

THE RULES

YOUR INVESTIGATOR

Choose a name and occupation. Describe your Investigator. Take a green Insight Die.

INSIGHT

Your Insight shows how far you can see into the horror behind the universe. It starts at 1.

When you see something disturbing, roll your Insight Die. If you get higher than your Insight, add 1 to your Insight and roleplay your fear. (This is called an “Insight roll”.)

Is your Insight real? Can you really see a deeper truth? Or is it just insanity? Sometimes, it is hard to tell.

INVESTIGATING

When you investigate something, roll:

- ▶ One die if what you’re doing is within human capabilities (the “Human Die”).
- ▶ One die if it’s within your occupational expertise (the “Occupation Die”).
- ▶ Your Insight Die, if you will risk your mind to succeed.

If your Insight Die rolls higher than any other die, make an Insight roll, as above.

Then your highest die shows how much information you get. On a 1, you get the bare minimum: if you need information to proceed, you get it, but that’s all. On a 4, you get everything a competent investigator would discover.

On a 5, you discover everything a competent investigator would discover, plus something more. For example, you might also remember a related folktale, rumour or scientific experiment.

On a 6, you discover all of that, plus, in some way, you glimpse beyond human knowledge. This probably means you see something horrific and make an Insight Roll.

Here is an example. You’re investigating your great-uncle’s manuscripts. On a 1, you get only enough information to continue with the story: it is an address, “7 Thomas Street”. On a 4, you discover everything a competent investigator would discover: you find that your great-uncle was researching people plagued by dreams and visions, one of whom was Mr Wilcox of 7 Thomas Street.

On a 5, you discover all that, plus something more. So, you find that your great-uncle was researching people plagued by dreams and visions, one of whom was Mr Wilcox of 7 Thomas Street. Plus, when you read the descriptions of the dreams, they remind you of newspaper reports about a Californian theosophist colony, who recently donned robes for a “glorious fulfilment”.

On a 6, you discover all that, plus you glimpse beyond human knowledge. So, you find that your great-uncle was investigating people plagued by dreams and visions, one of whom was Mr Wilcox of 7 Thomas Street, and you recall newspaper reports about a Californian theosophist colony. And you experience one of the visions yourself.

DOING OTHER THINGS

When you do something other than investigating, roll dice as above. If you roll your Insight Die and it rolls higher than any other die, then, as before, make an Insight Roll.

Again, your highest die shows how well you do. On a 1, you barely succeed. On a 4, you succeed competently. On a 5, you succeed well and may get something extra. On a 6, you succeed brilliantly and get something extra, but maybe more than you wanted.

For example: you’re escaping from the window of a hotel in Innsmouth. On a 1, you crash on an adjoining roof and attract attention. On a 4, you land quietly on the roof. On a 5, you land quietly and get something extra: you escape your pursuers. On a 6, you land quietly, escape your pursuers and get something extra that is more than you wanted: you get a glimpse of your pursuers, who are twisted and inhuman.

FAILING

If someone thinks the story would more interesting if you failed, they describe how you might fail, then roll a die (called the “Failure Die”). They can’t do this if you’re investigating and you must succeed for the scenario to proceed.

If their Failure Die rolls higher than your highest die, you fail, just as they described. If not, you succeed as before, with your highest die showing how well you succeed.

Returning to the example above: you’re escaping from the hotel window. This time, someone thinks it would be more interesting if your pursuers caught you. You both roll. Their Failure Die rolls higher than your highest die. You are caught.

TRYING AGAIN

If you included your Insight Die in a roll and you’re not happy with the result, you may reroll (all the dice).

If you didn’t include your Insight Die, you may add it and reroll.

Afterwards, look at the new result. As before, the highest die shows how well you do. And, if your Insight Die is higher than any other die, make an Insight roll.

You may reroll as many times as you like.

COOPERATING AND COMPETING

To cooperate: everyone who is cooperating rolls their dice. Take the highest die, rolled by anyone, as the result.

To compete: everyone who is competing rolls their dice. The highest die wins. On a tie, anyone who wants to reroll may do so, providing they include their Insight Die in the roll. If that doesn’t resolve the tie, then whoever has the highest Insight wins, and if that doesn’t resolve it, everyone rerolls.

FIGHTING

If you try to defeat any supernatural creature by fighting it, you will die. Instead, roll to hide or escape.

If you fight something that is not supernatural, be clear about what you want out of the fight, then roll as described under “Doing other things”.

SUPPRESSING KNOWLEDGE

When your Insight reaches 5, you may now reduce it by suppressing knowledge of what you have discovered: for example, burning books, stopping rituals or destroying yourself.

Each time you do this, roll your Insight Die. If you get less than your current Insight, decrease your Insight by 1.

You may continue suppressing your insight into the Mythos when your Insight drops below 5.

UNDERSTANDING THE FULL HORROR

When your Insight reaches 6, you understand the full horror behind the Universe and leave everyday life behind. To the outside world, you appear insane. This is a special moment: everyone focusses on your character’s last moments of lucidity. Go out however you want: fight, scream, run, collapse or go eerily silent.

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

FINAL POINTS

Cthulhu Dark is a game about doomed Investigators. So don’t play to win. Instead, enjoy losing. Enjoy watching your Investigator’s mind slowly break.

The rules leave certain questions unanswered. Who decides when to roll Insight? Who decides when it’s interesting to know how well you do something? Who decides whether you might fail? Decide the answers to these questions with your group. Make reasonable assumptions.