Touched
By
Evil

a horror game
by
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Touched by Evil

a game of Dread and Horror

Playtest v0.4

This version counts *18* pages in A4 format with no pictures but spacious (and hopefully clear) formatting. More info and games can be found @ www.UnPlayableGames.tk

This game owes many thanks to **Graham Walmsley**'s essay *Stealing Cthulhu* and its companion game *Cthulhu Dark,* for they showed me a different path to madness.

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Basic Elements

This game is meant for **2-5** participants and will last approximately **2-3** sessions.

To play you need:

- a printout of the **Play Aids**
- at least 6 six-sided **dice** (6d6) of which one, the *Menace* die, must be easily recognizable
- one **token**
- some paper and pencils

In this game you and your friends play the role of characters in a very specific kind of horror story: normal and rational people, in a normal and rational world, that slowly starts to feel increasingly **wrong** and **unsafe** and **disturbing**, in a crescendo that will lead to a horrific epilogue. This kind of horror focuses less on gore and violence, and more on **unease** and "cosmic" **dread**. Notable examples include most novels by *H. P. Lovecraft*, or stories such as *The Shining*, *Jacob's Ladder*, *The Wicker Man*, *The Others*, and more.

For this journey into the dark the game makes use of a map (the **Path**) split in five sections (the **Chapters**) that each offer one or more thematic options (the **Stations**). After an initial setup the Players will take turns (called **Moments**) describing what happens to the characters in the fiction. What you can describe and how you can do it is where the rules come into effect.

Rule Zero

The fundamental mechanic in *Touched by Evil* is that anything you describe regarding the game fiction **must** be OK for all the Players involved. Things can be vague, unexplained and strange, or maybe they can touch on difficult and distressing subjects; either way they always have to **feel right** for everybody.

If even one person is not into it **you can't** describe the thing you wanted in the way you wanted; chat about it to find common ground and adjust your contribution so that everyone is happy.

Pro Tip: don't try to argue defending your description. It's usually a waste of time and you risk appearing stubborn and bossy. Instead, accept that your description is not ok for someone and **ask them** what's wrong and how you can make it right. More often than not the big problem will reveal itself to be a minor detail you don't really care about, something that can be easily fixed.

Game SetUp

Classic Setup

The classic and most effective setup for a game of *Touched by Evil* is to have all Players collectively follow the actions and events surrounding a **single protagonist** and their closest relationships. In game terms the protagonist is called *Touched One* while everyone else is just a secondary *Non-Touched* character. The story begins **today** and **in this city**.

This setup provides the most intense and personal kind of play, with a tighter and faster narrative rhythm.
As an option to play with multiple protagonists will be explained in the next paragraph, for usability's sake the rules will be expressed to accommodate any number of Touched Ones, thus avoiding exceptions in the text.

For increased clarity and accessibility during play it could be a good idea to give a copy of the character sheet **to each Player** even if you play with a single Touched One, allowing everyone to more easily view the important elements of the current story and update them as the game progresses.

Troupe Play

In this variant **each** Player creates and moves their own personal Touched One.
They might be perfect strangers (**recommended option**) or some of them might already know each other for whatever reason. Simply chat about it until you all come to a satisfactory agreement.

This variant tends to make the overall game a bit less unnerving and claustrophobic, adding a modicum of safety to the undeniable horror. First of all, because you are not truly alone against the Evil. And then the very rhythm of the story is made slower and less hectic, as the narrative focus is split between multiple co-protagonists.

Alternate Settings

In this variant Players agree on a setting that are less "close to home" that the classic here and now, opting to explore more diverse locations and epochs. Start by agreeing on a place, a time, and a general idea of where the protagonists stand in relation to those:
  - pick a general epoch (modern day, victorian past, cyberpunk future, etc)
  - pick a general location (Italy, outer space, the lands Beyond the Vale, etc)
  - pick a more specific location (a city, a spaceship, an island, etc)
  - decide in very vague terms if you want your Touched One to live in the location or somewhere else, and in case of Troupe play if they know the other Touched Ones or not

Discuss and drill down these ideas until everyone is satisfied but don't dwell on the specifics just yet. You will have to do it, in the proper way, in the next two sections of the SetUp.

The Touched Ones

Players now need to create one or more protagonists, the **Touched Ones**. Each needs to feel adequate and interesting for everyone, so don't hesitate to chat among Players for ideas, inspiration and help. Follow these steps for every Touched One and record the results on the character sheet:
- You are a normal person with a **Name** and a **Profession**. Describe them.
- No one is an island. Name **three people**, alive and currently part of your life, you genuinely care about, and explain why you care about them.

The Catalyst Event

Each protagonist has been recently "touched" by an event. This catalyst event is **the same** for all Touched Ones, but each one might have different reasons to be touched by it, a different angle, a personal perspective. All Players should help describe what this common event is, keeping in mind the following elements:
- it is something **mundane**, maybe tragic, maybe unusual or unexpected, but definitely "normal"
- it is something **distant**, it did not happen to you nor were you a direct witness to it
- it is something **new**, you have learned about it only recently
- it is something **nebulous**, you currently ignore all but the most basic details of how or why it happened
- it is something that **calls for your action**: what are you supposed to do and why?

A nebulous call...

The **less** informations you establish now, the **better**.
"*Edward Straw has died*" is perfect.
"*Edward Straw has died in a car accident*" is already more than what's needed.
"*An explosion on Deck-C*" is perfect.
"*An explosion on Deck-C which killed someone who was not supposed to be there*" is definitely too much.

Aim for a very **nebulous** (and *mundane*, and *distant*, and *new*) event and <u>then</u> find the specific reason **why** each Touched One would learn about it, and <u>finally</u> determine **how** they practically end up learning about it. Notice how these are all infos about the Touched Ones and their situation in relation to the event, not about the event itself.

...but a call none the less!

Regarding the call to action: curiosity and self motivation are **not** enough.
Someone has to **ask/tell** each Touched One to **do something**.
Maybe the insurance company wants you to go sign some papers; maybe the miners appoint you as their spokesperson; maybe your parents ask you to help organize uncle Dave's funeral; maybe an anonymous letter intimates you to stay away from Laura; maybe the Police assigns you to the case; etc.

You can actually flesh out "the call" to be the first Moment in your Touched One's story, or you can just briefly describe the elements required by the rules to define the Catalyst Event. Chat with the other Players and find the best solution for your group.

Also notice that it's ok if some or all Touched Ones **don't want** to do what the call asks of them, and it is even ok if later they **will not** do it at all or actively try to get away from it. You don't need to chase the Shadows, as eventually they will chase you. The aim here is to set things up so that they can project the **right kind** of shadows later in the game.

The Path

In *Touched by Evil* the story unfolds by following a **Path** over a map. This map counts **12 Stations**, each one a possible step of your Touched One's journey. The Stations are arranged to form **5 Chapters** in total.
At the beginning of the game put one **token** representing <u>all</u> Touched Ones on the first **Station** of the map.
Take the Station **card** "*1 - Beginning*" and place it face up near the Path, where everyone can see it clearly.

Creeping Menace

Starting the game place the *Menace Die* on the Station that looks like a tentacular horror, top face set on "1".
At the **end** of each *Moment* roll this die:
- if **equal to** or **less than** the current Chapter, set the Menace die to "1" and move it to the next Chapter
- otherwise rise its top face by one; when "6" should become "7" reconsider the roll you just made:
    - on an **even** number the top face remains "6" and nothing happens
    - on an **odd** number set the Menace die to "1" and move it to the next Chapter

When the Menace reaches the same **Chapter** as the Touched Ones it triggers a **Dark Moment** and the Menace die is **reset** to its initial tentacular Station and top face. *Dark Moments* are explained in the *Moments* chapter.

Deeper and Deeper

There are two ways to make actual progress in the story, advancing from one Chapter to the next:
1. have a Touched One perform a **key action** <u>during</u> a Moment. Every Chapter has a different **Key**; when the Players see it happen they should point it out and agree whether "*the key is being turned*"
2. trigger the *No Easy Way Out* mechanic, explained in the *Taking Action* chapter

Either way **immediately** roll a die to select a new Station from the **next** Chapter and move the Touched Ones **token** there, then place its Station card with the other revealed ones. You can now bring the current Moment to its natural end. Notice two important details:
- the actions of <u>a single</u> Touched One are sufficient to push forward everyone's story on the Path
- Chapter advancement happens <u>during</u> a Moment, while the Menace roll happens at the <u>end</u> of it

The Chapter Keys

Read the Keys in as much a literal or metaphorical way as you like. If the fiction described at the table during the **current** Chapter feels like matching the **current** Key, then probably it is the right moment to step forward on the Path.

Chapter 1 - **Illusion**	ends when a Touched One <u>*believes*</u> that something weird is going on and <u>*decides*</u> to act on this belief.
Chapter 2 - **Rumors**	ends when a Touched One enters an <u>*underground*</u> place that might hold answers about what is going on.
Chapter 3 - **Descent**	ends when a Touched One <u>*believes*</u> there is some kind of Evil behind the recent events and <u>*decides*</u> to act on this belief.
Chapter 4 - **Horror**	ends when a Touched One <u>*realizes*</u> that all she has seen so far were just Shadows, cast by a deeper Evil.
Chapter 5 - **Epilogue**	has special rules explained in the *Epilogue* section of this document.

Moments

The story begins by choosing a Player to be "active" and have their Touched One be the protagonist of the current Moment. All subsequent Moments will proceed in **clockwise** order around the table, with new Players becoming active one at a time. When your Moment comes, **frame** it and then **play** it as explained in the section.

A Moment **begins** right after its framing and **ends** when the <u>location</u>, <u>time</u> or character <u>spotlight</u> change considerably, or when Players agree that it should end. If in doubt, ask: "*Should we end this Moment?*"

Framing a Moment

To frame a Moment you simply answer these questions:
- **where** is your Touched One right now?
- what **time** of the day it is?
- are **other characters** present, and what are they generally doing?

Now focus on the location you are describing and provide one or more things from the following list:
- name one **smell** in this place that you notice
- name one **color** in this place that stands out
- name one **sound** you hear in the background
- name the **feeling on your skin** that started when you set foot in this place

Finally, someone will introduce the **Shadows**...

The Touch of Shadows

Shadows are fictional elements revealing the presence and influence of the Evil upon the world. Initially vague and disconnected, as the story unfolds they will solidify and become more coherent and meaningful. Don't worry too much about this, as the game will make this happen naturally.

A Shadow is something **specific** that the Touched Ones are experiencing during the current Moment. How this happens might vary: it could **be present** there and then, or a character might **talk** about it or the Touched Ones themselves might be described as **thinking** about it.
In any case the Shadow has to be something from the following list:
1. a feeling
2. an item
3. a place
4. a person
5. an information
6. an action or event

Shadows can be introduced right from the start of a Moment or at any other time while it unfolds. Just know that the sooner you let the Shadows touch a Moment, the more they will influence it.

Each Moment must have **at least one** Shadow present in it. It can be either an old or new one, but **only one new** Shadow is allowed in each Moment. The first Moment of a **new Chapter** must introduce a new Shadow inspired by the new Chapter's Station card. A Moment **can not end** without a Shadow touching it.
When a new Shadow is described all Players **have to** note it down on their play sheet.

In the upcoming section there are rules about what Players are allowed to describe during a Moment. Shadows **are** subject to these limits.

Understanding what a Shadow is and how to create a good one is central to the success of the game. Shadows should always be "**things**" in the fiction: be they items or people or something else entirely they should be clear enough to be seen as discrete elements that could be seamlessly added in any Moment of play. Let's look at the inspiration list, one element at a time.

A **feeling** should always be a physical sensation: the feeling of something oily on your skin, of a peculiar smell, of a lingering aftertaste, of nausea at the pit of your stomach, of vertigo, etc. This kind of Shadow is very good because it is very concrete yet subtle in its effect on the story and mood.

Purely mental feelings might seem evocative, but in the long run don't work too well. For one they might end up dictating the thoughts and emotions of a Touched One, hampering the emotional effect on the real Players. Moreover they might bypass the *Degrees of Separation*, adding too much weirdness too early in the story. It is better to pin the Shadow on a concrete detail, then adding whatever feeling as a way of additional description: *a tingling sensation at the back of your skull* makes you feel watched, *a low buzzing noise in your ear* makes you feel detached from reality and alone, *small and piglike eyes* make you feel uncomfortable near this person, etc.

Items, **places** and **people** are easier to use as Shadows.
Holes in the ground, purple vines creeping on a surface, red shoes...
The house at the end of the street, the parking lot, a patch of old and spoiled trees...
A guy with mirror shades, an old granny, a blond child...

The trick here is that while the specific element might be otherwise perfectly normal, it is injected in the story with a charged intent. And by reincorporating it more and more it will acquire a haunting quality: originally it was just a random detail, but now the Touched Ones keep bumping into it, was it always there? Is it the very same or just something similar? Can this be a coincidence?

Informations are meant as a special kind of "items" that might take a life of its own.
If something like *an old tale* or *a piece of gossip* are marked as a Shadow they will eventually grow and change and reveal new and disquieting details.
A newspaper article could be a Shadow, possibly giving a particularly paranoid and conspiratorial twist to the story because, whatever the content of the article is, the article itself will appear again and again, either physically or as the subject of conversations or even dreams.

Actions and **events** can be a bit tricky.
Actions offer better results when they are something very small and/or very mundane. A particular *tik or mannerism* are perfect actions, just like an *odd but simple gesture*. It can also be a recognisable behaviour like "*the natives are nervous about digging holes in the ground*".

Events work better as either natural occurrences, such as *rain* or *fog* or *wind* or even *a slight tremor*, or otherwise as references to past/historical/future events, the kind of event that is referred to with a proper name such as *The Fire on 1964* or *The Blue Harvest*.
Random accidents, even small ones, are instead poor shadows for the same reasons of purely mental feelings, they can inadvertently bypass the *Degrees of Separation*. And at any rate something like *a hanging picture falling down* or *a statuette being in the wrong place* are much better Shadows if expressed as simple items: that one hanging picture or that one statuette.

In general there is no need to clearly tag every Shadow as an "item" rather than an "action" or a "place". The distinction serves only as a way to help Players formulate Shadows in a clearer and more functional way.

When the **token** representing the Touched Ones is placed on a Station, have the Players add the corresponding card beside the Path. These cards offer specific inspiration to be used to create new Shadows. **All** Shadows **must** adhere to such elements.

All Shadows are signs and manifestations of **the same Evil**. At the beginning they might look unrelated, but in time they should fit together and point to **a single root**. Try to **actively avoid** complicated explanations concerning multiple forces in play, as eventually they will all turn out to be false, except for one.

In the *Illusion* chapter there is always a single Station, the initial starting point.
In the *Rumors*, *Descent* and *Horror* chapters the Path is manyfold; when the time comes to step into one of these chapters **roll one die** to know where the Touched Ones will end up.
The *Epilogue* is again represented by a single Station, the end of the story.

Chapter		Station	Allowed Shadows
Illusion	//	Malkuth	it **feels** *off*, out of place or *wrong* in an **undefinable** way
Rumors	1-2	Hod	art, science, human **craft**
	3-4	Yesod	abuse, brutality, the use of **force**
	5-6	Netzah	organized action, social gatherings, the drive of **ambition**
Descent	1-2	Tiphereth	spirituality, **religion**, faith
	3-4	Geburah	harsh **judgment**, limitation or confinement, punishment
	5-6	Chesed	morbid **affection**, misplaced kindness, unhealthy healing
Horror	1-2	Binah	cold heart, **ancient** matter, mechanical
	3-4	Daat	being **lost**
	5-6	Chochmah	great distance, **alien** energy, shapeless
Epilogue	//	Kether	the primal **Evil** casting all the Shadows

Malkuth : The Foundation

The elements offered by each Station are there to inspire you, use them however feels best. Except for **Malkuth**, as it will make or break the overall mood of the story. Give thought and attention to these Shadows!

First, whatever the Shadow is (an item, a person, a place, etc) it has to elicit a **feeling** of unease, offness, wrongness. *This **feeling** is the true Shadow* and you are just attaching it to something specific in the fiction.

Second, the reason why the Shadow elicits such feeling must be **unexplainable** and **undefinable**.
A muddy footprint on the ceiling of a room is "wrong" for obvious reasons.
A muddy footprint on the floor is still out of place, but there is no obvious reason for it to feels so much "wrong".

Of course what is obvious and what is not heavily depends on the specific circumstances and situation within your story. Hopefully the rest of the narration rules will help you come up with the right sort of details without worrying too much about them.

Playing a Moment

After a Moment has been framed you and your friends will describe what happens, what the various characters say and do, which events and consequences take place. There are rules for this:

- <u>only</u> <u>you</u> can say what **your own** Touched One says and does, and what she thinks and feels. When sharing the same Touched One you have this authority <u>only during your turn</u>.

- <u>any</u> <u>Player</u> can describe **the scenery**, the smells and sounds and how it all feels and changes.

- <u>any</u> <u>Player</u> can say what any ***Non-Touched Character*** (NTC) present in the Moment says and does, how they look and behave, how they go away or new ones arrive (exiting and entering this Moment).
If your Touched One interacts directly with an NTC then the **other** Players **must** answer for her.

- <u>no</u> <u>one</u> can describe things outside the **immediate perceptions** of a Touched One; **not** the thoughts and feelings of NTCs, **not** what lies behind a door nobody has yet opened, **not** what is really happening "*behind the scenes*".

In addition to this, what you describe during a Moment must <u>always</u> be **mundane**, maybe **ordinary**, and in general adhere to common sense. No unnatural phenomena or weird-crazy things are allowed to happen, no disturbing or over the top elements can be described. No **gore**, no **violence**, no **horror**.
Even **Shadows** have to follow this rule. Unless...

...unless you put enough narrative distance between the Touched Ones and anything that can be seen as:
- **shock** material, gore, graphic violence, blatant insanity.
- whatever is obviously **weird**, exotic, extraneous/alien or offly rare.

There are four ways to create separation; pick one or more and mix them up until the element you want to describe feels distant enough. How much distance you need depends on the current Chapter of the story. Chapter One (*Illusion*) requires a minimum of **two** degrees of separation; Chapter Two (*Rumors*) just **one**; finally from Chapter Three (*Descent*) no separation is required, but may still be appropriate.

- **Indirect Experience**
  The element is experienced *second hand*, maybe through other people's reports, or through documents, or being just hinted at by traces, signs and clues.

- **Uncertain Experience**
  The element is experienced through an *untrustworthy source*, maybe from folk tales rather than official history, from gossip instead of documents, or from an unreliable witnesses (old, crazy, ignorant, drunk), or through confusing circumstances (darkness, heavy rain, hallucinations).

- **Physical Distance**
  The element is not located nearby the Touched One, but at a (relatively) substantial travel distance.

- **Temporal Distance**
  The element is not recent, but has happened in the (relatively) distant past.

The actions of a Touched One and their direct consequences **can't be filtered**.
A Touched One is free to use violence, say incoherent words, perform disturbing acts, etc. The degrees of separation are meant to **put distance** between the Touched Ones and **the world**, what they find in it, what the world presents to them; not to limit the Touched Ones' freedom of action.

Example... during Chapter One a Touched One can't just happen to find a corpse. Maybe *someone tells her* that *according to confidential sources* there is a horribly mutilated corpse in the local morgue. If later the Touched One manages to get in the morgue and look at the corpse, the horrible spectacle **can** be described, even in Chapter One.

Touched by Evil is a game about horror, **not** about solving mysteries. For this reason there are no mechanics to generate random answers.
Whenever an answer is not already obvious, you as Players have to come up with the missing information. Be **obvious**. Be **simple**. Say the **first thing** that comes to your mind. Just remember to **always** follow the rules on how to *Play a Moment* and the *Degrees of Separation*.
Most of the time all will go smoothly at the table. Otherwise, Rule Zero will help you find common ground.

The **horror** part of the game is already taken care of and will unfold in such a way that, Moment by Moment, all important bits will eventually fall into place, leading to the Epilogue of the story. The best thing you can do is to **be the voice of reason**, describe the normal stuff, say what makes sense.

Dark Moments

A Dark Moment happens when the Menace die reaches the Touched Ones' token on the Path.

It happens **in addition** to the normal round of Moments, **between** the one that just ended and the one that has to be framed next. It follows the normal rules governing any other Moment, with these differences:

- have all Players take a moment to briefly review what has happened in the story up to this point, with a particular eye towards the list of Shadows noted down so far

- randomly select one Player to be the **Victim** and, also randomly, pick one of her Touched One's *Loved Ones*. If this is not possible, select a different Player to be the Victim

- have the Victim frame a Moment in the role of the *Loved One* **instead** of playing as her Touched One

- the Dark Moment ends, possibly on a cliffhanger, right **after** the Shadows **interact** with the *Loved One*

- **never roll** dice for a *Loved One*, she always succeeds **unless** the Shadows are somehow involved, in which case she always fails

- *Loved Ones* **never die** during a Dark Moment, but are always scarred by such a brush with the Evil and its Shadows; mark it down appropriately on the Touched One sheet:
    - in Chapter 1 and 2 they become **despondent**, in low spirits from loss of hope or courage
    - in Chapter 3 and 4 they become **frantic**, upset by fear and anxiety
    - in Chapter 5 they become **broken**, crippled in mind and/or in body but still not dead

If a *Loved One* should suffer a scar she already has, mark down the next one. For example when a **despondent** character endures a second Dark Moment in Chapter 1 or 2 she will become **frantic**, and a subsequent Dark Moment will make her **broken**.

After a *Loved One* becomes broken she can't endure any more *Dark Moments* and a different *Loved One* must be selected. If this is not possible, frame instead a very brief Moment where **one detail** of the Evil is revealed; to do this correctly follow the procedures in the *__Epilogue__* chapter, then add the described detail to the current list of Shadows.

Taking Action

Whenever a Touched One performs an **action** she **always succeeds** except in two cases:
- another character opposes her in any way (not cooperating, bargaining, competing, etc)
- your actions look very difficult **and** failure would have important or interesting consequences

If there are doubts about whether to roll or not, **always roll**.

First, the other Players clarify what will happen **if you fail** the roll; "nothing happens" is never a valid option, failure must always carry a negative consequence, which might include death, imprisonment or any sort of problem that makes sense in the specific situation, so chat briefly about it.

Don't waste time to clarify or negotiate what happens "_if you win_" as it is of minor importance. Just stick to what makes sense as a direct result of your Touched One's action, adhere to the rules about what can be described, and everything should be fine.

Depending on your description of the action that triggered the roll you will gather a pool of dice:
- if the attempted action is within **human** capabilities, add one die to the pool
- if the attempted action involves your **professional** expertise, add one die to the pool
- if the attempted action involves in any way your **Loved Ones**, add one die to the pool
- if the failure would trigger the _**No Easy Way Out**_ condition, add one die to the pool
- if neither apply you simply **fail**

Roll your dice; someone else will roll against you a pool of dice equal to the current Chapter.

Look at your **highest die**: if its score is **higher than** any other die from any pool, you **win**. Otherwise, you **fail**.

The score also informs the quality of your action: on a 1 you barely succeed while on a 6 you do brilliantly. Anyone can describe what this actually means in the fiction, but you have precedence when it comes to the actions of your own Touched One.

If your Touched One **competes** against other Touched Ones the procedure is the same: first you agree on what happens if one or the other fails, then everyone rolls their pool against each other's. In case of **tie** all tied participants **fail** and the Moment ends.

Unease & Cooperation

When you fail you can elect to instead win by increasing your **Unease Rating** by one point.

When rolling against other Touched Ones **anyone** can chose to increase **everyone's** Unease by one, forcing **all** to repeat their roll. This is possible only once per roll.

When your Unease rating raises to **three** points or more, reset it to a value of **zero**, then follow the *__Neurosis__* rules explained in the next paragraph.

A safer way to yield a better result **before** a roll is done is to **cooperate** with other Touched Ones. Have them describe what they do to help and roll their dice along with yours. The highest score rolled by anyone is used as the common best result. Help from NTCs might *enable* your Touched One to act in ways that would not be possible if she was alone, but it does not affect the dice pool in any way.

True Unease

The Unease rating will also increase by 1 every time you clearly describe your Touched One as **doubting her own sanity** or **feeling overwhelmed** by some negative emotion. Maybe she actually says "*I must be going crazy*" or something else along those lines; maybe she just thinks it (and you describe it). Either way, if she truly feels that way, her Unease raises by 1.

Just like with the turning of a Chapter's Key this is **not** a *gotcha!* kind of thing. When someone sees a Touched One express such a feeling she should have everyone **take notice** of it and **ask** to the relevant Player if her Touched One really feels that way, or if it was just a figure of speech, or an exaggeration.

This is not a punishment: the effects of Unease and Neurosis are **dramatic**, but in no way limiting. Calling out Unease is a way to represent mechanically what is obviously already happening in the fiction, and in turn it feeds the sense of tension and stress experienced by the Touched Ones in the story.

Neurosis

When your Unease reaches **three** points, reset it to **zero**.

If it was the first time, draw a random Neurosis card and **keep it**; read aloud the **first** line and answer any questions that the card or the other Players might have for you. Every subsequent time that your Unease reaches 3 and is reset, read the **next line** from your card; if there are no further lines to read this triggers the **No Easy Way Out** condition.

You should keep portraying your Touched One however you like. The Neurosis card doesn't define who your Touched One is or should be. But **once** per Moment any one Player (you included) can **force** your Touched One into performing the action described in the current line of your Neurosis card. **You** **can't** **resist**, but you are can negotiate the specific way in which such effect is described in the fiction, until everyone is satisfied.

When picking details for your Neurosis don't be too specific. Something like "*counting steps*" is ok, while "*counting steps when I cross a threshold*" might be too narrow.

Obsession
1 : At times you think of only one thing, it fills your mind, you can't ignore it. What is it?
2 : Briefly but completely space out, thinking about the thing.
3 : Act out your thoughts of the thing, talk about them, do something related to them.
Es... feet, gender, cleanliness, order, perfection, justice, comic books, food.

Compulsion
1 : You have to perform some kind of specific "ritual" action. What is it?
2 : You have to perform the ritual, maybe multiple times, NOW!
3 : You have to perform the ritual, again and again and again, until it hurts you.
Es... washing hands, walkin in a pattern, jerking your neck, biting your nails.

Addiction
1 : You crave something; have it NOW or look stressed and nervous. What do you crave?
2 : Have it NOW or look ill and anxious.
3 : Have it NOW or be unable to do anything but suffer for its absence.
Es... jerk off, theft, burn stuff, use violence (physical or otherwise), a drug.

Anxiety
1 : Something horrible is about to happen, you KNOW it! You look nervous.
2 : It is also hard to breath and to keep your focus.
3 : You also cry, scream and either collapse in despair or run in a panic or react violently.

Phobia
1 : You look worried because of something, **even if it is not present**. What is it?
2 : Your fear obviously interferes with whatever you are doing.
3 : Your fear is here, you must act! Smash it, run away, scream for help, curl up in a ball.
Es... insects, being alone, fur, germs, darkness, enclosed spaces, magnetic fields.

Disorientation
1 : <u>Small</u> things slip your mind: track of time, your train of thought, details; you might zone out <u>briefly</u>.
2 : You can't remember what it is that you are forgetting unless you try really hard.
3 : When alone you black out and... where are you? Doing what? Why?
   When in the company of others you look dazed and confused and try to wander off.
[**Note**: no one can have your Touched One just "wake up" doing something you don't agree with]

No Easy Way Out

If the circumstances would see your Touched One defeated in a permanent or long term way (death, imprisonment, madness) then the Moment **ends abruptly**, fading to black in a sudden cliffhanger. The ominous fate will somehow be averted. How it happens is not important and might not be ever portrayed or explained clearly; instead what's important is:

- the story is forced into the **next Chapter** on the Path, move the common token accordingly
- a **Dark Moment** is triggered, with **you** as the Victim player

Dealing with the Shadows

During the course of the game the fictional elements introduced as Shadows will cross the path of the Touched Ones. Whatever a Touched One chooses to do about them, she is bound by a few rules that are **universally true**. This means that even if you roll dice the end result will always be dictated by the following truths:

No one believes you

It doesn't matter who you talk to, how convincing you are, or what kind of proof you offer. If you talk to someone about the **Evil** or about your worries regarding the **Shadows** and their influence, **no one will believe you**. If you force or trick someone into facing your truth in a way that is impossible to deny or dismiss, their mind will **break** and they'll become useless or dangerous. The only exception are other Touched Ones.

Violence is never a solution

Whatever form the Evil and its Shadows may have, the use of physical violence against them is never a permanent solution, if not completely ineffective to begin with. It might buy you a small amount of time, or open up a tight opportunity for other actions, but **it never actually solves the problem**, it never truly stops the Evil.

Magic does not work

First of all, this is the **real** world. There is no such thing as magic, no supernatural, no gods, no monsters, no legends, no heroes, no powers, no weird fringe science, no forgotten rituals. People might believe in those things, but it is all innuendo and folklore, **it just does not work**.

Except, the Evil and its Shadows exist and they don't care about the laws of reality. But **even if** magic existed because your story is set in a fantastic world, the Shadows will still ignore its laws and boundaries as magic/science/powers **just do not work** on the Evil.

The Shadows are alien

You can't **understand** the Evil casting shadows all around you. Whatever it is, it is not people, not human, not rational in a way that can make sense to you. You can't **reason** with it, you can't **persuade** it, you can't **haggle** with it; you can't anticipate or second guess it. Whatever you do, you can never be sure that your actions will sort the desired effect, or prompt something completely different, unexpected and horrible.

Epilogue

During this Chapter the Shadows finally allow a glimpse of, or maybe a confrontation with, the **Evil** at the root of the whole story. When you describe it...
- if you say how it **looks**, you can <u>only</u> describe what parts of it **look human**
- or you can say how it **does not look** like something else
- if you say how it **smells**, **moves**, **sounds** or **feels** like, you can freely describe whatever you want

Also, the final Chapter of the story is special because it offers **three** possible Keys to end it:
- successfully **fleeing** away from the Evil
- attempting to take **direct action** against the Evil
- being just about to **discover something important** about the Evil

When a Touched One turns a Key the Epilogue **does not end**:
- her current Moment fades to black, possibly ending in a cliffhanger
- when her turn comes again simply skip it
- when all Touched Ones have turned a Key, then the Epilogue ends and everyone's fate is revealed
- triggering the _**No Easy Way Out**_ rule during the Epilogue works normally, except that no new Chapter is unlocked, it instead counts as turning a Key

When each Touched One has turned a Key, the game is over.

Have someone roll a die on the _**End of all Evil**_ table, then everyone chooses freely (or rolls, if in need of inspiration) a fate for her Touched One from the _**End of all Innocence**_ table.

Finally have everyone work together to waive such results in the fiction, narrating how the story ends.

	End of all Evil Roll just one die, adding +1 for every Touched One that turned the Key of *direct action*.
1-6	**The Grim Ending** All your effort and suffering were for nothing, the Evil got what it wanted and is now satisfied. Maybe it **stays**, ready to cast longer and darker shadows. Maybe it **goes away**, for its own mysterious reasons. **What** makes you realize that your struggle was irrelevant to the Evil's actions?
7+	**The Empty Victory** All your effort and suffering were for nothing, the Evil has been thwarted today, but it is still here, and it will return. All you achieved was to delay it for one more cycle: a year? a decade? a generation? **How** do you prevail? **What** makes you realize that in truth the Evil is not vanquished?

	End of all Innocence Choose freely which fate best suits your Touched One's final moments in the story.
1-2	**The Easy Way Out** Your life has come to an end. Maybe you actually **died** facing the Evil and its Shadows. Maybe you **killed yourself** to stop the fear and the grief. No more horror for you, only silence.
3	**Fates Worse than Death** You are not yourself anymore. Maybe your **mind broke**, fleeing reality, gone and never returning. Maybe you became a **puppet** or **slave** to the Evil, unable to rebel, trapped, doomed.
4	**The Lure of Darkness** You turned. Maybe you **embraced** the Evil and are now a willing follower, part of its Shadows. Maybe you discovered that it was part of you **all along** and surrendered to the undeniable state of things. Maybe you got **infected**, and are turning into something else, not you anymore.
5	**A Tortured Life** You saved your life and kept your sanity, but the things you saw are now with you forever. Maybe you live in **fear** of being found by the Evil and its Shadows. Maybe you turned into a street **wako** trying to warn people of something not even you fully believe. Maybe you just **gave up** on life, wasting yourself until the Shadows or the substance abuse come to claim you.
6	**Deep Scars** Alive and sane, you kept it together. Maybe you (try to) **go on** with your life. Maybe you **prepare** for the "next time", looking for clues, contacting others, trying not to end up in an asylum. But you carry **deep scars** that set you apart from normal, happy, oblivious people. You know better.