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DELTA GREEN CASE OFFICER'S HANDBOOK

"That cult would never die till the stars came right again, and the secret priests would take great Cthulhu from His tomb to revive His subjects and resume His rule of earth. The time would be easy to know, for then mankind would have become as the Great Old Ones; free and wild and beyond good and evil, with laws and morals thrown aside and all men shouting and killing and revelling in joy."

—H.P. Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu"

"On Edward Teller's blackboard at Los Alamos I once saw a list of weapons—ideas for weapons—with their abilities and properties displayed. For the last one on the list, the largest, the method of delivery was listed as 'Backyard.' Since that particular design would kill everyone on Earth, there was no use carting it elsewhere."

—Robert Serber about Edward Teller

PLAYERS READ NO FURTHER

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Delta Green, a game of horror, wonder and conspiracy. By opening this book, you have chosen to become the Case Officer. It's the Case Officer's job to keep the players, who take the role of Delta Green agents, engaged. You are the host, the creator and judge of all things that occur in this fictional world. You fill it with secrets, and take the role of every character your players interact with, as well as every threat they face. You alone understand the mysteries at which they probe, and only you see the absolute truth.

Being a Case Officer is difficult. It requires preparation, a good imagination and an unwavering vision of where the game is heading. In Delta Green, it also requires a buddhist-like indifference to outcome. You might consider

altering a die roll to save an agent, or dropping a vital clue when the team is on the wrong path. Resist this urge. Delta Green is not about stacking the deck, and it's not about victory. It's about something else.

Delta Green is about man's insignificance in the universe and its urge to survive, to understand and overcome. Delta Green agents embody this concept. They struggle to defeat threats that outstrip the human mind, even as the world rushes towards destruction.

Congratulations, CO. You are that apocalypse.

RUNNING THE GAME

Players control their agents. You, the Case Officer, control everything else. To run a Delta Green game, you gather with friends, (with rulebooks and dice) and describe what's happening to them, in the world of their agents. Players react as their agents might react, and attempt to solve the mystery without losing their agents to insanity or death.

A single unit of game play is called a session. A single Delta Green mystery is called an operation. Some operations take many sessions to resolve, some just one.

Sometimes Delta Green agents call an operation a "night at the opera" or a "psychotic opera". Operations have code-names for the sake of secrecy. Like Operation BLACK FLAG, Operation COVENANT or Operation OBSIDIAN.

Example of Play

Martin is the CO, and his players, Michael and Kim play agents IVAN and IRENE, on the trail of a killer in Detroit, in operation HATTER.

CO: *You crash in the door, coming in from the night and the snowstorm. The house is rickety and old, ruined, but was once grand, from sometime when Detroit was a boom town. Now it's a wreck. Recent, wet footprints track across the floor to a basement door, closed. On the wall opposite the door is a graffiti tag which reads DOWN UNDERGROUND.*

Michael (as Agent Ivan): *I draw my pistol, pull out my flashlight and turn it on.*

Kim (as Agent Irene): *I try 911.*

CO: *Your iPhone reads NO SERVICE. No matter which way you move it, you can't get any bars. No internet either. Give me a INTx5 roll.*

Michael: (rolls some dice and consults his INTx5) *Fail, 89.*

Kim (rolls some dice and consults her INTx5): *Made it, 10.*

CO: *Agent Irene, from where you're standing, near the stove vent, you hear someone talking in the basement.*

Kim: *What are they saying? Can I tell?*

CO: *"I don't want to hurt them, you can't make me," the man's voice says, then disappears into the silence of the house. Something else responds — a different voice, a child's voice; "serve me and live forever," it whispers. Agent Ivan doesn't hear this, it all happens so quickly. Kim, give me a SAN roll.*

Kim (rolls some dice and consults SAN stat): *Made it, 22.*

CO: *No SAN lost. What are you doing now?*

Kim: *"He's in the basement. I don't think he's alone."*

Michael: *"Ok. We need to move, now. It's almost the time from the book, right? The gate... What time is it?"*

CO: *"In 9 minutes it will be 11:33:33 PM, the time on the book."*

Kim: *Uh. I unsling my shotgun and check it. I let him lead the way.*

Michael: *I move to the basement door and turn back to her. "On my count, we go in. Are you ready?"*

Kim: "We have to do this."

Michael: "One, two, three!" I kick in the door.

As you can see, a Delta Green session is full of tension, fear and mystery.

OVERVIEW

Delta Green has existed since 1942. First, it was an arm of the Office of Strategic Services exploiting the Nazis' obsession with the "occult" in World War II. In reality, it fought against actual unnatural horrors Nazi research had uncovered. (See THE SECRET HISTORY on page XX for details.)

Since then, Delta Green has existed in many forms. First, as a commando operation, then an investigation service, then a conspiracy within the federal government. Today, it is both a conspiracy and sanctioned program, working independently—and sometimes at odds—with one another.

Most importantly, very few people in either group knows about this schism.

What a Delta Green Agent Does

Delta Green agents locate and destroy unnatural forces that threaten American interests. Of course, there are unnatural threats *outside* the U.S., but Delta Green does not have the resources or will to police the world (if it can help it, though sometimes this becomes necessary). Larger world governments have similar programs, like Britain's PISCES, Canada's M-EPIC and Russia's GRU SV-8 (See THE SECRET HISTORY on page XX for details.) These groups operate in a similar manner to Delta Green within those territories.

Delta Green agents operate in secret. Their *actual* employer (be it a government agency, the armed forces or some private company) never know their true mission. Delta Green keeps the ultimate secret: that the world is not as ordered as it seems, and that man is not the only threat to mankind's future.

Often, Delta Green requires agents to lie, cheat, steal and commit crimes for the greater good of humanity. In the face of human extinction, almost any action is justifiable. This, as much as facing unnatural horrors from beyond, preys on the sanity of Delta Green agents.

A Thankless Task

Like most covert agencies, Delta Green agents have always enjoyed a particularly thankless task. There are no parades or medals, and no ultimate reward. Yet, without them, the world might have fallen into darkness many times.

The forces of the unnatural they put down are real and relentless. Long ago, the group came to the conclusion that there is no ultimate solution. There is only an endless holding action against the forces from outside.

Delta Green agents fight for personal reasons to keep the unnatural from erasing humanity. They can never win, just as they can never surrender.

The Three Delta Greens

Delta Green has existed in many forms over the decades—and it exists in many forms now. It was never, and likely will never be a monolithic entity in total control of all its resources. Like any intelligence service, there are parts which operate in the absolute black, just as there are splinter groups, defectors and worse.

Are your agents in the official Department of Defense special access program known colloquially as “the Program”? Or are they in a conspiracy that colludes to use government resources for unsanctioned missions known as “the Group”? Or are they outsiders, used by either group as a canary in a coal-mine, without ever knowing the name Delta Green? Or worse and most likely, *do they not even know where they stand?*

The real nature of Delta Green in the game is up to the Case Officer. And it's a separate question from what the players *believe* they know. The agents might believe they're part of a genuine program when they actually work for conspirators, out in the cold for years. Maybe they think they're outsiders, but answer to people in a reactivated program. The only thing the agents

should know for certain is that their work, even at its most odious, saves lives and can never be discovered by the public at large.

The Nature of the Unnatural

The following is a basic summary of the unnatural in the world of Delta Green. An in-depth description of entities, threats and their interrelationship is presented later in this book (see THE OLD ONES CYCLE on page XX for more details.)

The Limits of Current Intelligence

First, *no one* in the world of Delta Green knows and understands everything presented here. At best, the most informed members who have managed to remain sane understand a tiny fraction. Second, much of what is “known” is wrong, or at the very least, misinformed. Vast amounts of this information is from books written by madmen on the cutting edge of science and religion scattered across the skein of history. Today, even with mankind’s technological ascent, the clarity of this situation has not changed.

There is no “DEEP ONE ELIMINATION” manual, just as there are no open repositories of artifacts or spells. Since the 1950s, Delta Green has understood the deleterious effects of these concepts have on the mind. It has learned to compartmentalize information not just for the sake of secrecy, but also sanity. Books, artifacts and creatures act as a cancer on the human mind, changing those exposed into something less human, and eventually, into servants of the darkness. No one is immune to this effect.

As such agents operate in a vacuum of information, and must identify, uncover and destroy the threat on their own. On rare occasions, assistance from the conspiracy (or group) does occur, but experienced agents learn not to rely on such things.

There are less than three thousand people across the United States who know anything about the unnatural. Most know only that a force exists outside of accepted reality, and it is as much a threat to sanity as it is to the physical well-being.

On the level above the intelligence services tasked with uprooting the unnatural, what is *really* happening? This is a good question for any Case Officer to work out for their own sake.

Staying true to the concept of Delta Green, the players will never understand the ultimate truth. But establishing that truth will inform the tone of the operation, as well as the threats they face and will give a good CO ammunition to fill sessions with moments of terror.

That means that you, the CO, must decide what's *real* in your Delta Green campaign. The players should never feel secure that they know what's *really* going on. As soon as they think they do, it's your duty to prove them horribly wrong.

The Infection of Understanding

For decades Delta Green has understood that the unnatural is a force that transcends understanding. Like radioactivity, it has the power to spread silently and last indefinitely. It changes people, and warps them until they become agents serving the unnatural. There is no ultimate solution or truth to puzzle out, and no final problem to solve to prevent apocalypse.

Instead, the unnatural erupts in small outbreaks, and usually, collapses under its own weight before it can go wide. Perhaps half a dozen events in history have suggested something much bigger. Ruthless intervention by Delta Green and other groups has "put down" such wildfires. Usually, an unnatural event spreads, is detected, contained, and/or destroyed, if possible.

Past that, there is little thought to correlating information, except under special circumstances for direct purposes.

This mandate is for a specific reason. In seventy-two years of operation, Delta Green has lost many agents to the other side. Study of the enemy drove them to madness, until, to those compromised assets, only the cultists worshipping the forces from outside seemed sane. As might be imagined, such defections are doubly damning — agents converted to the worship of some unnatural thing are far more potent a threat than some dabbler in the occult who stumbles on to the truth.

Sometimes operations force agents to collect and collate data. When this becomes necessary, protocols are in place to prevent an "outbreak". The agent studying the unnatural remains under surveillance, with a contingency to remove them if they become a threat. This, as might be imagined, is done in secret.

The Great Old Ones

The greatest secret Delta Green keeps is approximately this:

The Great Old Ones came from elsewhere and fought over the earth billions of years before man, and sleep in some infernal cycle of time. Man is the result of biological run-off; a fungus borne of alien shit, that has clung and crawled and evolved as the giants sleep. Their science is our magic, and the remnants of their civilization spring up to infect our world. Soon they will wake and destroy humanity.

So then, what is a Great Old One, exactly? Some claim they are aliens from another world of scale and proportion beyond all terrestrial life. Others say that they are native to Earth but that we are to them as bacteria are to us. Still others say that they exist on some other alternate reality which bleeds over into our own. Still others place them in hierarchies of power: Elder Gods, Great Old Ones, Other Gods. Forces that serve other forces more infinite than infinite.

There are many theories. What those theories agree upon is this: they "sleep", seek freedom, and once released, will destroy humanity.

The Great Old Ones appear to manipulate reality in ways that make the most advanced human sciences look ridiculously primitive. Yet, some men have learned the hypergeometrical principles of the Great Old Ones.

The existence of the Great Old Ones can be said to have been "confirmed" on many occasions by the group. So have the terrible effects of their alien "science". Beyond this, little can be said with any certainty.

For example, an entity called *Cthulhu*, "sleeps" in an alien fold in space/time at 49°51'S 128°34'W in the Pacific Ocean. What then, is it?

It is the size of a small mountain. It has superficial features of a living being. It appears to be able to change shape, bend space/time, and warp its form. If nothing about the creature is static, how do you define it?

Is this "Cthulhu" the same one fired upon by the U.S. Navy S-8 Submarine in the 1928 raid on Insmouth, Massachusetts? Or is it the entity spotted at Black Cod Island, identified as "He Who Swims With Corpses", of identical description? None can say.

Take this further. There is an entity identified as Nyarlathotep, linked to Egyptian myth. It is described as an ebony skinned man, or a creature with a blood-red tentacle, *or* a horrific corpse woman. Each of these forms is known to be "real". Are they related? How does one tell? What if this entity is not only *all* these forms, but *all* the other Great Old Ones as well? Time, distance, mass and energy appear to mean less than nothing to "them". What if these forces are a singular creature, conforming to our cultural perceptions the way water conforms to the shape of a puddle?

As can be seen in this thought experiment, understanding implies an absolute knowledge of power, energy and time, something no man can achieve and remain sane.

Delta Green has learned not to pursue a deep understanding of the truth, because that is like pouring fuel on a fire. Keeping such threats at bay is enough.

Other Unnatural Threats

The Great Old Ones are by no means the *only* threats discovered by Delta Green. Immortal creatures who feast on the dead, time travelers from a horrific non-human future, fungal beings from a secret satellite of Pluto. Delta Green has encountered these and many, many, more. No agent doubts there are many others. (See THREATS: IDENTIFIED AND UNIDENTIFIED on page XX for more details.)

Some unnatural threats conform with human legend. Or, perhaps it is better to say human legend conforms with *them*. Things that operate like supernatural creatures from history: vampires, lycanthropes, yeti. Nearly

anything could be out there, lensed through the eyes of history, hiding and waiting.

What has not been discovered is a confirmation of one of the world's major religions — heaven, hell or an afterlife. There have been cases of non human intelligences impersonating religious or historical figures, and there have been reports of humans using alien techniques to separate mind from body. No aspect of spiritualism has revealed the affirmations and comforts of a human religion to be true.

Books, Artifacts, and Alien Science

The unnatural exists in many forms, not all of them living. The remnants of alien cultures and science have intertwined with human history and can be found buried in ancient texts of magic, in one-off artifacts pulled from the earth, or in alien concepts that haunt the human brain.

More often than not, a book, artifact or alien concept causes an outbreak of the unnatural. Worse, they are often the first step in calling something from outside. Delta Green works hard to identify, contain or destroy these things before they can find a foothold and do any damage. (See ALIEN ARTIFACTS on page XX.)

Creating Your Own Unnatural Threats

Creating new threats for your agents is easy. Nearly anything can exist in the world of Delta Green, and none of it has to make sense — in fact, that's what it can *never* do.

Building your own “mythos” — an interconnected series of artifacts, entities and locations all focused around some Lovecraftian threat of your own creation is easy and fun. (See CONSTRUCTING THE UNNATURAL on page XX.)

CREATING YOUR DELTA GREEN CAMPAIGN

A campaign is an ongoing series of Delta Green operations, focusing on a single group of Delta Green agents. Agents come and go — sometimes, they

die, go mad, or “retire”, but some central thread remains (usually the Cell Designation, a central NPC, or some key concept).

As the Case Officer, you must make many choices in constructing a Delta Green campaign. It's not just about selecting an unnatural threat to investigate. You must understand all the moving parts on a level which the players will never comprehend.

- 1. Pick the Decade:** In what era is your Delta Green game set? The group has existed since 1942 in many different forms. The era that serves as a backdrop deeply influences the tone and style of gameplay.
- 2. Customize the Situation:** Sometimes you want to create your own particular setting *within* the Delta Green universe. For example, say you want focus on the 1950s but you want to set it at a secret Delta Green mental facility that treats agents who have seen too much. Try to keep your new idea in line with the nihilistic vision of Delta Green (see THINGS THAT SHOULD NOT CHANGE on page XX).
- 3. Define the Scope of Threat:** Choose a threat to be the primary focus of the campaign (but certainly, don't tell the players!) The Great Old Ones in total, a particular Great Old One, or Hastur, either as a Great Old One or as an entropy-like force that erodes reality, or both, or immortal worms that control people like puppets. Delta Green exists to confront *all* of these things, but your campaign will be more effective if it has a clear focus — at least in the beginning. Don't let that restrict you or make your campaign predictable. An isolated operation might deal with a different sort of threat altogether to keep the agents guessing.
- 4. Brief the Players:** Give the players a summary of the decade and general concept of the campaign, and let them create agents for it. If you have any special guidelines (“you all have to be test pilots”), it's best to do the footwork for them and have some notes on how, specifically, to make their agent work within the campaign you're imagining.

Step 1: Pick the Decade

Are your agents racing to confront and cover up the monstrosities that Nazi Germany unearthed, before the Soviets find them in April, 1945? Or are they

hunting a time traveler in a Kansas town in 1951? Or are they closing in on a cult attempting to wake something horrible beneath Yellowstone in 1967, during the Summer of Love? Are they on the run from black-budget outfits in the U.S. government with access to technology from beyond in 1982—or 1999, 2009, or 2019?

The choices are endless, but it's best to start at the same place: What *feeling* do you want to explore in your game? Every decade highlights and evokes a theme that can serve as a backdrop in the campaign and that can help you explore how Delta Green's power and influence has ebbed and flowed over the years. (See DECADES OF DELTA GREEN on page XX for details.)

Era	Prevailing Theme	Delta Green's Status
1940s	The unifying drive to defeat Germany, Italy and Japan	Official and Fully Sanctioned
1950s	A fundamental struggle between the forces that triumphed in World War II: Communism vs. Western democracy	Official and Fully Sanctioned
1960s	The dissolution and reconstruction of the ideals of American society	Official and Partially Sanctioned
1970s	The rise of violent crime in America	Unofficial with No Sanction
1980s	Corporate greed, the War on Drugs, and the rise of all-consuming capitalism	Unofficial with No Sanction
1990s	Reconstruction and restoration following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and	Unofficial with No Sanction

	distrust of American power in the aftermath	
2000s	The world transformed by the global war on terrorism and American-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq	Official and Partially Sanctioned as a special access program within the U.S. government; and Unofficial with No Sanction as a conspiracy that rejected government reactivation
2010s	The aftermath of deepening links between government power and corporate profit; the global war on terror transforms from on-the-ground occupation to isolated strikes and assassinations	Official and Partially Sanctioned as a special access program within the U.S. government; and Unofficial with No Sanction as a conspiracy that rejected government reactivation

Official, Unofficial, or Sanctioned?

Throughout Delta Green's incarnations, it has enjoyed three main dispositions. *Official and Fully Sanctioned*, *Official and Partially Sanctioned* and *Unofficial with No Sanction*. Which version of Delta Green do you want your players to experience?

Official and Fully Sanctioned: A covert force, very secret but with the full power of the U.S. government behind it. This is Delta Green as it was at the height of WWII. Nearly any resource can be tapped, and those in the know include the president of the United States.

Official and Partially Sanctioned: A covert force existing on the periphery of the black budget. Delta Green as it was in the 1960s, as well as in the 2000s when it is reactivated as an active Special Access Program within the Department of Defense. Those on the edges know of it but resources are limited to whatever can be funneled away from the vast

black budgets of the government. Strings can be pulled for influence but only at great professional cost.

Unofficial with No Sanction: A covert conspiracy actively defying U.S. law, made up of members within the federal government. Delta Green as it was between 1970 and 2001. In the modern era, this conspiracy exists as an active network of 25 cells across the U.S., monitored and mediated by A-Cell, operating independently of the official DELTA GREEN Special Access Program.

Keep in mind, players don't need to know the *true* nature of "their" Delta Green at all. For example, they might believe they are working for a *real* covert agency when in actuality they have joined an illegal conspiracy

Step 2: Customize the Situation

Your version of Delta Green might differ from the ones we describe. We encourage that. Keep the players guessing.

And being CO means shaping the Delta Green game into what you want it to be. Sometimes you can explore the game as it already exists before bringing anything new to it. Sometimes you begin with a clear vision of something fresh. But stick to a few crucial rules to keep the essential thread of what makes the Delta Green setting unique.

Things That Should Not Change

Delta Green has shifted throughout its long and storied history and the shape of the campaign is up to the CO, but certain aspects of Delta Green should *never* change.

It's tempting to make Delta Green upbeat and winnable. But that transforms it into a science fiction game, a thriller or a military sim. Why bother? Plenty of good games already do those things. Delta Green without the essential hopelessness of Lovecraft has little point.

If you keep the following elements consistent, no matter the time, place, or scale of the covert operation, you keep the Delta Green spirit:

Humans are the Main Threat

While the unnatural is the focus of Delta Green, humans are the main threat. People willing to do anything for power, for understanding, for immortality — things only the unnatural might bring them. Mankind is forever pawing at the lock to release those that howl beyond, and Delta Green is forever slamming those doors shut.

The Mundane is the Backdrop

Delta Green is rooted in the mundane. The more you cement it among things the things the players know, trust and understand, the more striking the moments of terror become.

Have the phase-shifting horror manifest in a grocery store. Note the details of unnatural destruction in a home by describing the tipped-over coffee table and blood-soaked *People* magazine with Justin Bieber on the cover.

At the same time, moments that feature the unnatural should be few and far between. Think of your game as a symphony. A symphony of only crescendos is boring. The crescendo comes at the key moment. Choose the moments when the unnatural appears carefully, make them count, and make them hurt.

Nothing is Certain

If Delta Green players are confident in their associates, relationships, or methods, you're doing it wrong. They should live in fear of the double-cross, of being hung out to dry, or being set up. Anyone might be compromised. Anyone could be a puppet for a inhuman intelligence. Any new lead; a trap.

A good example: An agent is driving his Thunderbird, and the brakes keep squealing. He decides to take the car in. While paying for the job, the mechanic hands him an odd, gray box:

"Oh, this was in the wheel well. I don't know what the fuck it is."

Popping this device open, the agent discovers a mud-stained GPS tracker with a heavy magnet. No identifying marks. Attempts to trace the

electronics in it lead to dead ends and empty lots never used by American firms.

The agent becomes paranoid. The Case Officer never needs to follow up on this. The player will do it for them. The point isn't the box. The point is the player's fear of the endless unknowable threats the box represents.

Unnatural Horror is About LACK of Understanding

With the unnatural, the answers go only so far. How did the book displace the agent's consciousness? How does a gesture in the air cut a man in half? How can a thing that appears to be composed of swirling glass, speak and pass through walls?

The answers to these questions are beyond human conception and always will be. While some elements at the edges may be picked apart, there will always be a fundamental lack of understanding of the unnatural. That's why it is unnatural.

Problems arise when the Case Officer allows the players to "understand" an unnatural threat. Once that threat's actions, stats and behaviors can be guessed, it is no longer frightening. The oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.

Death is Omnipresent

Do not protect the agents. You are the mediator of the game, but you should not step in and reprieve a doomed agent. It is your job to walk them to the scaffold. The dice are the guillotine. Death is not *only* part of Delta Green, it is its foundation. This is a game about human frailty, about the struggle against the unknown despite the impossibility of absolute victory. Only in the face of death can the most heroic moments can be found.

Let the game dictate the outcome. The rules are stacked in favor of the unnatural. Humans, unless they are exceedingly careful and clever, have only a small chance of survival, much less achieving "victory".

This is not a game about winning, it is a game about surviving to fight another day. Death and madness are the main outcomes of Delta Green

operations. Even an operation that doesn't leave an agent dead, crippled or insane should be defined by its lack of them—by the negative space left by a disaster that everyone knew would come.

There are Worse Things Than Dying

There are worse fates than death. There are creatures that infect and subsume an agent's mind. There are methods to artificially prolong or restore life, turning humans into something else. There are places where all such rules—life and death—are removed completely. The price that they demand is always too appalling to contemplate.

It's important to show that price being paid so the players are forced to contemplate it. Agents should exist in mortal fear of such outcomes. They should be on the lookout for situations which can compromise the very thing they are fighting for: normal, human existence.

Many agencies and groups exist to further these concepts and infections. One might even say that the minions who serve the Great Old Ones themselves are a vector for a disease that infects human thought, replacing it with alien ideas and concepts.

Step 3: Define the Scope of the Threat

What types of threats will your agents see in your Delta Green campaign? Some campaigns are a mish-mash of unnatural threats that have no interrelation except the fact that those particular agents are sent to investigate them, others are fraught with correlated contents. It remains up to you as CO to determine what you hope to pursue. If you're clever, you can even connect up what were once disparate investigations into a single unbroken thread.

Building your first operation is a good way to set about establishing the scope of threat. Are your agents out to fight *all* the unnatural, or just the non-human, immortal entities that feed on the human dead colloquially known as "ghouls"? This scope need not be limited — if the players choose to pursue a lead instead of one which will take them closer to the heart of the "ghoul" mystery, more power to them, but you as CO have to be ready.

Step 4: Brief the Players

Inform the players of any details they need to know to create their agents. List any requirements. If all agents need to be in the Pacific Northwest, or all agents need a background in federal law enforcement, inform them.

Answer any questions the players might have. Step through agent creation with them, and make sure the agent's they imagine will work in the campaign you're creating. If a player comes up with a great idea that just doesn't fit, decide whether you can adjust the campaign or whether, more likely, the agent needs to be adjusted.

BUILDING A DELTA GREEN OPERATION

THE ANATOMY OF A DELTA GREEN OPERATION

For the most part, Delta Green operations all follow a similar structure. Usually an unnatural threat is discovered by an agent or friendly, or by a news story hitting the wire that contains a watchword or a connection to some location, object or type of activity known to intersect with the unnatural.

This intel is flagged by leadership in the group, and assigned to the most relevant (or most available) "Cell" — a group of Delta Green agents who have operated together in the past.

Sometimes, an operational assignment occurs on the fly — a new designation sent down the chain based on some shifting situation, or a new piece of recovered intel, sending the agents off in a different direction.

Beginnings

The CO begins a session by establishing the *mundane*: the world the agents come from, and fight to protect. Only by doing this will the unnatural threat presented later truly stand out.

Life and Work

What does each agent do at home or at work *before* the call comes? Perhaps they are shopping for a child's birthday gift, having dental surgery, or filing taxes at H&R Block. The agent might be at work, directing traffic, filing a report on a subject under surveillance by the FBI, or performing an autopsy on a motorcycle fatality. Maybe the agent is simply having breakfast with the family. These vignettes ground the players in the reality and certainty of the world they're must leave behind.

The Call

The operation begins with the call from Delta Green. Sometimes it's not a phone call. Sometimes it's an email disguised as spam, or a fax, a postcard, a page over an airport PA system, or a green strip of cloth tacked to a telephone pole.

It's a coded message which means "get in touch with the group via secure means". Different agents have different contacts. Some do not know who is on the other side of the line. Others know their representatives in the group well, having served with them before.

The Briefing

Contacting the group grants the agents access to the briefing. This establishes the operational code name, its location, and the basics of what the group wants done.

For example, the briefing might be about operation PATTON, and focus on discovering the source of the batrachian features of the abandoned newborns found at Dearborn Hospital in Potter, Massachusetts. Operation ULYSSES might focus on the identification and elimination of the creature known as the "Totem Lake Monster" in Myrid, North Dakota. The code name has nothing to do with the operation's objective or details.

During this briefing the agents are told if there is an official cover-story in place or that they "under the radar". Sometimes the group pulls strings to allow the agents unfettered access as official law enforcement agents or consultants (sometimes with real names and designation, and sometimes

not). Other times, the agents are told to keep out of the spotlight, avoid detection by local authorities, and get the job done anyway.

Most of the time, the group has little clear intel on the situation: only whatever was provided by the contact who brought the possible unnatural incursion to their attention. Sometimes it's a police file, a newspaper story, a video or audio file in an anonymous Dropbox link, other times, it's nothing but a sentence over a telephone.

The Mentor

On the players' *first* operation, the CO might use an experienced Non-Player Character (NPC) as a teaching tool, to show the new group the ropes, by walking them through each step, just as a group mentor might tutor a new agent. A veteran should also demonstrate the risks of Delta Green: insanity, violence and a life in general disarray; the cost of service is high. This NPC isn't some super-character to make the player characters look bad, they're a case study, and a warning.

Preparation

During the preparation phase agents should gather resources, including tools that they might require, but can't get on the mission. Of course, if the requirement is illegal, getting it to the location of the operation may be difficult.

If the agents enter in an "official" capacity, it is much easier to get what is needed locally rather than moving it across country. If they are unofficial, they must be much more careful. None of this should be "hand waived" by the CO — the reality of the world is established in such details. No agent simply shows up with a new Barrett .50 cal sniper rifle without explaining how they bought it, and transported it to the location. Remember, the horrors of the unnatural are only as terrifying as the world is mundane.

Transition

Once the agents are briefed, it's up to them to make their way to the location of the operation. This should never be glossed over. Usually, agents must travel without alerting their superiors and their family to their true destination; this means a viable cover story must be created.

Worse, unsanctioned missions require the agent to get to the locale on their own, with what they need to complete the mission, without getting caught, and without recompense. This can get expensive, and difficult to cover up from loved ones.

Building the Mystery

The operation is something agents *descend* into; uncovering leads and tracking down suspects. Invariably, it speeds up, becoming more and more dangerous as the investigation approach uncovering the unnatural truth.

Location

The mystery the agents work to unravel usually takes place in a single location (or a small series of related locations). Most of the time, the agents begin to clearly understand the disposition of the location, and the movers and shakers found there.

Task Force HQ

The first order of business for agents is usually setting up a safe location to operate from. Experienced agents often set up shop at a “Green Box”— a rental or storage facility where they can operate, unobserved, and store questionable items. (Sometimes, near large, metropolitan areas, a Green Box has previously been established by other teams, and may be reused.) Others set up two locations: a motel as a “public” location to interact with locals, and a second hidden HQ that only the agents know of.

Local Friendlies

Sometimes local friendlies and agents can be useful contacts on the ground during an operation. These contacts are few and far between but their value should not be underestimated. Most of the time, the agent or friendly on the ground is the one who brought the possible unnatural incident to the attention of the group in the first place.

Official or Unofficial

Agents must quickly get the lay of the land. How they go about it depends entirely on their status. Are they “official”— on the record as investigating a known crime in the area (albeit one locals believe mundane)? Are they only falsely “official”? *Claiming* to be on the record, waiting for their bona fides to

collapse under local law enforcement scrutiny? Are they completely below the water-line, “under the radar”; illegal and without sanction, poking around an official investigation?

Depending on their status, agents might find themselves awash in records, files, pictures, reports and every bit of information they could need, or they could be out in the cold, having to break and enter, spy, blackmail or otherwise squeeze their way into the investigation, illegally.

Records and Reports

Agents often pore through all available records and reports related to the operation when to piece together a theory. Sometimes that means older files, county records, old tax and zoning records, or local historical society archives.

Often, hints of the unnatural can be found in odd photographs, records, and reports from previous eras.

Open Threads

Usually, obvious open threads present themselves for active investigation. *Where is the third hiker? If the room was locked, who or what stabbed the children? What was the thing climbing the side of the building in the YouTube clip?*

Novice agents split up to investigate multiple threads at once, veterans avoid this mistake. Hitting a thread that reveals the threat can be deadly.

Live Wires

It usually doesn't take long before agents hit a “live wire,” an investigative thread that reveals something connected to the unnatural menace. This may be a dramatic display or a subtle hint at the activities of the threat. When agents are unlucky or novice, this can be deadly.

Interference or Exposure

Agents can find themselves facing investigation from outside authorities. Stirring the unnatural threat can cause far-reaching and unpredictable repercussions. Disturb the thing in the mineshaft, and people begin to disappear. Read the runes on the tablet, and the corpse sits up on the

morgue table and rushes out into the night. Smash the mirror, and all the people in the retirement home drop dead.

These incidents can draw interference from local law enforcement—and even federal law enforcement—if the local police complain up the chain of command about the agents' investigation. If the agents are not "official" and are found out, this could be the beginning of a much larger problem for the agents and for Delta Green.

Worst of all, the agents can draw *media attention*. Having the threat itself go viral on the internet is the last thing Delta Green wants.

Agents are human beings; they have families, friends and co-workers interested in their location and well being. This is a dangerous thing when the agent is not supposed to be where they are, or when they have to disappear for long periods of time. In the modern world, a simple miscue on a social network can alert people to your *actual* location. When the questions begin on such matters, they will not stop.

Location and Confrontation

In the end, it all comes down to locating and confronting the unnatural threat. When Delta Green comes face-to-face with the unnatural, all bets are off. This can range from stopping a lone madman in an occult-inspired murder spree, to a full-blown shattering of space and time as a Great Old One attempts to come *through*.

Elimination

When possible, Delta Green attempts to permanently remove the threat. Most of the time, this is simply beyond their capabilities. Some threats are non-terrene, or are completely immune to weapons altogether. If the agents aren't careful and prepared, they can find the tables turned very quickly, no matter how well prepared they believe themselves to be.

Containment

When elimination is not possible, containment is attempted. Sometimes this can be as simple as dynamiting a mine-shaft, marking an area "off limits" with the threat of federal enforcement, or leveling a building that's been condemned by the EPA.

Sometimes it's more exotic than that. Some unnatural threats can apparently be "bound" or "controlled" by other, greater, malevolent forces. Hypergeometric rituals may trap unnatural creatures to locations, items, or even other dimensions. Finding and learning these techniques can be the key to an operation—and can be nearly as dangerous as the final confrontation itself.

Failure

Sometimes an operation is simply a failure. Either the agents misjudge the threat, act too soon, or suffer bad luck. Failure comes with a toll of madness, death, or both.

Death is simpler to deal with. Federal agents know many ways to make a death look like an accident or, if necessary, to dispose of a dead body and cover up the disappearance. None of this training makes it easier to dismember and dissolve a friend in quicklime, however.

The psychological toll of an operation is sometimes more dangerous than death, insomuch as it's harder to detect and its impact can last indefinitely. Agents driven to mental collapse can be committed, if the family is manipulated to secure their cooperation, and the agent is made to look sufficiently dangerous to force the court's hand. More rarely, Delta Green can remove an agent to a secure location for treatment. In the most severe cases, the group might need to "deal with" an agent whose breakdown poses a threat in itself. Such solutions are not easier, per se, but they are faster.

One day the player characters might get the mission of eliminating an insane stranger who was once an agent like themselves.

Cover Up

After a Delta Green operation, no loose ends can remain. Information related to the unnatural propagates and spreads. Great lengths must be taken to account for and conceal all evidence. Theft, destruction and disinformation are often all necessary after a Delta Green operation to sterilize the infection.

If things have gone poorly and deaths have occurred, it is even more important to make certain those affected are never identified, lest the investigation lead back to the agents or expose the group itself.

After the smoke has cleared, only those with Delta Green clearance should have any idea what *really* went on.

Battling Unnatural Inflation and Player Complacency

If, in your game, if the unnatural is behind every rock, soon your games will suffer from *unnatural inflation*, requiring a bigger and bigger amount of the unnatural to make your players react. This is a losing battle.

The *actual* unnatural must be sparingly used. Instead, focus on creating mystery and action *around* unnatural elements. The human cult worshipping *The Haunter of the Void* and performing terrible crimes in its name is *more* than enough to occupy the players for many, many, sessions. Then, and only then, do you unveil the payoff of an actual unnatural event.

Another force to battle is *player complacency*. Are your players up against something they've seen before? Or are they carrying knowledge from outside the game that makes them become jaded with what is going on?

Players shouting out what they *believe* the monster is, mentioning its number of Hit Points, Armor Points, Attacks, etc... must never be met with a lackluster response by the CO. The authority of the Case Officer is the most important thing in the game. Without the CO's guidance and control, the game will degenerate into a morass of compromises.

Delta Green is about absolutes. There is no place for compromise. It is up to the Case Officer to keep control in the game, and to present old hat entities in a new way, or to startle the players out of their boredom in some other way. Keep this concept central in your mind: *the unnatural must never be understood*.

UNNATURAL ENTITIES

For seventy-two years Delta Green has confronted all manner of unnatural entities. In that time, few real connections between these creatures have been confirmed, and even when such facts *were* confirmed, they were rarely recorded. No agent knows all that is listed below, but if contents were correlated, it is likely the following could be divined from existing intelligence.

Known Threats

The Great Old Ones

The Great Old Ones are non-human alien entities that represent the pinnacle of power, far beyond the scope of humanity. They span space and time, and have been known to exhibit control on a scale that is cosmic. They vary in size, description and influence (or appear to), but what is clear is that *any one of them is enough to end human civilization as we know it*.

They are beyond the ability of direct intervention by the group, though agents have often warred with their human (and inhuman) servants.

Alien Intelligences

After the Great Old Ones first began their sleep in the distant past, multiple species from the stars warred over the ruins of Earth. Crinoid plant-like beings, amorphous blobs of sentient cells that can reshape into any form, extradimensional blights of non-terrene matter with a thousand eyes, fungus-scientists from the edge of the solar system; just to name a few, built cities, and forged empires that rose and fell long before humanity evolved. These beings left behind artifacts, ruins and science buried far from the haunts of man. They are called by many, many names.

Some persist, even today, enacting alien plans to restore their race to supremacy. Delta Green has actively hunted such creatures since its foundation.

Inhuman Earthly Intelligences

The most common nonhuman entity is the Deep One; alien, amphibious, immortal beings that have been interbreeding with humanity since the dawn of history for unknown purposes. Second are the Ghouls; dog-like beings

who feast on the human dead, living in warrens underground. Third, are Serpent Men, reptile-humanoids who long ago gained access to the science of the Great Old Ones during the age of the dinosaurs. All three are believed to be native to Earth, but the definitive answer to this question remains unknown.

It *is* known that man was never alone on Earth. And where these three are the most commonly encountered, there are many, many others.

Human Hybrids

Both Deep Ones and Ghouls, through unknown means, interbreed with humans to produce hybrids. Serpent Men, using hypergeometry, have masqueraded as humans for long periods of time; even interacting with humans in the modern age.

Hybrids and the infection caused by creatures living in masquerade represent some of the greatest threats Delta Green has ever known.

Extradimensional Intelligences

The Great Race is a non-human intelligence which can transcend time and occupy human minds, to manipulate history. The Lloigor are non-physical intelligences which can manipulate energy and matter to create living projections of their consciousness. These two forces seem to be in conflict, with their battlefield being the last two centuries of human history. Since time and space is insubstantial to them, this war is persistent and temporally fixed — a front in a war across time.

Little, if anything, is understood about their methods or plans, and it remains likely there are more than two such forces warring in this manner.

Others

Invisible, alien carnivores living in the membranes between dimensions, a coherent fog of swirling glass that can congeal in the angles, rat-creatures imbued with the face and mind of a human. All of these, and more, exist at the periphery of human experience, hiding, and waiting.

HYPERGEOMETRY

Every culture on Earth has its belief in “magic”, a force that exists outside the world, which can make amazing, dangerous or terrible things happen. Agents long ago labelled this power *hypergeometry*, due to its obsession with numbers, math, position, and shapes. From the inhuman angles of the city of Cthulhu, to the bending of space which flings the minds of the Great Race of Yith down the corridors of time — each represents hypergeometrical techniques.

Humans have always attempted to harness the power of hypergeometry. It is best to think of hypergeometry as a live circuit flowing with infinite energy beyond the four dimensional construct which the human consciousness exists in. Humans that alter their perception can tap this circuit, bridging the gap between the other world and our own, focusing energy into a point of action.

Whether it is a shaman dancing around a fire drawing a mandala in sand, or a scientist placing lasers at points in a circle to call down something from the sky, the “math” is essentially the same. The only difference is culture, and it is often difficult to tell where the culture ends and the power begins. The ritual and action is only important to the “operator” insofar as it affects their mind, which is the actual gate that moves the energy from beyond. This also means two people can enact the exact same ritual and have completely different outcomes. One might see nothing, the other might end the world.

All *true* oddities in human culture can be traced back to hypergeometric techniques. “Psychic” ability, witchcraft, divination, ghosts and more, each represents only a mis-focused projection of the powers passed down from the titans that once ruled the Earth, either genetically, psychically, or through physical artifacts. The only consistent fact behind hypergeometry is this; it destroys the human brain in its use.

Types of Hypergeometry

Since the dawn of humanity, man has encountered the remnants of the alien civilizations. Giant structures, haunting dreams and even biological

dispositions have secretly driven all human history, even as the monstrous entities that once warred over Earth, sleep.

Artifact

This is the most common form of hypergeometric infection. Ancient information inscribed on alien metals, giant temples buried beneath arctic ice that bend space/time, nth dimensional weapons pulled from the bottom of a wells filled with human bones — the artifacts of alien cultures are scattered all over the world, waiting for misguided humans to find and reactivate them.

Delta Green and many other organizations in the world spend much of their time locating and sanitizing such artifacts before an “outbreak” can occur.

Certain artifacts store Willpower to be used in hypergeometric rituals associated with them like a “battery”. Some Willpower batteries can be refilled either at a 1 to 1 of spent Willpower, or through blood sacrifice (this transfers the sacrificed target’s Willpower into the “battery”).

Psychic

The sleeping great olds ones are so powerful, they broadcast hypergeometric secrets like a radio signal, which some human minds are strong enough to pick up. Those who “hear” this broadcast are often artists, dreamers or philosophers.

Those affected by the “call” can sometimes do amazing things, shown to them by the voices that whisper beyond. Many of the greatest books of hypergeometrical techniques such as the *Necronomicon* or *De Vermiis Mysteriis* were rendered into physical forms through this method; unconsciously dictated by powers beyond the veil. Sometimes Psychic hypergeometric spells can be fueled from outside forces.

Genetic

All life on Earth is the genetic backwash of alien entities which once controlled the globe. The last 2.5 billion years of life is a mistake, arisen from the effluvia of their waste. Some of their genetic material remains in

small offshoots of humanity, Ghouls, Deep Ones, the Tcho-Tcho and others are more or less connected with the entities that began all of this.

These creatures, not wholly human, have access to the psychic broadcast on a more primal level, allowing them to tap into a power much more fundamental than can be found by psychic or artifact contact.

Learning Hypergeometric Spells

For game purposes, each spell has a *study time*, an *Unnatural rating* and *SAN loss*. To learn a spell, an agent must devote the *study time* to do so. Some spells are simple (chant a single word or consider a single symbol of power), while others are incredibly complex, so the CO determines the required study time. Most of the time, this is study from the pages of a book. This study time must be uninterrupted and without serious distraction, and with all resources required (obviously, if you wish to read a tome in another language, you must have that language to do so).

Once this is done, a SAN roll is made against the SAN loss of the spell. If the SAN roll *fails*, the agent learns the spell, and suffers SAN loss and all its attendant effects, and *gains* the Unnatural rating of the spell permanently, adding it to their Unnatural skill. On a success, the agent gains nothing (though they lose the lower SAN cost), as they fail to grasp the subtleties of the spell. They may try again as many times as they like, by once again devoting study time.

Example: *Carter (SAN 55) settles in to study De Vermiis Mysteriis, specifically, the spell within it named the Calling of the Black. It has a study time of 40 hours, an Unnatural of +6, and a SAN cost of 0/1D4.*

Carter spends the allotted time in study, dodging phone calls from concerned cel members, and rolls his SAN, getting a 58. He fails, and the true horrors of the manuscript become clear to him. He learns the spell, gains +6 to his Unnatural Skill, and loses 1D4 SAN. He can cast the spell Calling of the Black.

What, Precisely Is an Unnatural Tome?

Is there such a thing as a standard version of the *NECRONOMICON*, in plain English, that can drive an agent mad? Can you simply copy *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* into a Word file and spam a message board with it and cost everyone who reads it 2D8 SAN?

What constitutes a Unnatural tome is an interesting question. The definition of its effect is simple enough; a book (or piece of art, or sculpture — some artifact) that causes damage to the human mind, and allows access to the powers beyond. But *why* does it damage the human mind? What is it that causes the damage?

In a world filled with fake CGI videos of alien abductions, swamp monsters and ghosts, it's hard to believe some musty old block print is going to cause a lot of mental trouble.

There are mass shootings, executions, bomb attacks, child murders, mass poisonings and more, each and every day; and that's just in a Google News feed. Modern humanity is far more prolific in its violence than ever before (if not in absolute percentage, than in the depravity of such violence), and we are well on our way towards becoming as the Great Old Ones. Why would a book written in 1344 with art that looks like something a fifth-grader might scribble seem even a little bit shocking today? Good question.

Is it evidence of the supernatural that causes the damage? Does your level of education or expertise in a subject matter? (for example, looking at a Mayan Codex if you can't understand it isn't going to be *too* horrific, even if there are pictures). Or is there some inherent evil, a cancer of reality tied to the object itself that causes mental degeneration? A sanity-radiation-poisoning that destroys the mind and affects all that touch the tome?

All of the above can be true. No standard exists. Each book or object is different. Like the Old Ones and hypergeometry, no absolute rules can be discerned. Just when the agents believe they have a handle on how it operates, they find something that breaks the established order of rules.

As a Case Officer, approach each book or object as a unique threat. Perhaps a code embedded in the text warps the mind, or a strange picture filled with impossible angles, or an unknown species of mold on the pages attacks the central nervous system, or something more sinister and less physical. Work hard to establish the rules, and stick to them for each individual Unnatural tome. Make each a mystery to be solved — a sanity bomb waiting to go off in the agent's mind...

All in all, a rogue's gallery of Unnatural tome threats — each with different applications, dangers and problems — will *always* be more interesting than "roll 1D20 SAN".

Employment of Hypergeometry

Hypergeometry is beyond human conception; no sane mind can truly understand it, but that doesn't mean humans can't use it.

In game terms, the character employing a specific hypergeometric ritual (for convenience, we'll all such a ritual a "spell" and the character employing it a "spellcaster") must performs the required actions, spend the required Willpower, and attempt an operation roll.

The operation roll's chance of success equals the caster's Unnatural skill plus the caster's POW plus the WP cost of the spell.

Critical Success: The spell takes effect. It costs only 1 WP, no matter how much it ordinarily requires, and the operator adds +1 point to his or her Unnatural Skill. SAN losses remain normal.

Success: The power activates, the mechanical effect happens, and the caster loses SAN and the WP cost.

Failure: The operator loses WP according to the spell's cost. Nothing else happens.

Fumble: The operator loses the spell's full WP and SAN costs but the spell fails. In addition, an Unnatural Side Effect Occurs (see below).

Example: Arthur has learned the spell "Malfeasant Glare." This spell costs 14 WP and 1/1D8 SAN to use. Arthur's POW is 15, and his Unnatural Skill is 12%. His chance of success equals his Unnatural skill (12%) plus his POW (15) plus the spell's WP cost (14), or 41%. He rolls a 46, which fails. He loses 14 WP (leaving him with just this side of collapse with only 1 WP remaining), but nothing else happens and he loses no SAN.

These rules are for humans using hypergeometry. Nonhuman entities have their own rules for creating such effects. For some it's as instinctive as breathing.

The Esoteric Nature of Hypergeometry

Hypergeometric effects vary wildly in operation time, scope and effect. They are balanced only on the highest level of the game, inasmuch as they exact a severe price for their use from a resource which is not readily replaceable: the agent's SAN. This means the inevitable decline of the agents using hypergeometry is eventually guaranteed. The smallest mechanical details need not be balanced.

After all, if a spell inflicts 1D100 HP damage and exacts 1D100 SAN from the operator, it is likely a closed loop. An agent hoping to abuse that spell is soon to be insane and unplayable: lost on the streets or to a cult, committed to a psychiatric hospital, or "sanitized" by Delta Green.

SAN and Hypergeometry

There is no free lunch. Only the spellcaster loses SAN from casting the spell, but anyone who witnesses a hypergeometric effect may suffer SAN loss from its results: seeing a summoned creature, witnessing horrific acts performed in the ritual, or otherwise glimpsing things that man was not meant to know.

Even the most mild and benign spell invokes forces that twist the reality in which humanity maintains its fragile existence. Under no circumstances can any spell or hypergeometric effect restore SAN to a spellcaster or subject. A spell might force calm on someone in the grip of insanity, alleviating the symptoms; but it will never cure the insanity, and it might incur a SAN loss that will ultimately make things worse.

Addiction

The power of hypergeometry is as addictive as it is dangerous. The ability to create, change or destroy outside the bounds of classical reality has a draw that is beyond even the most addictive drug. Human minds have a hard time, once they learn how, to avoid using the power.

Every time an agent successfully uses a hypergeometrical technique and fails the SAN roll, the CO should note which technique was used. The next time a problem arises which might be "solved" by the application of that hypergeometrical power, that agent must spend 1D6 Willpower Points to

resist the urge. If the agent does not spend the Willpower, he or she *must* try to use the hypergeometric effect to solve the problem.

CREATING A NEW HYPERGEOMETRIC EFFECT

Hypergeometry allows human beings to achieve “impossible” things, such as inflicting damage without apparent cause, moving objects instantly across space and time, contacting inhuman intelligences, summoning alien creatures, or binding and dismissing them when their usefulness is expended.

Hypergeometric “spells” are named, defined rituals (such as *Leech*, *Overwhelm*, or *Draw Down the Black Goat*). Each has a WP cost, a SAN cost, an effect in game terms, and a clear writeup of its use.

To create a new hypergeometric effect, first define it. Imagine what you want that power to accomplish and be as specific as possible. It should never be as boring as “inflict 1D6 HPs damage”. Add flair, horror and weirdness.

Do you want a hand-sign that allows a person to step through a wall, causing the otherwise solid matter to ripple and move like water out of the way before the wall collapses back into shape? Or the ability to stare into a mirror, chant a phrase, and displace oneself anywhere in the reflection, no matter intervening obstacles? Or a forked hand sign which inflicts a mystical lightning that turns the target’s flesh to dust, leaving behind only charred bones? Or an instinctive, barely-controlled clairvoyance that strikes a psychic uncontrollably?

Assemble a single sentence that describes the purpose of the effect—the “spell.” Including any details you can imagine. How long does it take to implement? What components are needed in its “casting”? Can others assist in its activation? What is it called?

Now put it together in game terms. First, determine its WP cost. That's the most detailed part of creating a spell. The WP cost determines its Scale, which tells you the SAN cost.

Spell WP Cost

There are six categories that help calculate WP cost: Range, Time, Scope, Control/Transform, Damage/Restore/Resist, and Contact/Summon/Bind. Add up the WP cost for each category that applies and the degree to which it applies.

Many effects require only the WP costs for Range, Time, or Scope. Here are some examples:

- Seeing or hearing things beyond normal human senses.
- Altering the weather.
- Creating illusions or hallucinations.
- Communing mentally with another person or entity.
- Imbuing a mundane object with an aura of extradimensional energy, such as to allow a normal weapon to harm a creature with Transcendent armor.

If the spell has greater impact, add the cost for one of the other categories. If a category does not apply—a spell that affects only the caster needs no Range, for example—ignore it.

A spell that coerces a target's behavior—such as making mental contact against the target's will, inflicting unwanted hallucinations, or binding a target to control it—requires an opposed POW test (between the caster and the target) to succeed. If the target's POW test wins, the spell effect fails.

Range: How far can the effect reach in space?

Time: How long does the effect last, or how far does it reach in time? (This is not the time it takes to create the effect; that's discussed below.) If a spell has a long duration, does it require the caster to concentrate on it intently all that time? Can it be nullified by distracting, harming, or killing the caster? Those details are up to the CO. They may vary from spell to spell or even from one casting of a given spell to another.

Scope: How many people does the spell affect or how wide an area?

Control/Transform: Does the spell control solid, inanimate matter, or transform one kind of matter to another? How much? An effect which does this usually requires Range and Scope as well.

Damage/Restore/Resist: How much damage in HPs can the effect inflict, defend against (acting as armor), or heal? A spell that inflicts harm incurs a SAN cost for Violence as well as the loss for casting the spell. Usually damage inflicted by a spell ignores armor, but against a living creature it either requires an opposed POW test—if the victim wins, the spell inflicts no damage—or else the victim can attempt to Dodge it. Damage that can't be avoided with POW or Dodging typically doubles the WP cost. Damage that affects only certain kinds of entities or targets typically halves the WP cost. Healing or defensive effects that are similarly restrictive may reduce their WP cost. A damaging spell with a long duration inflicts its damage every turn that the target is in range.

Summon/Bind/Dismiss: How powerful an entity can the effect conjure or dominate? Summon means physically bringing an extradimensional entity into your presence through a gap in spacetime. Most summoning spells are not specific—they bring a random member of the species, which is usually furious, terrified, and/or hungry, and likely to lash out unless controlled. At the end of the spell's duration the summoned entity vanishes back to its point of origin. Bind means forcing a person or entity to behave as the spellcaster dictates. It requires an opposed POW test. A binding spell is typically good for a single, simple instruction. Some binding spells may enslave the target for a longer duration, according to the Time category's WP cost. Dismiss means forcing an extradimensional entity back to its point of origin by force of will. It, too, requires an opposed POW test.

Range	Time	Scope	Control/ Transform	Damage/ Restore/ Resist	Contact/ Summon/ Bind	WP Cost
Touch	Turns	Self	Grams	1D4	Up to POW 1	+1
Meters	Minutes	A Person	Kilograms	1D6	Up to POW 2	+2
Kilometers	Hours	A few people	Tons	1D8	Up to POW 4	+4

Worldwide	Days	Hundreds of people	Megatons	1D12	Up to POW 8	+8
In the Solar System	Years	A city	Gigatons	Kill Damage 15% or 15 AP	Up to POW 16	+16
Light Years	Centuries	The world	Teraton	Kill Damage 30% or 30 AP	Up to POW 32	+32
Between galaxies	Epochs	The solar system	A galaxy	Kill Damage 60% or 60 AP	Up to POW 64	+64

Spell Scale

Total WP cost determines the overall spell scale. The scale determines the spell's SAN cost and its typical casting time. If the Rule of Half or Double (see below on page xx) reduces the WP cost of a spell, that does not affect its scale, its SAN cost, or its casting time.

If a spell directly targets another, the target incurs the same SAN loss according to the scale of the spell. At the CO's discretion the target's SAN loss might be a level greater or lower if the spell is especially awful or relatively benign.

Total WP Cost	Scale	Caster's SAN Loss	Target's SAN Loss	Casting Time
1-4	Minor	0/1D4	0/1	1 turn
5-12	Significant	0/1D6	0/1D4	2 turns
13-28	Major	1/1D8	0/1D6	3 turns
29-60	Vast	1/1D10	1/1D8	4 turns
61+	Cataclysmic	1/1D100	1/1D10	5 turns

Ongoing Effects and Enchantments

Sometimes a spellcaster can deliberately maintain a spell beyond its built-in duration (its Time element). Usually means the operator must spend the spell's full WP cost again but need not make an operation roll since it's already active.

Some hypergeometric effects are seemingly permanent. A sigil that remains through the ages as a magic portal; a ward tattooed into skin that deflects bullets; a sign that harms extradimensional entities that get too close. In our relativistic universe, "permanent" is just a word. For a spell that apparently

lasts forever, boost its Time component—its duration—all the way up to “Epochs”.

For reasons unknown, a spell that imbues a hypergeometric effect permanently in a physical object requires a blood sacrifice and permanently expending at least 1 point of POW. The CO may decide if there are exceptions.

The Rule of Half or Double

At the CO's discretion, agents or NPCs taking their time, burning POW, choosing to open their mind to the things outside, carefully preparing, getting assistance, or having some other sort of advantage (“I’m casting a spell from the pages of the actual Necronomicon!”) while attempting to work a hypergeometric ritual may choose to either *double their operation roll* or *halve the WP cost of the spell* (round up).

Here are some examples of ways to invoke the Rule of Half or Double. Some of them may be available to anyone casting any spell: the caster may learn or instinctively feel that opening his or her mind to dangerous forces, burning POW, or getting help will improve the spell. But most are available only if they're part of a particular spell's defined ritual. Spells are complex and alien, and mastering them requires enormous, difficult work. Once learned a spell can't be changed or improvised on the fly. Not by human minds, anyway.

Customize these rules as needed. Hypergeometry makes little sense to the human mind. It is inconsistent in application and impossible to quantify reliably. Never let players think that they know all the rules just because they've read this book.

Opening one's mind to forces from outside: This causes the SAN roll for casting the spell to automatically fail. It is not an option for a spellcaster with zero SAN, whose mind is already quite open to otherworldly forces. A spellcaster can do this even if it's not built into the spell.

Burning POW: The caster may permanently burn a point of POW in the course of casting the spell. A spellcaster can do this even if it's not built into the spell.

Getting help: If it makes sense, other characters may help cast the spell. All helpers must know the spell in order to invoke this, and may divide the WP cost between them. Each caster decides how many WP to contribute. Only the primary caster rolls to activate the spell. If the spell requires an opposed POW test, add the WP contributed by each helper to the caster's POW for purposes of the test.

Taking extra time: Most spells take a few turns to cast. If yours takes hours instead, the Rule of Half or Double applies. The spell description will say if it takes so long to cast that it provides a bonus.

Unusual ingredients, techniques, or restrictions: Some spells use unusual, rare, or even dangerous ingredients that somehow make the process of spellcasting easier, or are easier because their impact is especially narrow. The spell must be learned in exactly the right way from the right source to gain the advantage of Half or Double. The spell's description will say which bonus applies, if any.

Ritual sacrifice: A spell may call for the spellcaster to ritually slaughter a living creature (typically something the size of a dog or goat, sometimes the size of a horse or cow), releasing its psychic power as fuel for the spell. If the operation roll succeeds, the Rule of Half or Double applies. If the sacrifice has human intelligence and is awake and aware of the procedure, both the Half and the Double apply. If the operation roll fails despite the sacrifice, the caster loses full WP. Conducting or witnessing a blood sacrifice incurs its own SAN cost from Violence on top of the cost of casting or witnessing the spell.

Mastering the technique: A caster who spends large amounts of time mastering a particular spell may become more effective at casting it. In effect this requires learning a spell twice: once to use it normally, then again to master it so fully as to invoke the Rule of Half or Double when casting it. Or at the CO's option, fully mastering a spell from a particularly reliable source might allow the caster to automatically succeed at its operation rolls, without having to roll. But there's a risk to studying a spell too deeply. If the second attempt to "learn" the spell fails, that confusion undoes all the earlier progress. The caster must relearn the spell from scratch to be able to use it at all.

Combining advantages: The CO decides when and whether these resources can be combined and multiplied. The “Double” side of the Rule of Half and Double can be applied only once to double the chance of success, but multiple advantages may reduce the WP farther and farther. Or a spell might borrow a little from one advantage and a little from another.

Here are some examples:

- A caster might take a little extra time—minutes instead of hours—and get help from assistants who follow directions but don’t know the spell. That combines pieces of two sources of advantage, which might be enough to invoke the Rule of Half or Double.
- A caster might both take hours to cast a spell and burn a point of POW to both cut the WP cost in half and double the operation roll.
- A caster might gain the Half or the Double by using an especially accurate and detailed grimoire as a source during the casting.
- Assistants who know the spell might burn their own points of POW to invoke the Rule of Half multiple times.

How and when the rule applies is always up to the CO.

Bad Magic

Spells learned from unreliable sources are even riskier and more difficult than standard spells, and latent psychic powers (gained from unhappy mutation, or through some atavistic memory of the alien forces that shaped humanity) almost always come with dire risks. The CO is free to add any of these penalties to a spell or power that finds its way into agent’s hands from dubious sources.

Greater scale: The spell may have the SAN cost or casting time (or both) of a spell of a higher scale. An otherwise Minor spell may have Significant WP and SAN costs, or a Major spell may have Catastrophic WP and SAN costs.

Higher cost: The spell might have double the usual WP cost. (That may bring it to a higher scale, with greater SAN cost and casting time.)

Side effects: The spell might trigger an Unnatural Side Effect on a failed operation roll, not just a fumble—or even on a successful roll.

Example Spells

APPAPORT

The operator can point at any nearby very small object or piece of an object, about the size of a coin, and displace it. The item vanishes and reappears nearby.

Range: Meters (2 WP)

Scope: A small object (1 WP)

Control: Grams (1 WP)

Total WP: 4

Scale: Minor

SAN Loss: 0/1D4

Casting Time: 1 turn

BRING THE STORM

A spell to change the weather, described in the Cthaat Aquadigen as it was purportedly taught to a sea-captain by the bloodthirsty denizens of a lost island. "Bring the Storm" requires hours of chanting guttural inhuman phrases; taking so much time serves to halve its WP cost. The weather changes gradually: clear and calm skies to cloudy and breezy, cloudy skies to rainy and windy, rainy and windy skies to an appalling, deadly storm; and vice versa. The spell can calm a storm instead of summoning one.

Range: Kilometers (4 WP)

Duration: Hours (4 WP)

Scope: A City (16 WP)

WP Cost: 12

Scale: Major

SAN Loss: 1/1D8

Casting Time: 3 hours

CANDLE COMMUNICATION

Must burn a specially prepared candle; requires the target to likewise burn a specially prepared candle at a prearranged time with the intent to establish communication. That restriction serves to halve the spell's WP cost.

Range: Kilometers (+4 WP)

Duration: Minutes (+2 WP)

Scope: A Person (+2 WP)

WP Cost: 4

Scale: Significant

SAN Loss: 0/1D6

Casting Time: 2 turns

COMMUNE WITH THE SILENT ONE

The operator must go into isolation for two days and eat and drink nothing while concentrating on a single word of power. At the end of that time the operator must use a specially-prepared copper dagger to ritually sacrifice an adult human being who is awake and aware of what's happening. The operator may then ask a single question about anything or anyone on Earth and attempt the operation roll at double normal chance. If it succeeds, the operator receive a still picture of the answer in his or her mind. It must be a concrete, objective question—a question of fact, not opinion or interpretation. Is Charles a good person? is not a viable question. Viable questions might include: Is Charles working for another agency?, What are the launch codes for the United States nuclear arsenal?, and In what year will the stars come right and Great Cthulhu awaken? If the answer is an image that costs SAN, that applies above and beyond the SAN cost for casting the spell. Since the spell requires human sacrifice, extensive casting time, and an unusual tool, its WP cost is reduced to one-quarter normal and the chance of success is doubled.

Range: Worldwide (8 WP)

Scope: The world (32 WP)

Total WP: 10

Scale: Vast

SAN Loss: 1/1D10 plus the Violence cost for human sacrifice

Casting time: 2 days

ELDER SIGN

Carves into a surface a fearsome symbol that causes agony to many extradimensional creatures. The sign's power is permanent; it's usually carved into some hard stone or metal which can withstand the ages. The power of the enchantment also makes the surface virtually indestructible, reducing the damage of any attack against it by 60 HP. A vulnerable entity that comes within about three meters of the Elder Sign suffers 1D12 HP damage per turn. Since the spell's effects are so benign (to humans), the caster's SAN loss is lower than usual for such a powerful effect. However, to create the Elder Sign the caster must open his or her mind to forces from Beyond, automatically failing the Sanity roll for the spell, and permanently burn 2 POW. The ritual carving takes hours.

Range: Touch (1 WP)

Time: Epochs (64 WP)

Scope: About 3 meters across (4 WP)

Damage: 1D12 with no defense, but only against some extradimensional entities (16 WP)

Resist: 60 AP, but only to protect the surface in which the sign is carved (32 AP)

WP Cost: 8

Scale: Cataclysmic

SAN Loss: 1/1D10

Casting Time: 5 hours

IMMORTAL KNIFE

Imbues a weapon with extradimensional energy so it can harm some Transcendent entities. The weapon does +1D12 damage against such entities, but only against such entities. That restriction halves the Damage cost. The spell takes half a day to cast, during which the caster must burn a point of permanent POW and the weapon must be used to ritually slay a sacrificial goat, sheep, or dog. Those restrictions and requirements double the spell's chance of success and reduce the WP cost to one-quarter normal. This spell affects a single weapon: a knife, a sword, or a bullet. If cast on a gun, it will only make the gun more deadly as a club.

Range: Touch (1 WP)

Time: Centuries (32 WP)

Scope: A large object (2 WP)

Damage: 1D12, but only against some extradimensional entities (4)

WP Cost: 10

Scale: Vast

SAN Loss: 1/1D10

Casting Time: 4 hours

PERFECT STILLNESS

After five turns of gesticulating wildly and chanting inhuman phrases, the operator must gesture with both arms in a particular direction, spend a permanent point of POW, and shout the secret name of Nyarlathotep. Any character hearing this name, and any inanimate object touched by the sound of it, suffers an attack of 60% Kill Damage, exploding into debris. Characters who have hearing protection remain miraculously untouched; even their ear protectors are undamaged. That limitation and the need for wild, blatant spellcasting halve the WP cost; burning a point of POW halves it again. Since the spell's cost is still staggering, the caster may need to cast it with partners to provide enough WP.

Range: Meters (2 WP)

Scope: 100 meters across (8 WP)

Damage: Kill Damage 60% (64 WP)

Total WP: 19

Scale: Cataclysmic

SAN Loss: 1/1D100 (plus the Violence cost for harming people)
Casting Time: 5 turns

PIERCE THE VEIL

Temporarily imbues a weapon with extradimensional energy harmful to some Transcendent entities. The weapon does its usual damage. This spell affects a single weapon: a knife, a sword, or a bullet. If cast on a gun, it will only make the gun more deadly as a club.

Range: Touch (1 WP)
Time: Minutes (2 WP)
Scope: A large object (2 WP)
WP Cost: 5
Scale: Significant
SAN Loss: 0/1D6
Casting Time: 2 turns

THE SIGN OF ALAR

The operator must chant a secret phrase, point at a target, spend Willpower, and overcome the target in an opposed POW test. If it succeeds a hole, the exact size and shape of the operator's finger, is removed from the target's flesh and bone, ignoring armor and defenses.

Range: Meters (2 WP)
Scope: A person (2 WP)
Damage: 1D12 (8 WP)
Total WP: 12
Scale: Significant
SAN Loss: 0/1D6 (plus SAN loss for Violence)
Casting Time: 2 turns

SYNCHRONOUS VIBRATION

The operator must study a target for a few minutes, spend Willpower, and make the operation roll. The operator slowly becomes in tune with the future actions of the subject for a short time, typically lasting as long as one engagement or battle. This is treated as reducing the damage of all incoming attacks from that target by 15 HP during this time, as the operator seems to know what the target is going to attempt next. Since this spell has significant limitations—it takes minutes to cast; the protection applies to only one possible assailant—its final WP cost is halved.

Time: Minutes (+2)
Scope: Self (+1)

Resist: 15 armor points (+16)

Total WP: 10

Scale: Major

SAN Loss: 1/1D8

Casting Time: 3 minutes