and lurks in dark sewers, uses troll Street Sams as appetizers, and could probably disembowel you with a single strike even if you have Armed Combat (8) and the latest Dikote-covered Monokatana. To this end, enforce sanity tests by describing every single death of an NPC in gory detail, with puss, gore, brains, bone splinters flying everywhere, cries of pain and anguish, splattering blood and generally mindless violence a la *Doom*. Read splatterpunk books before every adventure. Get copies of medical magazines on fractures and exposed wounds. Be inventive, dark, inflexible, be a Psycho! When your players arrive where the monster lurks, having read mind boggingly insane books, fought to the death hundreds of mindless cultists and found thousands of innocents slaughtered, they should be shaking to the bones. So, just before the Big Battle starts, they will have forgotten about their Panthers and grenades, and will be a less reliant on their own abilities... This way, even if they somehow manage to kill those critters, they won't have been disappointed by their weakness, their reaction will simply be: *What luck!*

Sanity in Cthulhoid Adventures

Sanity is a major part of any CoC adventure. The nicest thing about sanity is that the more you lose, the more you fail your tests, therefore the more you lose, the more you lose. To this end, a CoC-like system already exists in Shadowrun. Apply to sanity all the normal rules of the Physical and Mental Condition Monitor. Draw another 10 boxes on your sheet, put the usual L,M,S letters, plus a "CW" where the D would have been. These letters mean, of course, *Lightly Insane*, *Moderately Insane*, *Seriously Insane*, and *Completely Whacko!*. All the penalties on the sanity monitor should be used only against sanity tests. A sanity rating is a two-letter weapon-damage-like code, like 8M or 2L. The Character should make a sanity test by rolling die equal to his Willpower, with the appropriate penalties from Sanity status on his Sanity monitor. All the usual Damage rules apply (every 2 successes the Code goes up or down, according to the winner, etc...). Apply Sanity to the condition Monitor. Et voilà. So what? WeeeIIIII... Actually, that's not all... Whenever a character receives 1 box or more of Sanity, he or she gets a temporary insanity (one for every box)... Why??? But of course. You have 10 boxes, ain't it? So every box is 1/5th of your current sanity (hee hee)!!! Roll a die and consult the temporary insaity list below.

TEMPORARY INSANITIES (Roll a D6)

1	GASP! The character goes into catatonia, opens his eyes real wide and goes "Oooohhh" and "GROOSSS!!!" for a while. He loses the next D6 Complex Actions.
2	EEEEKKK! The character is SO repelled that he immediately starts outputting lead at the critter or other Sanity-Blasting-horror. He MUST fire his maximum number of shots per action (don't cheat you know what I mean, he changes setting to FA if he can!), until he has no more rounds left in the gun. At this point, still screaming, he stops panting for a simple action and looks at the results.
3	NAAAAAH! The character simply cannot believe one such thing exists. Pah! He will refuse to take any action against the Sanity-Blasting-Horror while shouting dumb phrases like "Shut down that holoprojector, enough of your practical jokes!". After 4D6 Combat Turns of this, he will realize something and can start acting up again.
4	*HURL!* The character starts vomiting. All of his target numbers go up +6 until he can have an hour or so of peace or the thingie leaves his eyesight for at least 20 Combat Turns.
5	HIC! The character needs to forget. As soon as out, he will start drinking, using BTL or taking hallucinogens until someone can slap him hard enough as to make him regain his consciousness. Of course, this is rather difficult to roleplay, but talk to the Player, and tell him he shouldn't let the others participate in this, that his character wants to be alone, etc... The others of the group have to find out before they can cure the poor sod. After that, cure is instantaneous. The Character will want to stop. IF he can, that is. Refer to drug addiction rules elsewhere...
6	Ooooh! The character faints, pure and simple. He goes S on his Mental Monitor, goes down, and stays down for 10+4D6 combat turns. After that, he wakes with a big headache and a Serious fatigue.

Plus, whenever the character passes from the M or S letters on his Sanity Monitor, he or she gets a permanent insanity. When someone goes to the CW letters on his Sanity Monitor, he is out of his head. Kaputt. He starts dreaming of Ol' Cthulhu and screaming phrases in Leng language. He is good for the Sanitaryum. He cannot be cured. Period. Refer instead to the table below for Permanent Insanities.

PERMANENT INSANITIES:

Note: we ignore effects on the Social Skill table. Assume a Ridiculous penalty of +20(?), since they just *know* you are mad... You keep giggling, tinkering with your gun, eyeing strangely the flies on the wall and screaming thuggish sentences like "DILBERT OH DILBERT!!!"

1	Paranoia: <i>everyone is around to get you... People eye strangely at you, they want to kill you, maim you, heck, they want YOU!!!</i> The Character becomes distrusting, malevolent. He wants to be the last in any line, he refuses to give his back to people. He is simply scared of things! A good insanity in a world where even little kids are armed...
2	Skizophrenia: <i>wheeeee! Ain't life goood, um... Well, who am I? Whoa! What? What's this gun here for? (Drops the gun) HEY! Who are you guys? Stay away from me! (picks up gun, points at other PCs)</i> Life's a hell for a deep skizoid. You simply are many people, forgetting things, realizing things... Do your worst to hassle the other players by turning peace-loving at the worst time, then again becoming a torturer, in short, do <i>strange things</i> ..
3	Manic Depressive: <i>Oh (sigh) so dull... What? No I don't care about incoming fire, I am in a funk... No I don't care about enemy Street Sams, and who's this friend guy I must cure? I ain't got any friends (sighs). CARE TO REPEAT THAT LITTLE COMMENT? ME A FRAGHEAD? I WILL POP YOUR HEAD OFF!</i> Yeah. You are a Major hassle. When you are in a funk you don't care about nothing, but when you are crazy man you're crazy. For every combat roll 1 die. If the result is odd, you add 3 to your Combat pool and 1 to your Reaction, while if the result is even, you have one less die of initiative (if you only have 1 die, you roll none!), and subtract 4 from your combat pool. Plus, of course, you tend to be irritable and rather strange.

4	<p>Phobia: <i>Gee, guys, no, oh no, you can't, I can't... I no, no, no, I must insist, I am scared... LET ME GO you can't pull me along I DON'T WANT TO COME EEEEEKKK THE WALLS ARE WARPING AND SECRETING GIANT ORANGE TINKERBEANS LET ME GOOO!!! (Others let go, he rushes as far away as can arrive from the object of his fear, whimpering)</i></p> <p>When you become a phobic, your GM must choose <i>something</i>. Algae chips, chicken, snakes, fire, guns, empty spaces, closed spaces, whatever. Your character has a <i>strong</i> phobia for that kind of thing, and won't under normal conditions go even near the thing if he can. If obliged (by someone shooting at him, for example), he will eventually ignore his phobia by losing one simple action every combat phase, by adding +4 to all of his target numbers and crawling along the wall scared as hell.</p>
5	<p>Delusion: <i>A TRI-AN-GLE??? Yeeeeeek, another proof of the Illuminati!</i></p> <p>The character believes things that are not, or disbelieves things that blatantly are. The effect is up to the GM, but should have a rather heavy impact on the game: good examples are believing that all guns are empty, or that you are invulnerable, or believing that trolls are actually evil demon ninja zombies from outer space and therefore must be killed, or that Elves are all magicians, or that cyberware is all government-controlled by satellite IR magically assisted cybercams.</p>
6	<p>AMNESIA <i>Geee... I was saying something about... Uh, but what was it about?</i></p> <p>The character suffers from conspicuous amnesias, in a desperate attempt to forget even the big SBH that reduced him to this state. He loses all Knowledge skills, and all active skills are halved, while he struggles to remember which way the gun must be pointed and where do you hold a knife.</p>

I have seen there already are other Sanity rules around... I therefore suggest to apply the above rules to Cthulhu monsters only. They are yucky and gooey and sticky and alien and squirrrrrmmmmmm! They need something different from the rest of the Sanity-Blasting-Horrors in general, no?

Curing Insanity

To cure insanity, there is no better way than to go see a doktor. Yes, in the 2050es, insanity can be cured, given time, money and more time and money. Roll 1D6. this is the time in months the Psychiatrist during which your doc will give you pills and stuff. Then roll a Willpower Test against the number of boxes filled in the Sanity monitor, and divide the base time for the number of successes. After this period of time, pay 1000 NY per month, and the character is stable again. Reduce the boxes filled by 3, and start all over again. Notice: the fact that you will only reduce the boxes by 3, means that if you are Seriously Insane, the doc will need twice as long to cure you (well, you have two insaities, after all...) If during the cure time the character loses even only one box of the Sanity Monitor, the cure is lost, everything must be done again. By paying 5000 NY per month, the cure can be reduced to 1/2 of the time (real fast pills and stuff).

>>>> [Anybody telling you that some of the latest methods to recover from insanity require the use of magic and/or corrective surgery implants, is wrong. There is absolutely no evidence that surgery, Virtual Reality therapy or Magic can help with any psychiatric problems. I myself can PROVe iT!!!]<<<<<

-Lobo Tommy (21:46:12/06-14-56)

New Skills

There are two new skills in Cthulhoid adventures: Occult and Cthulhu Mythos. Occult is veary close to Magical theory, and I suggest to include it as a concentration of Magical theory. Therefore, there should now be 3 concentrations of Magical Theory: (Design, History and Occult). Occult is quite close to History but goes way back before the awakening. As for Cthulhu Mythos, there is no way the PCs can buy it. They recieve Mythos by reading books (the typical book giving one point of Mythos if it is a really good book, like The Necronomicon or the De Vermiis Mysteriis, or no points if it is a minor book), and their total mythos skill subtracts permanently from their Sanity Monitor by *lowering the CW box*. That is, the Sanity monitor of someone with Mythos (4) would have the CW box where normal people have the S one. This means the PC will have no penalties on his sanity tests, but risks much more going out of his skull than his Mythos-less invertebrate friends... Chtulhu Mythos is not a concentration, has no concentrations, and no chips are available for it (not unless your GM says so). Ypou can roll a Cthulhu Mythos test whenever you wish to identify a probably-mythos creature, ritual or book, againts a target number which is dependant on the type of ID required.

>>>> [Many people ask us what is the difference between Occult and Magical Theory. Well, occult has more to do with superstitions and the pre-awakening history of so-called "magic", and has no scientific proof. Occultists are nothing more than charlatans in a mage's perspective!]<<<<<

-Eagle Kimbo (08:12:33/06-14-56)

>>>> [Yeah, and one of these "charlatans", having no magic aura, no nothing, managed to shrink one of my Samurai associates to a dried prune, while I sat back and could do nothing. Gee, I even tried to consume one of my elementals trying to stop that death ray! That was not the usual kind of magic! Don't be misled. A good occultist knows more than I and you do...] <<<<<<

-Wise Wanda (12:12:45/006-14-56)

Mythos Spells

One of the things that go *GRIND* when you try to conciliate Shadowrun with Cthulhu is the so called Mage Gene. In Call of Cthulhu, every person can cast a spell, and this in a world where *magic does not exist*. So what should happen once you put Mythos in a world where magic can be performed, but only by a small number of people? Well, my own answer to this question is that Mythos spells are a specialized kind of sorcery *with fixed drain*. This means that because the Mythos spells are so alien and unspeakably *evil* and insane, their drain cannot be resisted like normal spells. Thus, a Mythos spell (and Mythos spells usually fall into the summoning business) works rather differently from a normal spell in the fact that it eats up your Stun monitor whatever happens. The good news is that Mythos spells can be performed by non-magicians. They do not need any link to the astral, but rather use your inner force to call upon powerful beings that would normally ignore you. The only thing a PC must have when he casts a Mythos spell is the adequate concentration, plus any help described by the spell itself. Of course, Magicians are more accustomed to concentration and resisting the devastating effect of powerful forces flowing through your body, and as such they receive some bonuses. A magician's Magic attribute (plus initiation bonuses) counts as a bonus for the magician's willpower when casting any Mythos spell, and a magician loses one less box of Stun damage for every level of initiation he has when taking drain from Mythos spells.

Since Mythos spells, however, are mostly of the conjure/dismiss category, they usually need more than one person and a kind of ritual sorcery known between CoC players as "Whenever You Arrive, The Ritual Has Just Started", from the nasty habit the evil priests have of starting the ritual *exactly* when the PCs arrive on the scene, leaving no time for preparation, of even worse, making it impossible for them to ignore the whole affair. W.Y.A.etc. from now on called C/D SBH (Call/Dismiss Sanity-Blasting-Horror) sorcery, is a complicated kind of sorcery, that usually needs to be done during certain periods of time, under certain astronomical conditions, in specified places, and usually sacrificing innocent victims and/or using lots of chanting cultists. We therefore suggest a rule of the thumb for the GMs when creating C/D SBH sorcery: give a rating from 1 to 1000 to the difficulty of the spell, with 1 being the smallest ones (a Dismiss Byakhee could be a 1), while 1000 is the greatest (a Call Yog-Sohoth could be a 900?). This is the drain damage for the spell. For every innocent victim sacrificed, halve the drain code. For every chanting mindless thug, subtract one from the modified drain code, and for every co-priest subtract 5. Evil priests organize C/D SBH rituals with the goal of reducing drain to 1. Thus, let's say we were calling Nyarlathothep (Code 175 - i made it up, be inventive!). The evil priest sacrifices one young woman (eek, scream, etc. etc.), taking down the code to 1/2, or 87.5. The priest then uses 5 co-priests (the code goes down to 62.5) and 61 chanting thugs. Total for the ritual: 61 cultists, five major baddies, one priest and a chained maiden. Sounds right, no? On the other way, casting small spells can be quite difficult under these conditions: Dismiss Fire Vampire (I call it a 5): either you go to M on your stun monitor, or you just need 1 friend. Dismiss Dhole (a 30?) needs either a victim (but no, good people don't sacrifice, therefore you cannot use sacrifices when dismissing SBHs), or 20 or so other people. It all sounds quite strange. All you need is to have enough people? No.

The chanting thugs all need to know and perform the chanting correctly, and must then resist a Stun damage of (Modified code)S using their Willpowers (usual rules). The co-priests instead must resist (Modified code)D of stun damage, while the Priest itself first takes drain and then resists a (Modified code)S taking into account the damage modifiers... If any of the co-priests faints, or if the priest goes down, the spell didn't work, or it worked bad, or something really nasty happened. This, of course, is for PCs only. NPCs ALWAYS perform spells correctly in CoC! So, dismissing that Fire Vampire, is not as easy as it seems... You call 1 close friend to act as co-priest, recite the words, and then you take 1 box of drain. Then the priest resists a 1D, then you resist a 1S with a modifier of +1 for the light drain... Might well go wrong if your W is low!!! The Dhole affair, is another different matter altogether: you call 3 friends (co-priests, modifies by 15), plus 14 chanting thugs, to give you reasonable chance of success, and there are 3 co-priests that need to resist 1D damage. Hope nobody rolls all ones...

These are just rules of the thumb, as I prefer to consider each spell differently, with its complicated, difficult ritual. Be inventive, use dark, slimy places, gory crypts, screaming damsels in distress (Simsense stars? Prostitutes?), chanting thugs, pentacles... You know the stunt!

>>>> [I have seen one of these "rituals", I think. I happened to be near Torino, Italy, in a place called "Musinè". It's a big hill, where admittedly one of the vertexes of a "magic triangle" lies. These guys were dressed like they were ready for one of those black masses, but I was just shadowing one of them, so I could do nothing at all. They started chanting, and then something came out of the big fire they had started. I can swear those things were invisible, except they showed up faintly on my thermographics. One of the guys in a robe fainted, and hell did break loose. People started swatting the air, while their hair caught fire, and many died before I had to run, or they would have discovered me. Got a cybercam pic of that. You can download it at my coordinates. Anybody knows about anything? I'm trying to complete a piece...]<<<<<

- Saraceno Goodyear (03:12:54/06-14-56)

>>>> [I think I can help you, Saraceno. I have gotten my hands on a strange book written in Italian and latin. If I am not mistaken its title is "Missa di Requiem per Shuggai", maybe we can reach an agreement?] <<<<<

- Mistalobaloba (04:55:23/06-15-56)

>>>> [That book belongs to me and you better give it back before I get angry] <<<<<

- Baron H (04:55:23/06-15-56)

>>>> [Hey, seen the time/date of this guy??? Mistalobaloba, you still there? Maybe you better run...] <<<<<

- Flux (07:45:22/06-15-56)

Mythos or no mythos?

At this stage, as Cthulhoid monsters arise, some of your players might wonder if all of this is really real. Well, the best thing in a Shadowrun campaign is not to overflow the whole environment with SBHs from Leng, but to keep the PCs wondering. Were those winged beasts Byakhee or just some sort of awakened critter? To this end, one good thing is to let all sanity rolls be made by the GM, and the Sanity Monitor be kept by him, without possibility to glance at it. Another good thing is to use ultra-powerful characters (Harlequins works quite good) as buffers for the PC's fears. Does Nyarlathothep really exist or was it just a setup by some BIG practical joker? After all, Lovecraft DID exist. It must be all literature then... I have found that players find themselves lost when you give them unsolvable questions, and tend to sleep very badly at night. So, keep them wondering. Was it *really* old Chtulhu, or just the latest simsense advert? How can we believe in a monster that our grandfathers used to laugh at when reading books and buying lead miniatures? Give them no proofs. Fear and ignorance, ignorance and fear. They combine well in the cyberpunk environment, especially when you keep hinting that major corps are interested in this biz... Whatever they ask you, smile broadly, and give no answers. And remember, when Hounds of Tindalos are driven back, they leave no trace! On the other hand, if they don't, they DO come back!

Now Introducing Ye Sanity Blasting Horrors!!!

The following descriptions do not follow the usual Shadowrun format, since entries such as Habits and Ecology have no meaning when talking about interstellar or transdimensional horrors... Most of these creature's habits are in fact so alien that they couldn't probably be translated to words, and their ecology is so disgusting that we would incur serious censorship if we tried to describe it.

BYAKHEE: The Star-Seeds. Lesser servitor race.

	B	Q	S	C	I	W	Cbt.S.	R	Attacks
Byakhee	6/5	5	6x3	-	3	4	3	5+1d	9M

Powers: Possible Strength Drain, Byakhees have a 10% chance of knowing 1d3 Mythos spells.

Weaknesses: Nope.

Sanity loss: None. They just look very wierd.

Byakhees are winged beasts from outer space, often used by baddies as mounts, and fairly powerless.

- As a special attack mode, the Byakhee can try to bite the victim. If the Byakhee damages its opponent while doing so, it deals no damage but drains a number of Strength points from the victim equal to the boxes that should have been filled on the Condition Monitor. If the victim goes to 0 Strength (not including cyberware,

BUT including bioware), he or she dies automatically (no chance of stabilizing, no trama patches, nothing!). Strength lost in this way is regained at the rate of 1 point per day of rest or 2 points if medical treatment is present.

Referenece: H.P. Lovecraft: "The festival"

CHTONIAN: Tentacled Burrowers, Greater independent race.

	B	Q	S	C	I	W	Cbt.S.	R	Attacks
Chtonian	14/8	2	27	-	6	6	7	3+1d	9S / 15D

Powers: Influence (LOS), Hardened Armor, Essence Drain (?), Create Earthquake, Body Drain, Total immunity to fire
Weaknesses: Allergy (Water) Severe.
Sanity loss: 3M

The chtonians vaguely resemble immense (100 m. long or more) squids with slime-covered worm-like bodies. We shall ignore the different stages of evolution of the Chtonian and focus on the adult ones, which are big, do not feel heat up to 4000° Celsius, can tunnel through rock as though it were butter, can cause earthquakes and really hate water. The biggest chtonian of them all is Shudde M'ell, almost half a mile long, and very malevolent.

- The essence Drain power is anecdotal. You, as the GM, can decide wether to use it or not...
- The Create Earthquake works well if many chtonians work together to create a big one, assume that for every chtonian participating roughly 1 richter grade of quake is created, for the first 100 yards, with a power reduction of -1 richter grade per 100 yards. Quakes have no direct effect on people, unless, that is, a skyscraper tumbles on you.
- Each 9S attack that damages (tentacles), also drains one point of Body PERMANENTLY from the victim. If the victim goes down to 0 Body, not counting cyber or bodyware, he or she dies, without possibility of saving him or her.
- The Total immunity from fire means that no fire or incendiary projectile can harm the chtonian, apart from sheer force of impact.
- The second attack mode, the 15D-rated attack, is a special attack that implies the chtonian is rolling over its victim(s). Use this with discretion, since armor is discarded (you just don't count armor when a 500-ton behemoth worm crushes you...), and you may only use 1/2 of your combat pool to dodge the attack (it's arriving fast and it is really big). The chtonian, however, may opt to crush only if there is sufficient space for a minimum of run-up, and sufficient space for it to surface completely. It couldn't use it, for example, in a small room.

Reference: Brian Lumley: "The burrowers beneath" (where one investigator says to the other: "...and while you're in the library, read the Necronomicon, the De Vermiis Mysteriis, ah, and the Cultes De Ghoules!")

CTHULHU, Master of R'lyeh, Great old one.

	B	Q	S	C	I	W	Cbt.S.	R	Attacks
Chtulhu	59/21	6	123	3/*	18	20	36	18+2D	31D

Powers: Hardened Armor, Know hundreds of Mythos spells (but NOT Summon/Bind Nightgaunt and Contact Nodens *laughs*), Automatic heal (3), Immunity to magic.
Weaknesses: None, nope, nope!
Sanity loss: 4D

Old Cthulhu, which is a shambling mass about 30 stories tall of green putrescent slime, with wings, a polyp-like face and a bad attitude towards mankind, is presented here only for the GM leisure. Most of his stats are purely random numbers, as you might guess would happen when we're talking about a mountain of alien flesh and transdimensional goo, who feels Ares Dragon ATGMs like .22 nutcrackers. **If** the PCs ever encounter Old Cthulhu, **if** he gets angry *at them* (he's always angry...), **if** they somehow survive his sight, **if** they decide to fight him instead of just plain running, and **if** they manage to kill him, he will simply regenerate from nothing in 10+1d10 minutes. So there. Ah, and while you are wondering, if you nuke Cthulhu, he does come back, "only he gets all radioactive"™! More a Legend than a critter actually...

Reference: do we need to mention it? HP Lovecraft, "The Call Of..." (Of? Of? Yeah, you guessed it, Cthulhu!)

New Powers

Automatic heal (x): Automatic heal is a regenerating power typical of the mythos creatures. Each combat phase, the creature heals x damages from its condition monitor (ie delete 3 boxes of damage, starting from the top). Much more powerful than normal regeneration, it is due more to the fact that the creature is not composed of earthly matter than to a true difficulty in finding any vital parts.

>>>>[An associate of mine swears he has encountered one of these things, and he swears the next time he sees one he will run for good, 'cause they're ugly, strong, and never go down, even when bits of them start falling off...]<<<<<

- The Troll Decker (uh:oh:ah/do-do-do)