



Suffering Supernatural Terror at Cugel-Level



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Demon picture: Carrie Walters

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Introduction

This piece is an extension of the standard DERPG 'Wherewithal' rules. It incorporates core ideas from the material 'Resisting Fear of Demons' (*Demons of the Dying Earth*, p92), and can be seen as extending that information. The point of this piece is to add an extra element of amusing horror effects to your Cugel-Level games. Most specifically it is for gauging the reactions of Cugel-Level PCs that encounter unusually terrifying foes. These will usually be demons, or creatures with substantial demonic plasm, but could be other beings too - at the GM's discretion.

Wherewithal

"Maintaining your determination in the face of certain pain or supernatural terror." (DERPG, p20)

A normal Wherewithal check involves rolling on one's pool until a success is achieved. One can imagine that a GM will apply levies - or even a penalty - dependent on the severity of the terror. However, prior to this point, the actual outcomes that follow failure of Wherewithal rolls in terror situations have been unclear.



Resisting Terror

The situation is this: the PCs encounter without warning something that the GM feels would rightfully terrify them so much that they might be incapable of acting rationally. This might be just because it is significantly more frightening than a regular half-man, or because it is a creature from another dimension (as demons are) that radiates a supernatural aura of terror.

Standard Rules – On an encounter with a supernatural terror, the GM assigns a rating for its Aura of Terror. In the case of demons, this is the creature's own Wherewithal rating. In other encounters the GM decides whatever they feel is appropriate, dependent on the average Wherewithal ratings of the party. Then a standard contest is entered into.

'Action Enhancement' ruling – Rather than entering into a contest of pools, the GM calls for a single roll against the terror. We summarize the information from the 'Action Enhancement' article [also available on the Violet Cusps page] for your ease - (the range indicates the PC's Wherewithal rating, and the following number indicates the adjustment to be applied to the roll): 0-2 (-2); 3-6 (-1); 7-12 (0); 13-17 (+1); 18+ (+2). Note that the GM can apply a further penalty of 1 if she believes that the terror is a major one, or if there is a large number of average/lesser terrors. The astute will notice that the range in which most PCs will have their Wherewithal score requires no adjustment to the dice roll. This is no coincidence. (Option: A pool point is lost for each success using this ruling.)

Wherewithal Result

Illustrious Success: The PC is imbued with righteous zeal and overcomes their fear. Make attack rolls against these creatures at a boon of 1. (And the same with any other significant proactive actions against the terror, whatever it is.)

Prosaic Success: The PC masters their fear during this encounter.

Hair's-Breadth Success: The PC freezes in fear for one round, but then rallies and is able to repress their terror for the rest of the encounter. (However, after it is all over they need to sit down for a while and have a nice warm beverage.)

Exasperating Failure: The PC rolls on 'Terror Table 1'.

Quotidian Failure: The PC rolls on 'Terror Table 2'.

Dismal Failure: The PC rolls on 'Terror Table 3'.

Terror Tables	1	2	3
Abject Despondency	6	-	-
Eyeball Rolling Unconsciousness	5	6	-
Panic-Stricken Flight	4	5	6
Gibbering Idiocy	3	4	5
Delusional Rationality	2	3	4
Raving Paranoia	1	2	3
Suicidal Bravado	-	1	2
Demented Rage	-	-	1

Abject Despondency

The victim falls into massive despondency, and commences bemoaning their fate in the most grating and pathetic manner. They also cling to their companions, demanding to be saved/reassured. This continues for a number of rounds equal to the current difference between their Wherewithal pool and 20. During this time the person can flee and defend themselves at their normal ability, but performs any other actions against the source of their terror at a levy of 1 - and performs any actions outside the most immediate urgency at a penalty of 1. If somehow the supernatural terror is still present at the end of the stated duration, the person remains in this state for another number of minutes equal to the current difference between their Wherewithal pool and 20 (and then gradually recovers).



Eyeball Rolling Unconsciousness

The PC passes out instantly; thudding amusingly to the ground – or even more amusingly into whatever else the GM notes is at hand. If undisturbed, they will awaken naturally in a number of minutes $= [20 - \text{Hp}2]$ (where Hp2 is their current Health pool multiplied by 2). Other PCs with 'Physician' rating may try and assist this person (presuming they are not otherwise occupied). On an IS the person is woken in only 5 rounds, on a PS the time of unconsciousness is reduced by two thirds, on an HBS it is reduced by a third. If the supernatural terror is somehow still present when they awake, the person then suffers from Despondency (as above).

Panic-Stricken Flight

The victim will turn-tail and run as fast as they can in whatever direction visually appears to be least dangerous. They will run for as many rounds as the difference between their current Wherewithal pool and 20. In any situation where one unknown path leads to safety and another unknown path leads to danger the PC gets another Wherewithal roll - in the hopes of choosing the better option. (In other situations the GM rolls randomly.) In any event, the person remains irrational until the duration of the terror-response ends. A fleeing person cannot be reasoned with, and if physically restrained moves straight into Gibbering Idiocy - see below. Once the impulse to flee ends, or once a person is forced to stop (and coweringly hide as best they can) because it is impossible to go on, they slip into quiet hysteria for an equal number of rounds. During any of this time they can Defend themselves or flee (Athletics) at regular ability, but are otherwise unable to act rationally. If the supernatural terror is somehow still present when the suggested duration is over, or if it appears again within a few moments, the person suffers Eyeball Rolling Unconsciousness (as above).

Gibbering Idiocy

The person is temporarily bereft of wit – drooling, becoming vacant, dropping all held objects, trying to hide in a corner, that sort of thing. They cannot move under their own volition, but will follow running comrades if someone drags them along, although they might not move quite as fast as they could do if their Wherewithal hadn't suddenly deserted them. This lasts for half as many minutes as the difference between their Wherewithal pool and 20. After this, the person is in shock for the same amount of time again, and during this recovery time all abilities save defending against physical attack are at a levy of 1. If the supernatural terror is somehow still present when the suggested duration is over, or if it appears again within a few moments, the person suffers Eyeball Rolling Unconsciousness (as above).

Delusional Rationality

For twice as many rounds as the difference between their current Wherewithal pool and 20, the person super-rationalizes all threats/dangers/injuries as being ordinary beings/events/minor cuts and grazes. EG:

On seeing a massive demon approaching: *"Observe the immensity of that being. I'll wager even Prince Kandive's menagerie won't have a cage large enough to house it!"*

To an animated corpse: *"Are you quite well, my good fellow? You are looking a trifle pale?"*

When colleagues bellow about the dangers going on: *"Kindly desist from your screechings; I am composing a sonnet in honor of the Duchess of Azenomei"* (This uttered in an irrational wail.)

Once this ends, the victim is shaken for as many minutes again, and during this time all abilities save defending against physical attack are at a penalty of 1. If the supernatural terror is still present when the suggested duration is over, or if it appears again within a few moments, the person suffers Gibbering Idiocy (as above).

Raving Paranoia

Everyone and everything is bad. Friends and associates are bound to betray you. Enemies are even more fiendish. The duration is for three times as many rounds as the difference between the current Wherewithal



pool and 20. And after the end of this, the victim is 'shaken' for as many minutes again, and all abilities save defending against physical attack are at a penalty of 1. During the affliction the victim will refuse to accept any plans, and will see any suggestions as doomed at best, and likely deliberately misleading. "You're going to get us all killed!"; "You are working for our enemies; I've always known it!". Associates may make Persuasion attempts to try and calm them down, but since the afflicted character is not rational, these will only work to help convince them that individual suggestions have merit. (Not to cure the derangement completely.) If the supernatural terror is somehow still present when the suggested duration is over, or if it appears again within a few moments, the person suffers Delusional Rationality (as above).

Suicidal Bravado

The victim attacks the foe with violent fanaticism, using whatever weaponry is at hand. If the character (when sane) knows of a weapon at hand that is particularly useful in this situation then they get a Wherewithal roll (use 'Action Enhancement' ruling) to see if they think of this in their frenzy. The duration of this is for a number of rounds equal to 20 minus their current Wherewithal pool. Once the affliction is over, the victim is disorientated for an equal number of minutes (presuming they are still alive), and all abilities during that time - save defending against physical attack - are at a penalty of 1. An IS with ('Action Enhancement' ruling) with Persuasion ("Back away, back away!") might help if the foe is slow. If the supernatural terror is somehow still present when the suggested duration is over, or if it appears again within a few moments, the person suffers Delusional Rationality (as above).

Demented Rage

The victim attacks anything and anyone that is moving or posing a serious potential threat, or making loud noises - starting with whatever is most obvious, but turning quickly onto anyone who is attacking back. (If no-one attacks back, then the targets are random.) The duration of this is for as many rounds as the difference between the current Wherewithal pool and 20. Once the derangement is over, the victim is disorientated for an equal number of minutes (presuming they are still alive), and all abilities save defending against physical attack are at a penalty of 1 during this recovery period. An IS with Persuasion ('Action Enhancement' ruling) might help: ("Attack the demon - we are your friends!"). If the supernatural terror is somehow still present when the suggested duration is over, or if it appears again within a few moments, the person suffers Raving Paranoia (as above).

Becoming Used to Terrors

Since supernatural horrors are not necessarily very common in Cugel-Level campaigns, many GMs might be happy to leave these rules exactly as they stand. However, optionally at Cugel-Level one might wish to have the characters gradually become used to seeing supernatural horrors - something that indicates their increased resilience over time. Some will be happy enough with the regular Wherewithal rules - noting that the higher one's Wherewithal rises, the better the chance of resisting supernatural terror. If this is insufficient, here is one possible means to indicate this in the game. The GM must keep track of any demon (or other supernatural entity) a PC encounters whenever the PC successfully rolls an IS against it with their Wherewithal. As soon as this happens, the PC is thereafter declared immune - and the demon-types to which they are immune should be noted on their character sheet. An extension of this ruling is for the GM to call for a number of Wherewithal IS's to be required. That is to say that a regular minor demon would require only one IS to be rolled when resisting its aura of terror, and this then results in the PC becoming immune in future encounters. However, a demon of middling capacity might require two IS's to be rolled against it (one in each of two separate encounters) - and a major demon might require three - before immunity to terror is granted.