

BLACK BOOKS

TOMES OF THE OUTER DARK



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Introduction

Black Books is a horror role-playing game where the player characters (also called PCs and investigators) are ordinary people (historians, detectives, scholars, artists etc.) drawn into a dark and horrific version of our world. As the investigators learn more of the true horrors of the world and the irrelevance of humanity, their sanity inevitably withers away. The rules are biased towards playing in the 1920's although there is no reason these rules can't be adapted to other time periods.

This is a game about investigation more than about physical action; the investigators will probably start with a seemingly minor mystery, to discovering mind-numbingly awful, global conspiracies to destroy the world. It is assumed that most investigators will not survive (at least with their sanity intact) and that the only safe way to deal with the vast majority of indescribable horrors they come up against is to run away.

The game is about the veil that separates frail humanity from the terror that lurks beyond space and time. The characters sometimes see beyond this veil as they investigate forgotten ruins, haunted woods, and nameless menaces – even sometimes venturing (or being dragged) to other moons or into the voids of space. Investigations will lead characters to days of research in musty old libraries, visits to long lost ritual sites and interactions with all sorts of dubious individuals along the way.

A well-run Black Books campaign should engender a sense of foreboding and inevitable doom in its players. The style and setting of the game, in a relatively modern time period, creates an emphasis on real-life settings, character research, and thinking one's way around danger.

You are free to publish your own adventures, house-rules, and any other sort of materials designed for this game. Guidelines and requirements are at the end of the book.

If you enjoy this game, why not download the other three games in this line: *Ancient Mysteries & Lost Treasures*, *Blood & Bullets and Sabres & Witchery*. Even better, you can pick up all three rpgs in print from LULU.COM, where you'll also find many other great games from Beyond Belief Games.

– Simon Washbourne

CHAPTER 1: GETTING STARTED

Black Books, like most role playing games requires one person to run the game, called the Keeper and (preferably) two or more players. For players, the first step in playing the game is to create a player character. This is a simple matter of rolling some dice to determine your character's strength and other basic attributes, picking an investigator class, and buying in-game equipment. If you're the Keeper, however, you've got a bit more preparation to do—that's covered later in these rules.

Rule Number One

The most important rule in Black Books is that the Keeper always has the right to modify the rules. In fact, it's encouraged! This is your game, after all. There are gaps in the rules—holes left open on purpose—because much of the fun of “old school” gaming is being able to make up rules as needed.

Dice

Black Books uses several different types of dice, and they are abbreviated according to the number of sides they have. For example, a four-sided die is noted as “d4.” If this text requires a player to roll “3d4” that means to roll three (3) four-sided dice and add the results together. Other die types (six-sided, eight-sided, ten-sided, twelve-sided, and twenty-sided) follow in the same manner. However, there is no die with 100 sides. When asked to roll d100, instead roll two (2) ten-sided dice, treating the first roll as the “tens” and the second as the “ones.” So, if one were to roll a “7” and then a “3”, the result would be “73.” Please note that rolling two zeroes is treated as “100.”

Remember

Throughout this text are suggestions, explanations, and ideas presented in textbox format; feel free to use or discard them at leisure. New rules for governing certain situations can range from simple guidelines like “grab some dice, roll them, and tell me the number” to a complex series of tables for the smallest of details.

The core system

Whenever you attempt an action that has some chance of failure, you roll a 20-sided die (D20). To determine if your investigator succeeds at a task (such as attacking a monster or using class abilities), you do this:

- Roll a D20.
- Add any relevant modifiers.
- Compare the result to a target number.
- If the result equals or exceeds the target number, your character succeeds. If the result is lower than the target number, you fail.
- The target number for saves and abilities is normally 10 to 15. However, the GM might modify this for harder or easier tasks. See the *Table 1: Target Numbers (TN)* below. Opposed rolls are modified by the level (or *Hit Dice (HD)*) of the opponent: the Keeper rolls a D20 and adds the monster or npc's HD to the total.
- The target number when shooting or attacking is the *Defence Rating (DR)* of the opponent.
- A natural 1 always fails.
- A natural 20 always succeeds.

Table 1: Target Numbers

<i>Target Numbers</i>	<i>Example</i>
Very easy (0)	Notice something large in plain sight, leap over 1-foot wall
Easy (5)	Climb a knotted rope, leap over a 2-foot wall
Average (10)	Hear an approaching cultist, shoot to hit an average cultist
Tough (15)	Read a Mythos Tome, pick an average lock without the key
Challenging (20)	Swim in rapids or stormy seas, leap across a 25-foot chasm
Formidable (25)	Leap across a 30-foot chasm
Grueling (30)	Track a deep one across marshy ground after 24 hours of rainfall



Character Sheets

A character sheet is a piece of paper designed to organize and contain any and all necessary PC information, for the benefit of both the Keeper and player. For Black Books, the character sheet could be something as simple as a 3x5" index card – maybe with class abilities, equipment and other notes written on the back:

NAME	<i>Dr Honor Kildaire</i>	BACKGROUND	<i>Academia</i>
STR	6 (-2)	CLASS	<i>Scholar</i>
INT	15 (+2)	LEVEL	<i>1</i>
WIS	14 (+2)	# COMPLETED SCENARIOS	<i>0</i>
CON	11	HP	<i>4</i>
DEX	11	DR	<i>10</i>
CHA	12 (+1)	STARTING SAN	<i>60</i>
		CURRENT SAN	<i>60</i>
CR	<i>+1</i>	SAVES:	Fort <i>+1</i> Ref <i>+1</i> Will <i>+4</i>
ML	<i>0</i>		

Attribute scores

The basic abilities are numbers which represent the Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Constitution, Dexterity and Charisma of a character.

Rolling Attributes

In the world of Black Books, the PCs are ordinary individuals. Accordingly, characters are created by rolling 3D6 a total of six times and writing the scores down in the order they are rolled, starting with strength and finishing with charisma. It doesn't matter so much in a game of Black Books if your attributes aren't all good; your character isn't expected to last that long however high they are. In fact, if you roll poor attributes you might last longer because you are more likely to be ultra careful with your character - having said that if the results are terrible, the Keeper can give the go-ahead to roll up a new character.

Prime Attribute

This is the attribute that is most useful to characters of a particular class. In all cases, the character must have a minimum of 10 in the prime attribute of that class.

Attribute Modifier

Each attribute has the potential to modify what you can do. Refer to the following table to see the bonuses (or penalties) that apply from high or low

attributes. Humans don't go above 19, but some monsters are likely to have much higher attributes.

Table 2: Attribute Modifiers

<i>Attribute Roll</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Bonus/Penalty</i>
0-1	Deficient	-5
2-3	Abysmal	-4
4-5	Very Poor	-3
6-7	Poor	-2
8-9	Below Average	-1
10-11	Average	–
12-13	Above Average	+1
14-15	Good	+2
16-17	Very Good	+3
18-19	Exceptional	+4
20-21	Unnatural	+5
22+	Other-worldly	...and so on

Strength (STR)

A high strength lets a character carry more weight and will give him bonuses to attacks and damage when attacking with a melee weapon or his fists. STR is the prime attribute for an *Enforcer*.

Add your STR modifier when:

- Rolling to hit in melee combat
- Rolling weapon damage
- Fighting using fists, grappling, throwing and wrestling
- Checking if your character is overburdened
- Breaking down doors, pulling lifting or dragging heavy objects

Intelligence (INT)

Intelligence represents IQ, reasoning, and the ability to solve puzzles or understand difficult concepts. Every character in Black Books is assumed to be able to read and write in his native language (unless the player decides otherwise). A high INT score gives a character an additional language (spoken and written) for each point of bonus they have (so a PC with INT 18 would have 5 starting languages). INT is the prime attribute for a *Scholar*.

Add your INT modifier when:

- Rolling to recall a fact or information your character might know
- Determining the number of languages your character knows

Wisdom (WIS)

Wisdom determines a character's insight, perception, good judgment and willpower. WIS is the prime attribute for a *Spiritualist*.

Add your WIS modifier when:

- Making *will* (& SAN) saves, for negating the effect of fear, sanity loss and resisting the mind-invasive attacks of horrors and spells
- Using certain class-based abilities, such as when seeing if you notice things that are hidden or for following tracks in the wilderness

Constitution (CON)

Constitution refers to the health and endurance of a character. A high CON score gives characters additional hit points per hit die. CON is the prime attribute for a *Gadabout*.

Add your CON modifier when:

- Calculating your character's Hit Points
- Rolling to avoid death and the effects of poisons, illnesses, diseases and other effects that have a negative effect on your character's physical health (called *fortitude* saves)

Dexterity (DEX)

Dexterity is a combination of coordination and quickness. A high DEX score gives a character a bonus on their "to-hit" roll when attacking with a firearms or other ranged weapons. DEX is the prime attribute for a *Sneak*.

Add your DEX modifier when:

- Rolling to hit with firearms and other ranged weapons in combat
- Calculating your character's *Defence Rating*.
- Rolling to avoid traps, falling into pits and avoiding the effects of certain spells (called *reflex* saves)
- Using certain class-based abilities, such as when sneaking, climbing and lock picking

Charisma (CHA)

A highly charismatic character has a better chance to talk his way out of trouble and has a higher starting sanity than a character with a lower CHA. CHA is the prime attribute for a *Charmer* and for a *Dilettante*.

Add your CHA modifier when:

- Rolling to influence others

Secondary attributes

These are other characteristics that help give you an idea of your character's strengths and weaknesses. Most are derived from some other aspect of your character.

Hit Points (HP)

Hit points (HP) represent the amount of "damage" a character can take before dying and are determined by the amount of Hit Dice (HD) a character has at their particular class level. It doesn't solely represent the character's ability to absorb injury – it also represents the experience of the character to turn what might have been a mortal wound into a flesh wound, by correct positioning, general awareness, use of cover, distractions etc.

Each time a PC advances in level, you get to roll another HD and add the result to the character's previous total until your character reaches 4th level. After that you add either your CON modifier or 1 HP at each new level, whichever is higher.

Some Keepers will allow characters to have the maximum HP at 1st level to give their characters a little more survivability although this is less necessary in an investigative rpg like Black Books, where it is usually best to avoid getting into a fight.

Class Ability

Each *Investigator Class* in Black Books has a number of skills for which they receive a bonus to their attribute rolls. This bonus increases as the character increases in level. Characters of other classes can usually attempt these skills too – they just don't receive the level bonus. Some class abilities may not be attempted by characters of other classes; this is at the Keeper's discretion.

Credit Rating (CR)

In Black Books, actual money isn't tracked – instead character money is represented by their Credit Rating (CR). It is used as a measure of wealth, which in many situations leads to a measure of influence. This is the investigator's ability to panhandle or get a loan from a bank or business, and it is also the chance for the investigator to pass a bad check or to bluff their way past a demand for credentials - money talks. Your background determines your modifier to your D20 rolls to obtain credit. Your CHA can sometimes be used in combination with your CR to influence people or, if you are writing a letter to obtain credit, you might use your INT modifier instead. Generally though, you use your CR as it is.

Defence Rating (DR)

Armour isn't an important consideration in Black Books because it is rarely worn in the 1920's. Accordingly, characters have a Defence Rating (DR) (instead of an *armour class* as seen in other old school games) which is set at 10, modified by a character's DEX modifier. Your choice of class also provides a bonus to your DR.

Sanity Points (SAN)

This statistic represents the PC's descent from a stable and healthy mental state into confusion and mental instability. As investigators encounter abnormal creatures, witness horrific events and master forbidden knowledge, their sanity score, and their ability to function as a normal member of the human race, deteriorates.

A PC's starting sanity (SAN) is $CHA \times 5$. This score represents a starting PC's current SAN, as well as the upper limit of SAN that can be restored by medical treatment. After creation, a character's current SAN often fluctuates considerably and might never again match starting sanity. A change in a character's CHA score changes his or her starting SAN in terms of what treatment can restore. Current SAN, however, does not change if CHA rises or falls.

Each time an investigator advances in level he or she recovers 1 SAN and raises starting SAN by 1 point.

Saving Throws (saves)

From time to time, a hazard requires you to make a saving throw (save). Saving throws are similar to abilities, only they tend to be reactive rather than active. They are rolled as a result of something happening to the character, rather than the character attempting to do something. Making a saving throw generally does not take the character's turn to perform. The type of throw depends on the threat:

Fort Save: This would be against death, poisons, disease, paralysis and similar effects that are hazards to physical health and well-being.

Ref Save: This would be against slips and falls, keeping hold of or catching small items, dodging landslides and rock-falls and other similar situations, where quickness and agility are helpful.

Will Save: This type of save is where mental strength is crucial; it is particularly important for resisting the effects of SAN loss.

Your character has one *good save*; based on investigator class and the other two are *normal saves*. A save is made on a single D20, adding the attribute modifier and the level-based bonus, depending on whether it is the character's good save

or normal save. E.g. A 3rd level Enforcer with CON 14 is poisoned (TN 15). His save against the poison is made rolling a D20 and adding +2 for his CON and +3 for his good save, for a total of +5.

Mythos Lore

No character begins the game with any knowledge of the Cthulhu Mythos. However, as they encounter mythos entities and read books of lore, they will begin to gain an understanding of the subject. Once they have at least a +1 in Mythos Lore, they can start to make rolls to figure things out when they encounter mythos creatures, tomes, artifacts and places. Mythos Lore never becomes a class ability – it is only ever increased by encounters with the mythos. When rolling a D20 plus Mythos Lore skill, do not add your character's INT modifier to the roll. The Mythos is so alien to human understanding that the character's INT modifier is excluded from the roll. When puzzling out Mythos entities, artifacts, and secrets, only roll a D20 plus one's points in Mythos Lore.



Levels

As characters resolve problems and learn more about the old ones, they improve at what they do. This is represented by level advancement. At each level, the character is more resilient and learns how to avoid the worst in combat situations, to make what would be deadly hits into glancing blows or grazes (receives more HP). He or she is also more accurate (increased To Hit Bonus) and more alert to dangers that might otherwise kill him or her (better Saving Throw or Class Abilities).

Table 3: Level Advancement

<i>Level</i>	<i>HD</i>	<i>Good Save/Main Class Abilities</i>	<i>Normal Save/Secondary Class Abilities</i>	<i>Tertiary Class Abilities</i>	<i># of Completed Investigations</i>	<i>Total # of Completed Investigations</i>
1	1	+2	+1	+0	0	0
2	2	+3	+2	+1	+1	1
3	3	+3	+2	+1	+2	3
4	4	+4	+3	+1	+3	6
5	+1	+5	+3	+2	+4	10
6	+1	+5	+4	+2	+5	15
7	+1	+6	+4	+3	+6	21
8	+1	+7	+5	+3	+7	28
9	+1	+7	+5	+3	+8	36
10	+1	+8	+6	+4	+9	45

HD: Characters gain a hit dice each level to 4th. From 5th level, they gain their CON modifier or 1 hit point per level thereafter, whichever is the higher.

Good Save: This is determined by investigator class

Normal Save: This is for the other saving throws that aren't the character's primary save

Main Class Abilities: Each class has a number of class abilities for which they receive this bonus to their rolls for success.

Secondary Class Abilities: Some classes' combat skills aren't as good as those of Enforcers. They might have this bonus for their rolls to hit in combat or to their DR.

Tertiary Class Abilities: Some classes' combat skills are poor; they might have this bonus for their rolls to hit in combat or to their DR.

of Completed Investigations: Characters gain experience, represented by advancing levels by completing investigations. To advance to the next level, characters must complete a number of adventures equal to their current level.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUNDS

The first thing the player must do is decide their character's background. This gives an indication of the character's upbringing or the main influences on his or her life to early adulthood.

There are 10 backgrounds detailed here for a player to choose from. Once selected, there are two or three immediate benefits from their background. This is usually a bonus or penalty to CR, a bonus to an attribute and one *investigator class ability*. Then a player has a choice of one additional ability. If a player can't decide, he or she can roll a D10 to determine the character background.

Some benefits become class abilities for the character and these will therefore increase as the character advances in his or her class. Where the character's class also provides the same or similar ability, the background ability adds +2 to the class ability where it is applicable to the situation or task in hand.

Academia

You spent your early years in the hallowed halls of the university; as a student and possibly later as a lecturer or teacher. You attained high grades in your studies and feel at home in museums, libraries and places of learning.

- Credit Rating +1
- INT or WIS +1
- Library Use: Library Use enables an investigator to find a given book, newspaper, or reference in a library or collection of documents, assuming that the item is there. Each use of this ability marks four hours of continuous search. An investigator rarely gets more than two tries per day.

Choose one of:

- Mentor (CHA): Your college professor or some other well-placed and knowledgeable individual has a particular interest in you and your activities. He or she will always try to make him or herself available if you need help. The person will be able to answer questions that are within his or her realms of knowledge, open doors to places of



academia, such as libraries, museums and archeological sites and might even be able to help with finances.

- **Museum Pass (WIS):** You are a member of a respected museum, university, or other organization that preserves relics of ages past. You can gain access to the facilities where such antiquities are stored and can participate in their study. You may be allowed to accompany expeditions seeking to explore ruins or retrieve items of historical interest, if your area of expertise is relevant to the task at hand.
- **Personal Library (INT):** You own a small collection of rare and informative books on a range of subjects. You might even own a book shop. You can recognize and date rare books. Your personal collection gives an additional +2 to any knowledge rolls you make whilst you have access to it. Roll a D20. If you get a 20 there is also a rare mythos book in your collection.

Big Business

You come from the world of big business and big deals and you're on your way up the corporate ladder. Taking this background means your character comes from a family of professional people – maybe company bosses, bureaucrats, lawyers, accountants or bankers.

- **Credit Rating: +4**
- **INT or CHA +1**
- **Paperwork (INT):** You are used to dealing with legal papers, accounts ledgers and other official documents and you can find discrepancies or connections if given time for study. Even a quick scan might reveal some useful pieces of information. You might even be able to draw up some documents to requisition an item or to gain access to an establishment that would fool someone on a cursory examination.

Choose one of:

- **Criminal Contact (CHA):** You have defended someone in court or do the accounts for a disreputable individual and can generally rely on them for help with anything slightly shady when needed.
- **Good Business (WIS or CHA):** Your business or investments are doing very well and make you an income far above the norm and it just keeps getting better. Credit Rating therefore becomes a main class ability.
- **Legalese (CHA):** you are an expert in lawyer-speak and can quote chapter and verse of the law without pause. This can be used as a distraction or to get you and your friends out of jail or to talk court officials or the police into giving you access to legal papers, arrest records or to prisoners.

Big City

You grew up in the big city, learning to navigate the complex geography and social interactions therein. Your character was born into a “blue-collar” family of shopkeepers, labourers, craftsmen, artisans or other similar workers.

- Credit Rating: +0
- DEX or INT +1
- Craft (DEX or WIS): Your character has a professional trade, craft or skill. Examples would be carpentry, blacksmithing, jeweler, cooking, mechanical repair, electrical repair, book-binding, bartender, glass-blower etc.

Choose one of:

- Antiquarian (INT): You have an antique shop or auction house with a range of antiques for sale. You can recognize and date antique items and value them accurately. You have come across mythos items in the past and possibly have one in your shop (Roll 20 on D20).
- Good Business (WIS or CHA): For some reason your business is doing very well and makes you an income far above expectations for your background and it just keeps getting better. Credit Rating therefore becomes a secondary class ability.
- Practical Mind (WIS): Your character takes a pragmatic view of the world and tries to fit any supernatural events and sightings into what he or she knows as reality. This gives a +2 to any Will saves made to prevent SAN loss when observing and experiencing supernatural events and cosmic horrors.

Entertainment

You were born to a theatrical family or early on in your life you took to the stage. You might be a singer, musician, actor or comedian. Perhaps you are already quite famous. Or maybe your rise to stardom is just beginning.

- Credit Rating: -2
- DEX or CHA +1
- Perform (CHA or DEX): Choose two forms of entertainment as class abilities e.g. singing, acting, playing an instrument, comedy, mime, magic tricks, poetry or whatever. If you decide to be an all-round entertainer, you simply add +2 to any performance roll you make.

Choose one of:

- Disguise (CHA): You are an expert actor and make-up artist and you are skilled at mimicking people; both specific individuals and general types of people.
- Fame (CHA): You are a well-known personality and people generally like you and react well to you. Even your critics might have a grudging respect. Your fame can be used to open doors, get the best

seat at the table or even give you a free night in a hotel. You might be able to get tight-lipped individuals to open up where others fail. Also add +4 to your *Credit Rating*.

- Prestidigitation (DEX): You are a master of magic tricks and legerdemain. This can be combined with the *Sneak class ability* of *sleight*, if relevant.

High Society

You've grown up among the rich and powerful, so you know how to move in social circles and you know influential people. You could be a member of the aristocracy, a dilettante or a wealthy entrepreneur.

- Credit Rating: +6
- CHA +1
- Additional Income: You receive a regular income from investments or a family fortune. Credit Rating becomes a main class ability.

Choose one of:

- Manservant/Maid: You have a loyal and well-paid family retainer who looks after your needs and is at your beck and call. He or she makes sure you are dressed properly for every occasion, greets visitors to your door, acts as a chauffeur and personal bodyguard. He or she is not likely to investigate cases with you, but will be back in the hotel room or waiting round the corner in the car or ready to give advice when you're at a dinner party. It's up to you and the Keeper to define the abilities and limitations of your manservant/maid.
- Privileged Position (CHA): Thanks to your wealthy background, people are inclined to think the best of you. You are welcome in high society and people assume you have the right to be wherever you are. The common folk make every effort to accommodate you and avoid your displeasure, and other people of high status treat you as a member of the same social sphere. You can secure an audience with a local dignitary if you need to.
- Property: You own several (D3+1) houses both in and out of the country. These are staffed (if desired). You can work with the Keeper to either predetermine where they are located or to determine during the game where they are depending on where the investigations take you.

Law Enforcement

You served in the police force, the Pinkerton detective agency, the Bureau of Investigation or some other agency tasked with criminal investigation.

- Credit Rating: +0
- INT or WIS +1

- Search (WIS): You are skilled at examining crime scenes and other locations generally finding the most important of what there is to be found with an initial search. A more thorough search could still reveal more information.

Choose one of:

- Police Rank (CHA): You have a rank from your career in the police or whatever agency you worked for. Officers loyal to your former organization still recognize your authority and influence, and they defer to you if they are of a lower rank. You can invoke your rank to exert influence over other officers and requisition simple equipment or vehicles for temporary use. You can also usually gain access to friendly police station or agency office where your rank is recognized.
- Practical Mind (WIS): Your character takes a pragmatic view of the world and tries to fit any supernatural events and sightings into what he or she knows as reality. This gives a +2 to any saves made when observing and experiencing supernatural events and cosmic horrors.
- Hunch: When lost for what to do next during an investigation, your character gets a feeling or guess based on intuition rather than fact. Once per two levels (round in character's favour) per investigation the player can ask the Keeper for a clue or a direction that will be correct.

Military

You served in the army, the marines or navy in the Great War; therefore you've seen action and are trained to use military equipment and weapons.

- Credit Rating: +0
- STR, DEX or CON +1
- Military Weapon Training: You can use military weapons, whatever your chosen investigator class.

Choose one of:

- Arsenal (INT): You have your own arsenal of weapons, secreted away from your days in the military. Just about any weapon in the weapon section is available to you as long as you can retrieve it from where it is stored.
- Military History (INT): You have an extensive knowledge of military affairs and the details of battles, equipment and uniforms in use.
- Military Rank (CHA): You have a military rank from your career in the military. Soldiers loyal to your former military organization still recognize your authority and influence, and they defer to you if they are of a lower rank. You can invoke your rank to exert influence over other soldiers and requisition simple equipment or horses for temporary use. You can also usually gain access to friendly military bases where your rank is recognized.

- Pilot (DEX): You have trained to fly a biplane, possibly flying one during the war. This becomes a class ability for you.

Organized Crime

Whether through family ties or your own initiative, you've managed to find a place among the criminal gangs. This means you were primarily involved in unlawful activities and have possibly spent some time in prison.

- Credit Rating -4
- STR, DEX or INT +1
- Choose any *Sneak Class Ability*

Choose one of:

- Avenues & Alleyways (INT): You know the secret patterns and flow to cities and can find passages through the urban sprawl that others would miss. You know where the seediest parts of town are and can obtain illicit items, find dodgy people or places and acquire information not available to decent people. When you are not in combat, you (and companions you lead) can travel between any two locations in the city twice as fast as your speed would normally allow.
- Criminal Contact (CHA): You have a reliable and trustworthy contact who acts as your liaison to a network of other criminals. You know how to get messages to and from your contact, even over great distances and can obtain information from him if it is out there to be found.
- False Identity (CHA or INT): You have created a second identity that includes documentation, established acquaintances, and disguises that allow you to assume that persona. Additionally, you can forge documents including official papers and personal letters, as long as you have seen an example of the kind. Your Credit Rating is 0.

Religious

Your character had a devout upbringing; perhaps because they were born into, or at an early age entered into, a religious community. Whether or not you still have your faith, the religious foundation will stay with you.

- Credit Rating: +0
- WIS or CHA +1
- Occult Knowledge (INT):

Choose one from:

- Discovery (WIS): You were a hermit for some time and cut yourself off from normal society. This seclusion gave you access to a unique discovery. It might be a great truth about the cosmos, the deities, the powerful beings of the outer darkness, or the forces of nature. It could be a site that no one else has ever seen. You might have uncovered a

fact that has been long-forgotten or unearthed some relic of the past that could rewrite history. Work with your DM to determine the details of your discovery and its impact on the campaign.

- **Shelter (CHA):** As one of the faith, you command the respect of those who share your beliefs and you can perform the religious ceremonies of your faith. You and can expect to receive free care at a temple, shrine, or other established presence of your faith. You might also have ties to a specific temple or monastery dedicated to your chosen faith and you have a free residence there and can sometime call upon the community for assistance if not too hazardous to them.
- **Symbol of Faith:** You have a religious or insightful book, a relic or artifact of faith or some other item that is important to you. As long as this item is available to you, you can put your trust in it for inspiration and re-roll any failed D20 roll once per scenario per level.

Small Town

Your character grew up in a small rural town. Your education was pretty basic and the styles of the big city are foreign to you. But you're tough and you know your way around in the great outdoors.

- **Credit Rating:** -6
- **STR, CON or WIS** +1
- **Animal Handling (WIS):** You are used to dealing with animals and livestock from your outdoor upbringing. You can ride horses, train dogs and know how to deal with wild animals to pacify them or scare them away.

Choose one of:

- **Roughneck (STR):** You are a bit of a rowdy and can handle yourself in unarmed combat. You gain +2 to hit in brawls and your fists cause D4 damage instead of the usual D3. You also have an intimidating manner and can sometimes get people to talk when your "softer" friends fail.
- **Survival (CON or WIS):** In the wilderness, the character can obtain enough food and sufficient safe shelter by hunting and foraging to keep alive himself plus a number of additional people equal to his or her level. If there are more people in the group than this, a roll is required. You can also follow a trail across almost any ground, can recognize the prints and number of critters that made the tracks and never lose your sense of direction in the outdoors (cities are another matter).
- **Tough Cookie (CON):** Your life in the outdoors has toughened you up and you are rarely sick. Even when you are, you are never in your sickbed for too long. You receive +2 to any Fort saves made and in addition, you recover HP at twice the rate of others.

CHAPTER 3: CHARACTER CLASSES

There are seven character classes in Black Books; the *Charmer*, *Dilettante*, *Enforcer*, *Gadabout*, *Scholar*, *Sneak* and *Spiritualist*. Backgrounds suggest your character's upbringing or early life – classes represent broadly your character's approach to investigations. You can choose a class that is totally removed from your background if you wish; this creates good back story material for your character. The Keeper is free to invent other character classes or may allow optional classes from other games.

Charmer (CHA)

The Charmer is an enterprising person who uses his or her persuasiveness and personality to gather information and get things done. The character could be an expert gambler, a street hustler, spy, politician, dilettante, gentleman, an expert salesman or simply a scoundrel with the gift of the gab.

Charmer class features

Hit Dice:	D6
Weapons:	Charmers can use any non-military weapons
Primary Save:	Will (+2 at first level)
Normal saves:	Ref, Fort (+1 at 1 st level)
To Hit Rolls:	Secondary Class Ability (+1 at 1 st level)
Defence Rating:	Secondary Class Ability (+1 at 1 st level)

Charmer main class abilities

- **Affability (CHA):** The Charmer has the gift of the gab – they are very persuasive and can use their charm and influence to get what they want, sometimes by deceit, bluff or seduction. They can use this skill to get out of tricky situations or to trick the gullible into doing something they wouldn't normally do.
- **Contacts (CHA):** The Charmer has met a range of people from all walks of life in his or her travels. In any major city there is a chance that the Charmer knows someone who can be called upon to help when needed.



- **Information Gathering (CHA):** Your character is sociable and able to make friends in bars and other establishments to get a general idea of a locality's major news items, assuming there are no obvious reasons why the information would be withheld. The higher your roll; the better the information gained.
- **Read Person (INT):** This allows the Charmer to weigh up someone they have been talking to for a few minutes to determine their class (if they have one) or profession, whether they are lying or hiding something.

Dilettante (Cha)

The Dilettante is a moneyed individual who does little or no work. He or she is well educated, though not necessarily accomplished in anything. Having money frees the dilettante to be lazy, eccentric and/or outspoken. He or she has had plenty of time to take up a range of pursuits and interests; usually in a very casual way. The Dilettante appears to be knowledgeable but this knowledge is only superficial and the Dilettante is usually found out by anyone who has real knowledge of a subject.



Dilettante Class Features

Hit Dice:	D6
Weapons:	Dilettantes can use any melee weapons and non-military firearms
Primary Save:	Choose one
Normal Saves:	The two that weren't chosen as primary
To Hit Rolls:	Secondary class ability (+1 at 1 st level)
Defence Rating:	Secondary class ability (+1 at 1 st level)

Dilettante main class abilities:

- **Dabbler (INT, WIS or CHA):** Choose any one class ability of any class that is based on INT, WIS or CHA and that becomes one of your main class abilities.
- **Saddles, Wings & Wheels (DEX):** The Dilettante often likes to live dangerously and be the first to try exciting new things. They ride horses, drive fast cars (often entering races) and dabble in flying.

- Do you know who my father is? (CHA): Coming from a privileged background, the Dilettante can simply mention his or her family name and this is enough to get off criminal charges, open doors otherwise closed to most people and obtain expensive items that his or her Credit Rating wouldn't otherwise be obtainable. This ability is useable once per adventure. This goes up every three levels, so at 3rd, 6th and 9th.

Enforcer (STR)

Black Books isn't a game where you fight your way through the scenario. However, there is always room for a character who can handle a bunch of fanatical cultists braying for blood. An Enforcer is a tough guy, whose primary way of dealing with dangerous situations is through physical action, particularly combat. The character is trained to use weapons and is likely to be ex-military or ex-law enforcement, though this doesn't have to be the case and mobsters or bodyguards are also enforcers.



Enforcer class features

Hit Dice:	D10
Weapons:	Enforcers can use any weapons
Primary Save:	Fort (+2 at 1 st level)
Normal saves:	Ref, Will (+1 at 1 st level)
To Hit Rolls:	Main Class Ability (+2 at 1 st level)
Defence Rating:	Main Class Ability (+2 at 1 st level)

Enforcer main class abilities

- Assess Opponent (INT): This allows the Enforcer to weigh up the opposition at the start of a gunfight and make a roll to see if they can determine the strengths and weaknesses of the opposition (i.e. their level and/or HD).
- Hardboiled (CON): The Enforcer is a tough guy and has a highly cynical attitude due to witnessing violence and the results of crime on a daily basis. This allows the Enforcer to use his Fort save to save against SAN loss from violent scenes and cosmic horrors rather than Will.
- Combat Training: You are trained to be ready for action at any moment. This makes initiative rolls into a class ability for Enforcers.

- **Weapon Specialist:** This gives a +1 bonus to hit and damage using one type of firearm, chosen at outset (see the equipment section).

Gadabout (Con)

As opposed to someone who is poverty-stricken, the Gadabout's wandering life is a chosen lifestyle. The gadabout takes jobs, sometimes for months, but generally hits the road again as soon as he or she is bored or when they just start to feel "too settled" and needs to move on. The life of the road might seem typically American, but the same sort of life is chosen wherever travel itself is not overtly dangerous.

Gadabout Class Features

Hit Dice:	D8
Weapons:	Gadabouts can use any melee weapons as well as pistols and shotguns.
Primary Saves:	Choose Ref or Fort
Normal Save:	Will and Ref or Fort
To Hit Rolls:	Secondary class ability (+1 at 1 st level)
Defence Rating:	Main class ability (+2 at 1 st level)



Gadabout main class abilities:

- **Lucky Break (N/A):** The Gadabout gets by through luck as often as by his or her wits. This ability allows the Gadabout to re-roll any failed check again once per adventure. This goes up every three levels, so at 3rd, 6th and 9th.
- **Folk Tales (WIS):** The Gadabout often travel the roads and rails, picking up stories, gossip and folk lore from other travellers along the way. With a successful check, the Gadabout can recall some fact or bit of a story that might be relevant to whatever situation the PCs are in at the time.
- **Get By (DEX):** The Gadabout picks up some skills along the way to help them survive in their life on the road. You can choose one Sneak ability as one of your own Main Class Abilities.
- **Hobo Signs (INT):** The Gadabout can read (and create) signs left by hoboes and other drifters. These signs are often scratched or drawn onto walls or left as twigs and stones in a particular pattern on the

ground. They are often mundane messages, like “food can be had here”, or “beware the dogs” and so forth. However, there are often more supernatural warnings and messages and sometimes even spells.

Scholar (INT)

The Scholar is a learned or erudite person; someone who has profound knowledge of a range of subjects although they typically have a specialty. The character could be a historian, a college professor, a well-read book dealer, a librarian, a doctor or some other intellectual who believes in depth research is the best way of countering the outer darkness.



Scholar class features

Hit Dice:	D6
Weapons:	Scholars can use any non-military weapons
Primary Save:	Will (+2 at 1 st level)
Normal saves:	Ref, Fort (+1 at 1 st level)
To Hit Rolls:	Tertiary Class Ability (+0 at 1 st level)
Defence Rating:	Tertiary Class Ability (+0 at 1 st level)

Scholar main class abilities

- Languages (INT): The Scholar has double the normal number of starting languages based on his or her intelligence. The scholar can also learn one new language each time she goes up a level.
- Library Use (INT): This ability enables the Scholar to find a given book, newspaper, or reference in a library or collection of documents, assuming that the item is there. Each use of this skill marks four hours of continuous search. An investigator rarely gets more than two tries per day. If this ability has already been gained from the character’s background, the scholar can re roll any failed roll, once per scenario.
- Scholarly Specialty (INT): All scholars are academically qualified. Therefore they have knowledge and understanding of most fields of academia. Each PC has a specific proficiency in three fields of study. Choose from (but not limited to) the following: Anthropology, Archaeology, Astronomy, Astrology, Biology, Botany, Chemistry, Cryptology, Criminology, Cultures, Geology, Geography, History, Law, Linguistics, Mathematics, Medicine, Physics, Zoology.

- **Occult Lore (INT):** The scholar has knowledge involving or relating to mystical, supernatural or magical powers, practices, or phenomena. The scholar can understand and utilize books of occult and Mythos Lore better than other investigators, adding their Occult Lore score to INT rolls when attempting to understand books of forbidden lore.

The scholar can exchange one or two fields of study and/or occult lore for one or both of the following:

- **Medical (INT):** The PC is especially effective at using the contents of a doctor's bag. As long as he has his medical bag, he can restore up to 2HP per level per day to injured characters (there is 20HP worth of medicines/bandages etc in a full doctor's bag). He or she also enables another character that has fallen to below 0 HP to make another Fort save vs. death if the first one is failed and the medic reaches the injured person within 1 round per level. Both uses of this ability take several rounds of work.
- **Psychoanalysis (WIS):**
 1. **Immediate Care**
When someone suffers an episode of temporary insanity, a therapist can bring the patient out of it - calming the terror, snapping him or her out of their stupor, or doing whatever else is needed to restore the patient to the state she was in before the temporary insanity. This takes about a round. A therapist can also use immediate care to stabilize the sanity score of a character whose current sanity is below 0. On a successful ability roll (requiring a full-round) the character's sanity score improves to 0.
 2. **Long-Term Care**
Providing long-term care means treating a mentally disturbed person for a day or more in a place away from stress and distractions. A therapist must spend 1D4 hours per day doing nothing but talking to the patient. If the therapist makes a successful check at the end of this time, the patient recovers 1D6 sanity points. A therapist can tend up to six patients at a time; each patient beyond the first adds 1 hour to the total time per day that must be devoted to therapy. The check must be made each day for each patient. A roll of 1 on any of these checks indicates that the patient loses 1 point of sanity that day, as he or she regresses mentally due to horrors suddenly remembered.

Sneak (DEX)

The sneak is a character who primarily uses his or her skills of subtlety and stealth to help in the fight against the horrors that beset humankind. The character could be an expert cat burglar, a trained military reconnaissance expert, a gumshoe or even a street urchin small enough to not be noticed.

Sneak class features

Hit Dice:	D8
Weapons:	Sneaks can use any non-military weapons
Primary Save:	Ref (+2 at 1 st level)
Normal saves:	Fort, Will (+1 at 1 st level)
To Hit Rolls:	Secondary Class Ability (+1 at 1 st level)
Defence Rating:	Main Class Ability (+2 at 1 st level)

Sneak main class abilities

- **Climb (DEX):** The sneak can climb walls and drainpipes, quickly and efficiently.
- **Lock Picking (DEX):** The art of unlocking a lock by analyzing and manipulating the mechanism without the original key. This ability is also useful for safecracking.
- **Sleight (DEX):** The character has superb manipulation skills and is able to perform tricks like pulling coins out of the air, pocketing small items, picking pockets and similar feats of dexterity.
- **Stealth (DEX):** The PC is especially skilled at using the terrain, cover, shadows and so on to move without being noticed by his prey or his enemies.



Spiritualist (WIS)

The spiritualist is a person who is concerned with or insists on the spiritual side of things. The character is sensitive to influences or forces of a supernatural nature and uses the powers of his or her faith and conviction to battle the enemies of humankind. The character could be a priest or holy man of any denomination but equally could be a medium, witch or psychic.

Spiritualist class features

Hit Dice:	D6
Weapons:	Spiritualists are often pacifists and rarely use weapons. However, if pushed they can use any non-military weapons.

Primary Save: Will (+2 at 1st level)
Normal saves: Ref, Will (+1 at 1st level)
To Hit Rolls: Tertiary Class
Ability (+0 at 1st level)
Defence Rating: Secondary Class
Ability (+1 at 1st level)



Spiritualist main class abilities

- Awareness (WIS): You have an extraordinary sense for the unnatural and can sense the presence of evil lurking nearby. Any dark presence normally comes to you as a prickling or tingling feeling rather than anything specific. You may need to remind the Keeper that you have this ability from time to time because sometime she will want to make the roll for you (to keep you in the dark if the roll fails).
- Calming influence (WIS): The spiritualist has a serene manner and can help heal troubled minds. This can be used to help characters that have lost SAN spending D4 hours with them and making a successful roll. This ability will restore D3 lost SAN to the character. This only works once per episode of sanity loss.
- Non-Combatant (CHA): In combat spiritualists are not taken as a threat and, as long as they are not fighting, any (human) enemy will tend to ignore them and go for the more competent looking types. If necessary, the spiritualist can make a save to avoid being attacked.
- Occult Lore (INT): The spiritualist has knowledge involving or relating to mystical, supernatural or magical powers, practices, or phenomena. The spiritualist can understand and utilize books of occult and Mythos Lore as expertly as many Scholars.
- Religious Specialty (INT): You have knowledge and understanding of one field learning due to your religious studies. Choose from (but not limited to) the following: Astronomy, Astrology, Biology, Botany, Chemistry, Cultures, History, Linguistics, Mathematics, Medicine, Physics, and Zoology.

CHAPTER 4: POSSESSIONS

Starting characters in a Black Books campaign can have a number of items from these following lists. The player can choose a number of items equal to $10 + \text{CR}$, with a value equal to or less than $10 + \text{CR}$.

Acquiring new items during play is a matter of having the opportunity and making an appropriate CR die roll ($d20$ plus current CR). If the roll equals or exceeds the value of the item, it can be obtained in a timely fashion. On the roll of exactly "1" the character's credit history has caught up with them and no further purchases may be attempted until a new level is gained.

If the player considers the item to be more easily obtained than its value would indicate - because of a relevant background, class or ability - and the Keeper agrees, add +6 to the character's credit rating for this one purchase. Additionally, if circumstances warrant, the Keeper may allow the die roll to be modified by CHA (or other relevant ability), a background or class ability.

Items valued at $15 +$ the character's CR or greater are a drain on the resources; if the character wishes to acquire such an item and successfully makes the CR roll, reduce the character's CR by 2 until a new class level is gained.

Finally, the Keeper may arbitrarily increase or decrease a character's CR to account for a financial downturn, maintenance and repairs or locating valuable artifacts.

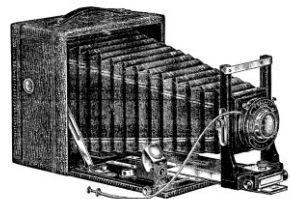


Table 5: Assorted goods, items and possessions

<i>Item</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>CR</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>CR</i>
Bicycle	2-4	Handcuffs	2	Pants, quality	5+
Binoculars	2-3	Hat, flat cap	1	Pick axe	1
Boots, worker's	2	Hat, gent's flat cap	2	Pocket watch, plain	2
Boots, outdoors	3-4	Hat, straw boater	2	Pocket watch, silver	4
Boots, riding	4+	Hat, panama	3	Pocket watch, gold	6
Box Camera	3-4	Hat, bowler	2	Radio	8
Blouse, poor	1	Hat, fedora	3	Rucksack	1
Blouse, everyday	1-2	Hat, trilby	4	Shirt, worker's	1
Blouse, ladies'	3	Hat, top	5	Shirt, everyday	2
Blouse, elegant	4	Hat, cloche (ladies)	2	Shirt, gent's	3
Cigarettes	1	Hat, flapper (ladies)	3	Shirt, quality	4
Cigars	1-3	Horse, nag & saddle	3	Shoes, poor	1
Coat, poor	2	Horse, good & saddle	5	Shoes, everyday	2
Coat, everyday	3	Horse, racing	8+	Shoes, gent's	3
Coat, ladies or gents	4-5	Jacket, everyday	2-4	Shovel	1
Coat, elegant	6+	Jacket, dress	5+	Smoking pipe	1-2
Coffin, basic	2	Jewelry, plain	1	Suit, poor	2
Coffin, everyday	3-5	Jewelry, everyday	2-4	Suit, everyday	3-4
Coffin, quality	6+	Jewelry, good	5-8	Suit, gent's	5-6
Dog, mutt	1	Jewelry, desirable	9-14	Suit, quality	7+
Dog, guard	2-3	Jewelry, quality	15+	Suitcase, everyday	2-3
Dog, pedigree	4+	Lantern	3	Suitcase, quality	4
Dress, poor	1	Lighter, cigarette	2	Tent	2-6
Dress, everyday	2-3	Matches	1	Travel Trunk	2-5
Dress, party	4-5	Pants, worker's	1	Typewriter	6-9
Dress, elegant	6+	Pants, everyday	2	Violin & case, basic	3-4
Flashlight	1	Pants, gent's	3	Violin & case, good	5-9

Table 6: Services

<i>Service</i>	<i>CR</i>
Airline Ticket	8-12
Local cable car, subway or bus fare	1
Local cab fare	2
Train Ticket	1-4
Transatlantic liner passage	15
Funeral Service	6-15
Flophouse	1
Board & lodgings	3
Basic hotel room	2-3
Average hotel room	3-5
Good hotel room	6-9
Quality hotel suite	10+

Table 7: Motor Vehicles

<i>Type</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Produced</i>	<i>Mph</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>CR</i>
Austin 7	England	1922-1939	40	4	15
Bentley 3 Litre Speed	England	1921-1929	90	6	25
Buick 4-door Sedan	USA	1924-1928	60	6	21
Cadillac Coupe	USA	1927-1930	90	6	23
Chrysler Imperial Sedan	USA	1926-1954	65	6	21
Chrysler B-70	USA	1924-1931	70	6	20
Citroen 5CV Torpedo	France	1922-1926	37	2	14
Crossley 25/30	England	1919-1925	65	4	19
Crossley 20/70, sport	England	1922	75	2	17
Duesenburg Model A	USA	1921-1926	50	6	22
Ford Model A	USA	1927-1931	65	4	16
Ford Model T	USA	1908-1927	45	4	15
Lancia Lambda	Italy	1922-1931	60	4	18
Morris Oxford Bullnose	England	1913-1919	50	2	13
Nash Advanced 6 Coupe	USA	1928-1934	70	4	17
Oakland 6-54A	USA	1924	60	4	17
Packard Six	USA	1925-1928	60	6	20
Peugeot 201	France	1929-1937	50	4	16
Renault 6 CV NN	France	1924-1930	40	4	14
Rolls-Royce Phantom	England	1925-1931	90	6	27
Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost	England	1906-1926	70	6	20
Studebaker Big Six	USA	1918-1926	60	7	18
Studebaker Light Six	USA	1918-1927	55	5	18
Whippet Roadster	USA	1926-1928	55	2	17

Note: There are many different makes and models of motor cars in the period and many of these motor cars were built in a range of body styles – Sedans, Coupes, Sports, Convertibles, 2-door, 4-door and so on. Prices varied massively dependent on the date and the body style; treat the above as a very rough and quick guide.

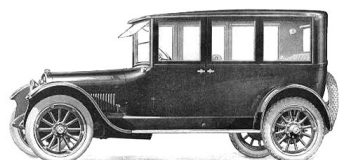
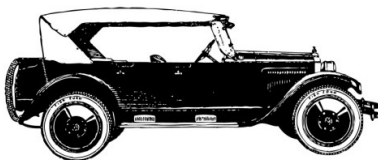
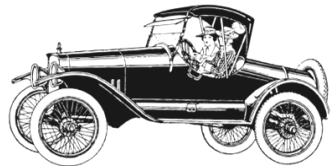


Table 8: Melee Weapons

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>CR</i>
Axe	1D8	2-3
Baton/Truncheon	1D6	1-2
Bowie knife*	1D4+1	1-3
Cane	1D4	2-5
Dagger*	1D4	1-2
Fists**	1D3	-
Sword	1D8	3-7

* *Can be thrown*

** *Temporary damage*

Table 9: Firearms

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>CR</i>
Elephant Gun	3D6+2	long	8-11
Hunting Rifle	2D6	long	7-9
Pistol, derringer	1D4+1	close	2-3
Pistol, heavy	1D10+1	medium	4-6
Pistol, light	1D6+1	close	3-5
Pistol, medium	1D8+1	medium	3-6
Double-Barrel Shotgun	4D4	short	3-5

Table 10: Military Firearms

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>CR</i>
Anti-tank Rifle***	4D6+4	medium	12-15
Machinegun**	3D8+3	long	13-16
Service Rifle	2D6	long	9-11
Tommy Gun**	3D6+3	medium	7-9

***Tommy guns and machine guns can be fired at up to three targets in a round, with a -2 to hit per target after the first (so firing at three target gives -4 to each roll). Damage dice are divided as evenly as possible between all those targets hit.

Machine Guns and Anti-Tank rifles are very heavy, usually requiring at least two men to carry the weapon, tripod or bipod and the ammunition.

Encumbrance

There are no specific rules for how much your character can carry because for most players it is dull to track this sort of thing. No person in the world of Black Books is going to be carrying so much as to encumber him or herself anyway. Just have your character carry about with her what is reasonable. If the Keeper thinks your character is trying to lift too much then you can make a strength roll.

CHAPTER 5: PLAYING THE GAME

Once characters have been created, the Keeper will describe where the characters are and what they can see. The game might start in a university in England, a dig site in Peru, a cultist lair in Dunwich, a bar in downtown Boston, a museum in Paris or on a boat heading down the Nile. From that point on, players describe what their characters do. Digging through old books in the university library, examining unusual symbols on the temple wall, challenging the guy at the bar who is seemingly watching you, talking to other player characters (PCs) or non-player characters (NPCs) controlled by the Keeper — all of these kinds of actions are decided by the players. The Keeper then describes what happens as a result. Or the Keeper could throw an event at you; there is a gunshot further down the train and a woman screams — what do you do? In the museum, an alarm goes off, a man runs past, thrusts something into your hand and then runs out of the main door pursued by guards. What do you do? The rules below are guidelines handling events like combat, gaining experience, movement, healing, madness, dying, and other important parts of the game.

Basically, you and the Keeper work together, with the Keeper handling the details of a world full of hardships and fear, and you handling what your character does in it. The grim story of your character's descent into madness and eventual demise is yours to create in the Keeper's world.

Gaining Levels

Characters gradually become more competent as they complete their adventures successfully and gain experience of the game world around them. They begin at 1st level, having had no investigations (although they might start out as people that have seen a bit of the world — this depends how on individual players view their own character). Once the first scenario has been completed successfully the characters advance to 2nd level; gaining all the HD, DR, saves and class ability improvements that go with advancement. The Keeper decides whether the investigation was successful or not, as well as exactly what constitutes an “investigation”. A single investigation could be over in two hours or it could take several sessions. Sometimes a very long scenario (called a campaign) should be broken down into smaller sections, each of which constitutes one single investigation, even though the scenario itself won't have been completed. To attain 3rd level, characters need to complete another two investigations (three in total). See *Table 3: Experience Level* on page 11 for more details of level advancement.

When your character has advanced to a new level, you will roll your additional HP for your new level. Your combat skills and other abilities may also increase.

In other words, you've become more competent and can pursue greater challenges!

Time

There will be times when the PCs are travelling between cities or resting up somewhere and nothing much is happening. When this is the case, you don't necessarily want to play out every minute or even hour of that passing of time. In that case, the Keeper will simply rule that an hour, a week or even a month (or longer) passes in the lives of the PCs. At other times, during a gunfight scene in particular, more specific rulings on the passage of time are required - the "turn" and "combat round." A turn (lasting ten minutes) is used to track and measure actions, movement and resources when our intrepid investigators are in dangerous situations. The shorter round (lasting about 10 seconds) is used in the midst of a fight or when you need to focus on a particular event where time is precious to allow for a faster blow-by-blow account of the action or to create a sense of dread. There are 60 rounds in a turn.

Attribute and ability rolls

Normally the Keeper will just allow characters to do things as described by the players and, if they seem reasonable, they will happen as stated. This is particularly true where the character is of a class that should be assumed to be able to complete the task naturally or where the thing they are doing is fairly straightforward. Sometimes, however, a roll will be required.

Target Numbers

The Keeper sets the TN, which is normally in the range of 10 - 15+. Harder tasks can be 20, 25 and so on. See *Table 1: Target Numbers* on page 5.

Rolls are made on a single D20. To the result, you add any modifiers. Modifiers can be from the character's attributes, class and level or from any equipment the character has to help in the task.

20's and 1's

A "natural" 20 is always a success and a 1 is always a failure.

When not to allow a roll

Whilst the GM should normally allow characters to attempt things wherever possible, there may be legitimate reasons why a GM may not allow a character to even make a roll. This is especially the case where characters are stepping on the toes of another player whose character has the relevant class ability. Here are some examples:

Sometimes the best person to do something is a character of the appropriate class and if that character fails to do it, it wouldn't make sense to allow another

character to make a roll. For example, a Scholar player has asked the Keeper if he has some knowledge of a certain occult rite. The Keeper believes it is reasonable for the Scholar to make a roll to see what he knows. If the Scholar fails it would be reasonable to disallow the Enforcer to even make a roll as he's unlikely to know anything that the Scholar doesn't.

In some instances one character can assist another in a task. If the assisting character has the appropriate class ability, she can give the acting character +2 to his roll. If the assisting character doesn't have the appropriate class ability, but has a positive bonus in an appropriate attribute (12+) she just provides +1 to the acting character's roll. If the assisting character has a negative attribute bonus there is a chance that his or her intervention will actually hinder the attempted task. This is at the Keeper's discretion.

Sanity and insanity

Sanity is the natural mental state of ordinary life. Normal mental balance is endangered when characters confront the horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos – their entities and activities are shocking, unnatural and bewildering. Such encounters cause the investigators to lose SAN, which in turn risks temporary or permanent insanity.

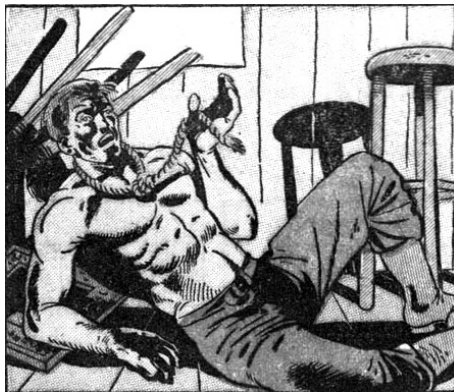
Whenever you encounter a gruesome, unnatural or supernatural situation that requires a SAN roll, you must make a Will save to resist losing SAN (usually called a SAN save). The TN of the situation or horror indicates the SAN save needed to resist the effects when you are initially exposed to it. Sometimes, even if you make the roll you lose some SAN, but not as much as you would if you had failed. Potential SAN loss is shown as two numbers separated by a slash, e.g. 1/1D6. In this case, if you fail the roll you lose 1D6 SAN and if you succeed you lost just one point. The monster descriptions set out the TN and how much SAN you lose when you encounter them.



An investigator's SAN is also at risk when the character reads certain books, learns the spells contained within and when he attempts to cast those spells. These losses are automatic (no SAN save).

Table 11: Sanity loss examples

<i>Situation</i>	<i>TN</i>	<i>SAN lost</i>
Surprised to find a mangled animal carcass	5	0/1D2
Surprised to find a human corpse	10	0/1D3
Surprised to find a human body part	10	0/1D3
Finding a stream flowing with blood	15	0/1D4
Finding a horribly mangled human corpse	15	1/1D4
Awakening trapped in a coffin	15	0/1D6
Witnessing a friend's violent death	15	0/1D6
Seeing a ghoul	20	0/1D6
Meeting someone you know to be dead	20	1/1D6+1
Undergoing severe torture	20	0/1D10
Seeing a corpse rise from the grave	25	1/1D10
Seeing a gigantic severed head fall from the sky	25	2/2D10+1
Seeing Great Cthulhu	30	1D10/4D10



Temporary insanity

If an investigator loses 5 or more SAN as the consequence of a single SAN save, he or she has suffered major emotional trauma. The player must then make an INT ability roll; success means the investigator fully understands what has been seen and goes temporarily insane for 1D10 hours.

If your investigator is temporarily insane, the Keeper gets to add a temporary phobia or mania to your sheet, most likely being something related to what drove you mad in the first place (such as “fear of the dark”, “fear of confined spaces” or “fear of loud noises”).

Here is a small list that you can roll on if stuck for an idea, but Keepers should not confine themselves to just these:

Table 12: Fear of...

A certain number	Injury
Bats	Loud noises
Being alone/solitude	Mirrors/own reflection
Being touched	Old people
Birds	Open spaces
Blood	Pain
Books	Rats
Cemeteries	Snakes
Churches	Sleep
Confined spaces	Speaking
Crowds	Spiders or bugs
Darkness	The opposite sex
Daylight/sunshine	Thunderstorms
Dust and grime	Toads or frogs
Fire	Ventriloquist's dummies/puppets
Heights	Water

During your character's period of temporary madness, the Keeper may present you r investigator with tricks of the mind – he or she hears noises that aren't there, sees things in the shadows etc. You can make a "reality check" by making another SAN save) - if you're successful, you see through the hallucination, but if you fail you fall deeper in to the madness, losing another 1D4 SAN.

Getting used to the horror

Within a single session of the game, or other duration determined by the keeper, characters should lose no more SAN for seeing monsters of a particular sort, or encountering the same or similar situation, than they would for encountering one such monster or situation. So, seeing a ghoul has a SAN cost of 1D6 for failing the save (a maximum of 6). Therefore, an investigator will not lose more than 6 SAN on encountering several ghouls within the same game session. Learning or casting spells never becomes a normal thing to do so a character always loses SAN.

The descent into insanity

Even if an investigator has only one point of SAN remaining, the player has control. However, the investigators player should role-play the effects of this fall towards insanity. If an investigator has ten or fewer SAN, he or she certainly knows the situation is serious. Let the players work out the effects of their own fall towards madness. Maybe they develop a phobia, start wearing unusual clothing, can't step on the cracks in the pavement or, maybe they won't

go anywhere without their “pet” begonia or maybe they start talking to inanimate objects. There are loads of possibilities – the players should get imaginative. However, their descent to insanity shouldn’t get completely in the way of the game and they should stay mostly functional and mostly sane until their SAN falls to zero.

Permanent insanity

A character whose SAN falls below zero has become permanently insane; the character becomes a NPC under the control of the Keeper. Such a character can never become sane again – they will probably be taken away by the authorities to be locked in a padded cell never to see the light of day again.

Recovering sanity

The primary way you can recover sanity is through psychoanalysis (a Scholar class ability) or the calming influence of a Spiritualist.

Long periods of rest in a quiet and safe location can help – a character can recover SAN for months spent doing nothing other than resting, being around friends and family and carrying out their favourite hobbies or activities (painting, reading, fishing etc) that completely take their minds off the horrors they’ve experienced. However, this only restores one SAN point for the first month, another point for the next two, and one more point for the next three months (a maximum of three points for six months spent in recovery).

Otherwise, one point of lost SAN is recovered when an investigator goes up a level.





Combat

Combat is something to be avoided in Black Books, if at all possible. However, sometimes it is inevitable. When the party of investigators comes into contact with enemies, the order of events in the combat round is as follows:

1. The Keeper determines if one side or the other is entitled to a free attack or move as a result of surprise - this is either a judgment or a die roll of some kind, depending on the circumstances.
2. Determine initiative. One roll is made for each PC. The Keeper rolls for a whole group of NPCs. However, important NPCs get a separate roll, just like PCs.
3. The character (or NPCs) with initiative acts first (shooting, movement, melee attacks, etc.) and results take effect.
4. Then the next highest initiative acts and so on down the line.
5. Individuals can withhold their initiative and wait for an opportunity to act at any time after they were due to act. NPCs can't do this.
6. The round is complete; keep turn order for the next round if the battle has not been resolved.

Determine Initiative

At the beginning of the first combat round, each character rolls initiative on a D20, with any modifiers for DEX or any class abilities. The Keeper rolls for all of the NPCs as a whole, with a separate roll for important NPCs or particularly tough creatures. The highest acts first, shooting, moving, attacking, hiding, running away etc. then the next highest, and so on. Actions can be withheld until any time later in the combat round (interrupting another individual's action even).

Initiative rolls may result in a tie. When this happens, the individual with the highest DEX acts first (or the order can be decided between PCs). If they are still equal, the highest level or HD determines who goes first. Otherwise they act at exactly the same time.

The Keeper may handle this situation in any way he chooses - with one caveat. The damage inflicted by combatants during simultaneous initiative is inflicted even if one of the combatants dies during the round. It is possible for two combatants to kill each other in this situation.

Movement

If you are using miniatures then movement rate is as set out below, per round.

Table 13: Movement Rate

<i>Action</i>	<i>Move</i>
Running	12
Normal	9
Cautious	6
Crawling	3

The Attack Roll

To attack with a weapon, the player rolls a D20 and adds any bonuses to the result. These “to-hit” bonuses may include a STR bonus (for attacks with hand held weapons) or a DEX bonus (for attacks with firearms) and a bonus for class and level. The player then subtracts any “to-hit” penalties they might have from their roll.

If the attack roll is equal to or higher than the DR of the opponent, the attack hits.

20's and 1's

A “natural” roll of 20 is always a hit and always causes maximum damage. So, if using a dagger, damage is 4 modified by any STR bonus.



A “natural” roll of 1 is always a miss and can be regarded as a potential fumble.

If the Keeper feels the situation warrants it, the investigator must make a REF save. Failure means the investigator has dropped her weapon, tripped on an obstruction or something similar has happened to put the character into a difficult position.

Specific Situations

The following are a compilation of guidelines and instructions for handling certain, specific situations that might arise during combat:

Damage

If an attack hits, it inflicts damage. Roll the weapon's damage die (which will normally be a single die but sometimes more and/or sometimes with a + or – to

the result) and add any STR modifiers for melee weapons. The damage is subtracted from the defender's hit point total.

Death

When a character (or creature) is hit, the amount of damage taken is deducted from her hit points. When HP reaches 0, the character gets a Fort save to see whether she dies. There is a modifier of -1 to the roll for every HP the character is below 0. If the character fails the roll, she is dead. If the character succeeds, she is just unconscious and requires medical help.

Healing

A character will recover 1 full HP per level per day of uninterrupted rest.

Damage from fists is classed as temporary damage and heals per hour rather than per day. When you hit 0 or less and the damage that took you below zero is temporary (even if you took normal damage too) then you are only unconscious, not dead and a death save isn't required.

Binding Wounds

Keepers can allow any characters to bind 1D3 HP worth of wounds following an encounter. There are extra rules for PCs with the Medic ability.

Note that the character can only recover HP lost during this particular encounter. Recovered HP cannot exceed the uninjured maximum amount.

Cover

An opponent may be using cover to shoot from. This will give an attacker a negative modifier to the roll, from -1 to -4 on their "to-hit" check, determined by the Keeper.



Melee Attack

A melee attack is an attack with a hand-held weapon such as a sword, cane or dagger. A character's STR bonuses "to-hit" and damage are added to melee attacks. Two combatants within five feet of each other are considered to be "in melee".

Ranged Attack

Ranged attacks are attacks with ranged weapons such as guns, crossbows, or thrown knives. A character's DEX bonus for missile attacks is added to the "to-hit" roll when the character is using such weapons. When using guns to fire into melee, it is not possible to choose which opponent (or friend!) will receive the brunt of the attack, so roll randomly to see who the shot could hit.

Burst & Auto fire

Some weapons are capable of shooting short bursts (3 bullets per squeeze of the trigger) or full auto fire (a constant spray of bullets until the trigger is released or the magazine is emptied).

If doing this, the character takes a -2 penalty to all rolls to hit per additional target shot at (maximum of three targets). The damage dice for the weapon are spread as evenly as possible between targets hit.

For example, a 1st level investigator firing his tommy gun at a group of three cultists. He aims at all of them, taking a -4 penalty to his three rolls. He manages to hit two of them, so applies 2D6+2 against the first one and 1D6+1 against the other.

Optional

If using burst or auto fire and you roll a natural 1, the Keeper can decide that your gun has jammed and will take a round to clear or you are out of ammo.

Morale

The majority of NPCs will not continue to fight a hopeless battle and will seek to retreat, surrender, or flee. The Keeper will decide when NPCs abandon battle and retreat, based upon the situation and the situation. Keepers should also use morale to determine the actions and loyalty of hirelings or other companion NPCs.

Remember

Black Books is a free-form roleplaying game, meaning that there aren't very many rules. The Keeper is responsible for handling situations that aren't covered by the rules, making fair evaluations of what the characters do and deciding what happens as a result. This is not a game in which the players are "against" the Keeper, even though the Keeper is responsible for setting the tone of the game and trying to create that feeling of impending doom that should permeate each session of Black Books. The players should be aware that their characters' lives may be very short-lived and the characters that last any longer should feel they are on borrowed time and that their eventual demise or insanity is just around the corner.

CHAPTER 6: RUNNING THE GAME

Running a game of Black Books is in some ways easier than running most other role-playing games; simply because there are not as many rules and your own discretion overrides them anyway. Most situations are handled by making “common sense” decisions concerning what happens next.

For example, if there are a bunch of cultists around the next corner and the players decide not to go around that corner, it’s up to the Keeper to determine whether or not it makes sense for the cultists to rush around the corner and attack—or whether their orders are to simply stay where they are. If a player decides that his character is going to jump through a wall of fire, with several sticks of dynamite in his pockets, it’s up to the Keeper to determine whether or not they explode.

This means “making up” a lot of stuff on the spot. If you’re not a good storyteller or if you’re not up to doing a lot of creative thinking on the fly, it might be better that you try a different game - one that provides more rules and guidance for every little situation that might arise. But if you’re a good storyteller, creative and fair, Black Books’ small, spartan rule-set frees up your creativity to create a role-playing experience completely different from the type of game that depends on a multitude of rules.

Black Books also frees up your creativity in terms of customizing the game. Unlike a more complex game, you can add house rules wherever you want to without accidentally messing up something else buried in the rules. If you want to use critical hits and fumbles, add ‘em in. You won’t break anything—there’s not that much to break!

Designing an adventure

An adventure in Black Books usually starts with some sort of a mystery or a puzzle. Usually, it will start with a fairly simple premise and then become more mysterious as the investigators dig deeper and deeper into the scenario. Maybe at an archaeological dig one of the PCs comes across some sort of abnormal artifact that appears to be a creature that has never existed, or a tablet with writing or designs etched onto it that don’t match any known language. Perhaps a professor friend of one of the characters is driven to madness after returning home with a book he bought in a bazaar in Cairo. Possibly the investigators are looking into something unconnected with the actual adventure and then one or more events occur that gradually lead them into another mystery. There are all sorts of ways to start the adventure and you should try to vary the introduction to each new one as far as you can so you don’t become predictable.

As the characters investigate the mystery, they should be drawn further and further into the plot and deeper and deeper into danger. Don't try to plan for all contingencies - it's guaranteed that the players will do something unexpected during the adventure and you'll just have to roll with it, thinking on your feet and making up new things as you go. Just as you challenge the players with adventure, they challenge you to keep up with their collective creativity. You may want to have a handy world atlas available for those occasions when the characters want to take a cruise ship to somewhere you hadn't considered but you can direct them to some degree by giving them enough clues and leads.

Whilst Black Books isn't an action thriller, you do need to keep an eye on the pacing of the game. Things should continue to happen so that the players don't become bored although there can be quieter periods whilst characters are researching the strange symbols on the ruins, or they are at the library going through old archives. Sooner or later, you'll want to push the pace a little; let the players know they are under pressure; make them feel their character's are in danger and don't let them feel too comfortable.



Creating a campaign

Concluding one adventure may lead the investigators into the next adventure. Friends or enemies from previous adventures might show up again to help or hinder. They will go to and meet up in familiar places; places they treat as “safe houses” where they can rest and talk. They will have a restaurant in town or a museum where the curator can be trusted and where the characters can drop off stuff they’ve found or examine other artifacts. The PCs will build on their character’s backgrounds and their lives beyond just the numbers on their character sheets.

A campaign is the world beyond the adventure – from the high-rise cities of the USA to dusty pyramids in the Sahara; from shipwrecks on the seabed off the Greek coast to remote villages in the mountains of Nepal; from Mayan ruins in the jungles of South America to the libraries of Paris, Oxford and Arkham. The players will almost certainly want their characters to travel the world exploring, tracking down adversaries, following up on leads, evading powerful foes and doing all sorts of exciting things in the world.

It’s up to you whether the fictional New England of H.P Lovecraft or the worlds of the other Cthulhu authors are real in your world or whether you just stick to the real world.



CHAPTER 7: DARK TOMES & OTHER THINGS

Mythos tomes might look like old leather-bound volumes, typeset books with metal clasps, handwritten notebooks with loose leaves and notes scribbled in the margins; ancient stone tablets carved with hieroglyphs or faded parchments ready to crumble to dust at the slightest touch. Each one contains a wealth of mythos knowledge and magical secrets, tinged with nonsensical raving and seemingly meaningless sketches, diagrams and equations.

Studying tomes

Studying these tomes is a lengthy process and the investigator must be able to read the language. Scholars are clearly the best at this sort of thing and even if they don't know the language when they get the book, they can study it and spend time learning to read it (when the scholar goes up a level, she can take the language as known).

It takes a week of examination of a mythos tome at the end of which an investigator can make the appropriate INT roll to understand what the book contains. Mystics and Scholars with Occult Lore add their Occult Lore score and their INT modifier to the D20 roll; all others only add their INT modifier to the d20 roll. Failure means they have failed to grasp it and need to continue their studies for a further week. The TN for reading tomes is generally 15 but some are 20 or more.

Some books grant a bonus to your Mythos Lore ability, the bonus only applies once you have successfully read the book. Mythos Lore points are not added to the D20 roll to read a Mythos tome; they are a (dubious) award for having read and understood the book. Likewise, when examining the evidence of Mythos activity, investigators only add their points of Mythos Lore to the d20 roll; INT and Occult Lore modifiers do not apply. The Cthulhu Mythos is so alien to human understanding that only points in Mythos Lore apply when attempting to understand its terrible mysteries.

Once you have read a book, learning to cast a spell within it takes a further 1D4 weeks of study. Once this time has been spent you know the spell and can cast it whenever you wish, suffering any side-effects each time. The Keeper assigns spells to each tome to suit the particular campaign, although some are noted already.



Mythos tomes

More than through any other means, the terrible secrets of the *Cthulhu Mythos* have become known to the human race through ancient books. Forbidden tomes like the *Necronomicon* and the impossibly old *Pnakotic Manuscripts* tell the truth of a world hostile to humanity, but they also offer humans insight into the true powers of the universe. The histories and rituals contained in these books are often too much for the mundane human mind to comprehend, so readers may forfeit their sanity in payment for their curiosity. The contents provided in these book descriptions are merely a starting point, and the Keeper should feel free to change the details to suit. If your investigators desperately need the spell to banish an entity, then maybe the book they just found should contain it, even if it's not noted here. You can also use these descriptions as a guide for creating entirely new ancient books for your adventures. Where the description mentions different versions (in brackets), these will usually have lower TN, SAN loss and Mythos Lore and fewer spells (at the Keeper's discretion).

Celaeno Fragments

This is a transcript of what Professor Laban Shrewsbury remembered of his translations of the books in the Great Library of Celaeno, when he travelled there to escape Cthulhu's minions.

Date: 1915, Language: English, TN: 15, SAN: 1D6, Mythos Lore +1, Spells: 1D4

Cthat Aquadingen

This text, by an unknown author, deals with Cthulhu and other sea-horrors.

Date: C4th, Language: *Elder Script* (Latin, English, French), TN: 20, SAN: 2D6, Mythos Lore +3, Spells: 1D4+1

Cultes des Goules

Cultes des Goules is a book on black magic written by Francois-Honore Balfour (Comte d'Erlette) in 1702.

Date: 1702, Language: French (Italian), TN: 15, SAN: 1D8, Mythos Lore +1, Spells: 1D4+1

Dhol Chants

These are alluded to in passing as a semi-mythical collection of chants attributed to the almost-human people of Leng. Author unknown.

Date: ? Language: *Elder Script*, TN: 25, SAN: 1D8, Mythos Lore +2, Spells: 1D4+1

Eibon Fragment

The full book is supposed to have been written by Eibon, a wizard in the land of Hyperborea. It was an immense text of arcane knowledge. Unfortunately, only one complete fragment of the original is known to exist. Date: ? Language: *Elder Script*, Greek, Egyptian, French, Latin, English), TN: 25, SAN: 1D6, Mythos Lore +2, Spells: 1D3+1

Eltdown Shards

These are mysterious pottery fragments found in 1882 and named after the place where they were discovered, Eltdown in southern England. The shards date to the Triassic period, are covered with strange symbols and thought to be untranslatable. Several authors have penned their own interpretations of the markings, including Gordon Whitney and his *The Eltdown Shards: A Partial Translation*. Date: ? Language: *Unknown* (English), TN: 25, SAN: 1D6, Mythos Lore +1, Spells: 1D3

G'harne Fragments

These are a set of miraculously preserved shards of obsidian that record the history of G'harne; a lost pre-human city located somewhere in the Sahara Desert. The two main translators of the fragments are Sir Amery Wendy-Smith and Gordon Walmsley. Date: ? Language: *Unknown* (English), TN: 25, SAN: 1D10, Mythos Lore +2, Spells: None

Necronomicon

The Necronomicon was written in the early 8th century by Abdul Alhazred. Alhazred was a poet in the court of a minor nobleman in the city of Sanaá. For reasons unknown he left the city and spent ten years wandering in the deserts. During this time he visited many strange and ancient places. In his old age Alhazred lived in the great city of Damascus, where he wrote the book. In the long years that followed many translations of this great work have been made. Date: 8th C, Language: Arabic (Greek, Latin, German, English, French, Spanish and others), TN: 25, SAN: 3D6, Mythos Lore +4, Spells: 3D6

Pnakotic Manuscripts (Fragments)

The Pnakotic Manuscripts is named after the place where it was kept, the city of Pnakotus, a primordial metropolis built by the Great Race of Yith. Date: ? Language: *Pnakotic* (Greek, English), TN: 20, SAN: 2D6, Mythos Lore +2, Spells: 1D6

Pnom Parchments

The Parchments of Pnom is a manuscript written by Hyperborea's leading soothsayer. Contains a detailed account of the lineage of the Hyperborean gods.

Date: ? Language: *Hyperborean*, TN: 20, SAN: 2D4+1, Mythos Lore +3, Spells: None

Ponape Scripture

The Scripture was found in the Caroline Islands by Captain Abner Exekiel Hoag sometime around 1734. The book was written in *Naacal* (the language of Mu). The book contains details of Mu. With the help of his servant Yogash (hinted to be a Deep One hybrid), Hoag managed to write a translation. Date: ? Language: *Naacal* (English), TN: 25, SAN: 2D6+1, Mythos Lore +3, Spells: 2D6

Book of Iod

The Book of Iod contains details about two evil entities and how to summon them. The book's origins are unknown. Date: ? Language: Greek/Coptic (Latin), TN: 15, SAN: 1D10, Mythos Lore +2, Spells: 2

Tarsioid Psalms

The Tarsioid Psalms are a collection of writings dating back the early Cenozoic Era, probably attributed to a primate-folk which lived in North America during Paleocene/Eocene times. They describe a number of evil destructive entities. Date: ? Language: *Cenozoic*, TN: 15, SAN: 1D6, Mythos Lore +1, Spells: None

Unspeakable Cults ("The Black Book")

Unausprechliche Kulte is believed to have been written by Friedrich Wilhelm von Junzt. Original editions in German have a heavy leather cover and iron hasps. The text contains information on cults that worship pre-human deities. Date: 1839 Language: German (English), TN: 20, SAN: 2D6, Mythos Lore +3, Spells: 1D8



Non mythos tomes

None of these books provide any Mythos Lore or cause SAN loss. They can contain spells however or some other useful information (maybe a bonus to a Scholar class ability – this is up to the Keeper).

Table 14: Non-Mythos Tomes

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Languages</i>	<i>TN</i>	<i>Spells</i>
The Emerald Tablet	6 th C	Arabic (Latin, English, French)	15	1D4
Picatrix	10 th C	Arabic (Spanish)	20	2D4
Turba Philosophorum	900AD	Arabic	20	1D6+1
Liber Investigationis	1531	Arabic (Greek)	15	1D3
Key of Wisdom	12 th C	Arabic (Greek)	20	2D6
Naturalis Historia	79AD	Latin	15	None
Remigius' Dæmonolatrea	1595	Latin (German, English)	15	None
The Malleus Maleficarum	1487	German	10	None
The Discoverie of Witchcraft	1584	English	15	2D4
The Golden Bough	1890	English	10	None
Heptameron	1496	Italian	15	1D4
Zohar	1558	Hebrew	10	None



Mythos Artifacts

Many artifacts also survive that leave evidence of the pre-human deities that once ruled the earth. There is a sampling of these artifacts here but Keepers are free to create their own; maybe by borrowing ideas from Mythos or other literature or even from other rpgs.

Amulet of the Ghoul Cult

This green jade amulet is carved with a crouching, winged hound with a human-like face. It has many glyphs carved along its perimeter, in a language long-forgotten. The amulet is prized for its power to allow the wearer to see as if through the *Voorish Sign*. In addition, it keeps at bay the infection of ghouls.

The Mirror of the Serpent People

The mirror is a small triangular tablet. One side is blank acting like a mirror, and the other has rows of lettering in an unknown pre-human language, cut into the metal with some sort of acid. The tablet is some sort of dense metal. The mirrored side is said to distort the person's image, to look as if dead. The text is some sort of summoning spell that brings forth an invisible entity of unknown origin that attacks and possesses the summoner.

The Black Stone

The Stone is a black block situated near Stregoicavar, in Hungary. It has been the altar of a cult that lived there and may be part of an ancient city in that area. A similar stone has been found in the Yucatan, though the two are not identical. It appears as a hexagonal block about sixteen feet high and about a foot and a half thick. It is of some shiny black stone and is covered with as yet untranslatable hieroglyphs. The Stone is said to cause constant nightmares in anyone who has slept near it.

Cthulhu Idol

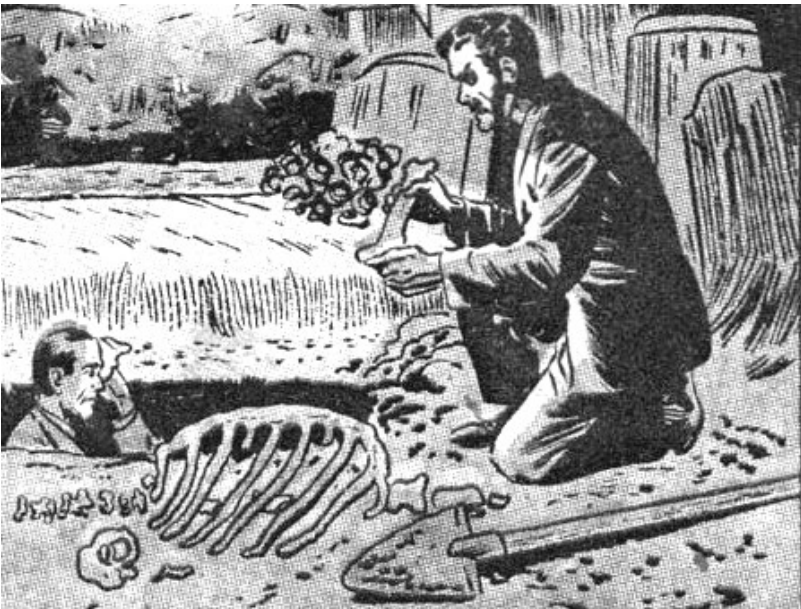
These statues are 8" tall and bear the hideous squatting visage of this Cthulhu and are made from soft, green-black alien mineral with flakes and swirls of gold within it. These idols were brought with the Old Ones from space, and are actually pieces of Old One technology, attuned to Cthulhu's psyche. Through the idol, any worshipper with CHA of 14 or higher may concentrate and communicate with Cthulhu in the form of images and feelings. However, they must also make a WILL save (TN 20) each time the idol is used, to resist a psychic attack from Cthulhu, that will seek to possess the user. These idols are highly coveted by cultists, and should they learn of the location of one, no effort is too great to acquire it. No one knows how many of these idols exist.

Silver Key of Zaggeroth

All Silver Keys are large, 1' long and covered in ancient glyphs. Each silver key acts as a portal to another world, and no two keys lead to the same destination. In order to be activated, the glyphs on a key must be uttered, and the key thrust into a blank expanse of natural stone. A doorway appears, which the key is able to open, revealing a portal to another world. The particular world should be determined by the Keeper, and can be another dimension or another planet. What or who Zaggeroth is isn't known.

Souvara

Souvara appears as a grey powder with pearly granules. Chemical analysis simply shows the presence of an alkaloid unknown to Western science. It is very rare and can only be found in Asia. Besides being an addictive narcotic souvara causes the user to experience past lives. After several usages the effect will occur even without the use of the drug. The drug is taken dissolved in a glass of pure water. At first visual perception is increased. Then objects seem to extend unexpectedly. After this they begin to become transparent. Once these have vanished a series of scenes will flash by showing the users past lives. If a past life contains a profound shock, especially contact with the Mythos, the user will re-live that life completely, not noticing their future life until the scene is over. This effect will happen again during subsequent usages of the drug, and can occur even after usage has stopped.



CHAPTER 8: SPELLS

Black Books takes place in a world where people don't believe supernatural powers exist. Stories of healing powers, psychic communication and alien technology are the domain of imaginative fantasy writers or the truly crazy. Yet secret powers do exist for those aware of the Mythos. In the hidden corners of the world, ancient cults cast ritual spells, hideous charms transform whole families into carnivorous ghouls, and advanced science allows instant travel to other worlds.

An investigator must study a spell in a book to understand it and then to be able to use it. When casting a spell, characters risk their sanity. Each spell description below includes the required saves for using each spell, and the consequences of failure. Most of the casting times and so forth are up to the Keeper; those that banish or destroy or cause harm are usually immediate or very nearly immediate, whereas those that summon or create often require longer periods of preparation. Whether special materials are required is normally also up to the Keeper, although in some cases this is mentioned in the description.

Absorb Harm

This spell allows the caster to negate various physical attacks. The caster invokes the Outer Gods and stretches out a hand toward the attacker. Until dropping the hand, the caster may absorb damage received. The caster may absorb damage from a succession of attacks, but can only absorb damage from one attack in a round. The caster absorbs D4+2 damage from the attack.

SAN: 1

Banish Yog-Sothoth

This ritual forces the removal of Yog-Sothoth fully back into the dimensions from which he came. Yog-Sothoth is permanently banished, unless or until properly summoned forth again. SAN: 1D3

Bind Dimensional Shambler

This spell is designed to bind a Dimensional Shambler to the will of the caster. Note that Dimensional Shamblers are notoriously free willed creatures and dislike being bound in service. The sorcerer had better be prepared when the spell's duration runs out....SAN: 1

Bind Hunting Horror

This spell is designed to force a Hunting Horror to obey the spell's caster's commands. Needless to say one should be careful how they phrase commands

to these beasts. As children of the Crawling Chaos they are clever at 'interpreting' their orders in ways that are baneful to the spell's casters.
SAN: 1D3

Bind Star Vampire

This spell is designed to bind an invisible horror form beyond the stars should the need to do so ever occur...SAN: 1

Call the Outer Dark

Casting this spell creates a sphere of absolute darkness around a particular a point or object. It lasts an hour, before fading away. SAN 1

Chant of Thoth

This spell increases the caster's chance to solve a particular intellectual problem. The spell gives the caster a +4 bonus to any one knowledge-based scholar class ability. SAN: 1

Control Shoggoth

Derived from the ancient formula used by the Elder Things that created Shoggoths, Control Shoggoth is a magical ritual that allows a sorcerer to control these abhorrent monstrosities. Shoggoths dislike being under another's control and will at the next opportunity seek to destroy the caster of this spell.

SAN: 1D3

Corpse Barrier

This spell creates a barrier which animated dead cannot cross. The spell caster draws a line on the ground with chalk or charcoal and adds some drops of human blood. This prevents anything that is no longer alive from crossing the line. SAN: 1



Create Zombies

This spell requires a human corpse which retains sufficient flesh to allow mobility after activation. The caster puts an ounce of his or her own blood in the mouth of the corpse, then kisses the lips of the corpse and 'breathes part of himself' into the body. Once the spell is cast, the corpse awakes ready to obey simple commands from its creator. Should the caster die, the zombie becomes inactive. The number of zombies than can be created is unlimited (as long as the caster can pay the SAN cost). Part of the invocation refers collectively to the Outer Gods - every caster knows such entities exist, though no names are used. These zombies stay useful indefinitely. SAN: 1D2

Decay

When this spell is uttered, it causes all food and drink nearby to perish or become spoiled and nauseating. SAN 1

Elder Sign

This spell freezes a single monster in place, unable to act or move. Each turn roll 1D6, 1 or 2 the creature breaks the ward. SAN: 1

Hands Of Colubra

This spell turns the arms of the caster into venomous snakes. It can only be used on the caster. The effect lasts 1D3 + 3 rounds. The transformed snakes can bite targets up to 10' away. Each snake receives a +4 bonus to hit, and does 1D3 damage per bite, plus paralyzing poison. A successful FORT save TN 10 means the victim avoids being paralyzed). SAN: 1D2

Heal

This spell maximizes the target's healing rate (healing rate x3). The recipient must be touched by the caster or the spell cannot take effect, and must be reapplied each day to have effect for that day. SAN: 1

Levitate

This spell allows the caster or a chosen target to float slowly through the air. The caster must be able to see the target properly to levitate it. The effect lasts 1D4 minutes. The spell levitates the caster or target up to 20' off the ground. SAN: 1

Mist of Ry'leh

The caster can create a dense mist to appear within 20' of himself. This cloud is about 30' or so in diameter and obscures vision within it. It is also very creepy and unnatural and deadens sounds within it. SAN: 1

Nightmare

This spell causes the target to experience a horrible nightmare and awake with a scream. The target must make a SAN save (TN 15) or lose D8 SAN. It affects a single sleeping individual, whose name must be known to the caster. The spell can take effect at any range. The shaken victim awakes in a cold sweat, but cannot remember the contents of the dream. SAN: 1

Red Sign of Shudde-M'ell

The caster paints a mystical symbol into the air with his fingers. If formed correctly, a dull, red symbol glows ominously in the air. The sign's sinister effects manifest the round after its creation. Once formed, the sign must be maintained by concentration. All those within 20' of the sign's presence automatically lose 2D6 HP, as their bodies quake and spasm, and their internal organs and blood vessels convulse. This damage occurs per round that the caster concentrates. SAN: 1D4

Shrivelling

This powerful spell of attack requires the right words to be intoned and then the caster must touch his intended victim. The spell causes the target's flesh to shrivel and blacken, causing D8 HP immediately and an additional 2 HP per round that the caster continues to touch the target. SAN: 1D3

Song of Hastur

This song is a wailing ululation costing the caster 1D3 HP each round of the spell, but a successful Cha roll (Perform (sing) ability roll) is needed for the weird melody to be effective. Though anyone present can hear the song, it must be directed against a specific target. The spell causes the skin and flesh of the victim to bubble and fester, causing 1D6 HPs per round. After two rounds, scarring reduces the victim's Cha by 1D6. After four rounds, internal ruptures lowers the victim's CON by 1D6. The victim continues to lose 1D6 CON per round until he reaches zero. Once this happens, the victim's body swells up and then bursts with a sickening pop as steam and gore spill onto the floor. SAN: 1D4.

Speak with Dead

This spell enables the caster to speak with the dead. He must be in the vicinity of the corpse and the longer the person has been dead, the longer it is to recall the dead spirit. The caster must be able to speak the language of the dead person. The corpse will answer up to three questions truthfully. SAN: 1

Summon Byahkee

This spell is designed to summon a Byakhee from the Outer Dark. It is taught to all of Hastur's sworn adepts but over the centuries enough copies of this

spell have been made that the spell is no longer their exclusive domain. SAN: 1D2

Summon Deep Ones

A magic-user may summon 2D4 Deep Ones with this ritual, but there must be Deep Ones within 50 miles. They will rise from the nearby sea once the chant has finished. They will not ordinarily react with aggression when summoned in this manner, unless attacked, but they will expect to have been summoned for the purposes of negotiation. If the caster is acting on the behalf of a community the Deep Ones may make agreements to help them increase their fishing catch, and arrange other blessings from the sea, but at the cost of allowing human/deep one matings and eventually in establishing churches for the *Order of Dagon*. SAN: 1

Summon Dimensional Shambler

This spell is designed to summon a Dimensional Shambler to the caster's presence. The Shambler is allowed a Will save to resist the summons. If the spell is successful the Shambler will appear at a spot designated by the caster and within his immediate vicinity. SAN: 1D2



Summon Hunting Horror

This spell is designed to summon forth one of the elder horror of the Outer Dark known as a Hunting Horror. Dealing with such creatures is unclean and dangerous to the soul though deters few of the practitioners of the dark arts. SAN: 1D3

Summon Star Vampire

This spell allows a person to summon an invisible ravening horror within close proximity of themselves should they ever feel the need to do so. Anyone feeling the need to do and who doesn't want to lose every drop of blood in their body this had better have the binding spell or other precautions ready to go. SAN: 1D2

Summon Yog-Sothoth

This is a major ritual that requires special preparations before it can be cast. A permanent summoning area should be made of stone, either a large room or outdoors where large stone pillars should be erected and an altar positioned. The lengthy ritual requires a blood sacrifice on the altar. Yog-Sothoth may remain in this dimension for only 2 turns. The summoner has no special power or ability to coerce this being, but requests that further his goals may be honoured. SAN: 1D4

Unspeakable Oath

This spell establishes a binding oath made to *He Who Is Not To Be Named* and costs the caster 2D4 HP, in blood sacrifice. Hastur grants the caster some benefit - an important ancient tome as the R'lyeh Text or +2 to an attribute each year, for the rest of the recipient's life. Additionally, however, there is a chance that the caster gradually transforms into a gruesome humanoid monster totally under Hastur's sway. SAN: 1D4

Voice of Ra

This spell temporary increases the caster's Cha and related skills. The spell requires 1 HP. The ritual takes two hours to complete and a variety of herbal components are burned during the casting. For 24 hours, the spell adds 2D4 to the caster's Cha and increases any Cha related ability rolls with a +4 bonus. SAN: 1

Voorish Sign

When the proper gestures of the Voorish sign are made, the magic-user is able to see and detect all extra-dimensional presences or influences within range. This includes beings that are invisible in the magic-user's dimension, or people who may have extra-dimensional beings within them. The sign also allows the caster to see gateways to other dimensions. SAN 1

Walk Among Angles

This ritual alters the consciousness of the spell-caster, granting him unusual spatial understanding and sight. It allows him to walk and navigate through areas constructed of non-Euclidian geometry. In effect, the character can step into an alternate dimension, and step back out somewhere else on Earth that the caster knows. The spell-caster may lead one additional human-sized person by taking an additional SAN point loss per person. SAN: 1

Ward against Deep Ones

By inscribing a glyph of the Old Ones on a small crystal and performing a ritual, a ward against Deep Ones is created. Deep Ones may not enter within 10' of a creature carrying the ward, but they may attack from a distance. SAN: 1

Wrack

This spell temporarily incapacitates a single target. It costs 1 HP to cast. It causes intense wracking pains; the target is incapacitated, the face and hands blister and drip fluid, the eyes cloud with blood and become temporarily sightless. The effect lasts 1D6 rounds, after which sight returns. After 10 + 1D20 minutes, the target fully recovers and resumes normal activity. SAN: 1



CHAPTER 9: DARK CULTS

Many of Lovecraft's writings feature cults, and little distinguishes one cult from another, except that they all worship otherworldly beings. Cultists may feature prominently in Black Books, as they serve as good plot devices and antagonists. The referee is encouraged to develop cults of the various Old Ones, as needed in the campaign.



Black Brotherhood

The Black Brotherhood is a group of international terrorists dedicated to hastening the return of the Great Old Ones. The Brotherhood is made up of people from all ethnicities and ways of life, and, believing that the Old Ones will awaken soon, conduct covert operations, such as attempted political assassinations. Few of its members are taken alive for interrogation, however, as most die shortly after carrying out their operations.

Brotherhood of the Beast

The Brotherhood of the Beast is a cult that worships Nyarlathotep in his aspect as *The Beast*. The Brotherhood is dedicated to fulfilling the prophecies of its founder, *Nephren-Ka*, an Egyptian high priest of Nyarlathotep in the 14th Dynasty.

Brothers of the Yellow Sign

The Brothers of the Yellow Sign (or Cult of the Yellow Sign) worship Hastur in his aspect as the King in Yellow. The cult is led by a group of human immortals from the technologically and physically advanced realm of K'n-yan (the cult probably originated in this subterranean land, though others trace it to the serpent people of Valusia).

Chesuncook Witch Coven

The Chesuncook Witch Coven, or the Cult of the Skull, worships the Outer God Shub-Niggurath. They hold their ceremonies in the deep woods near the village of Chesuncook, Maine. Their rites supposedly include entering a subterranean cavern and descending six thousand steps to a pit filled with hungry shoggoths.

Chorazos Cult

The Chorazos Cult is a sect dedicated to the Outer God Yog-Sothoth. The cult was founded in the mountains of Romania in the late 16th century, but later moved to England and then Scotland. The cult developed an unwholesome reputation and was eventually disbanded by locals although it has resurfaced recently.

Church of Starry Wisdom

The Church of Starry Wisdom, or Starry Wisdom Cult, is a cult that worships Nyarlathotep in his aspect as the Haunter of the Dark. The cult was founded in Providence, Rhode Island circa 1844 by the archaeologist and occultist Professor Enoch Bowen after he returned from Egypt having found the tomb of the unknown pharaoh Nephren-Ka. The cult used an age-old sacred relic known as the *Shining Trapezohedron* to summon the Haunter of the Dark, who demanded outrageous sacrifices in return for limitless knowledge of the universe.

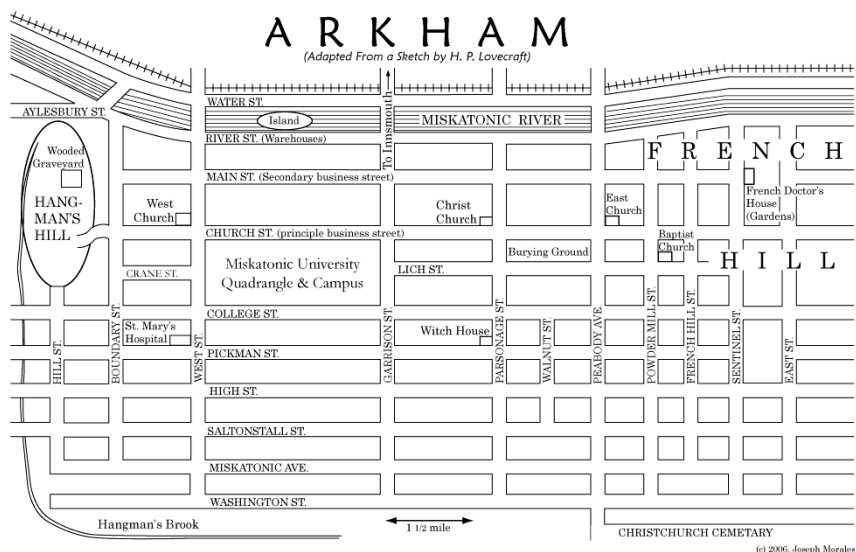
Esoteric Order of Dagon

The Esoteric Order of Dagon is the primary religion of the town of Innsmouth, Massachusetts, at the present time. Its members are dedicated to the worship of Dagon, Mother Hydra, and Cthulhu. The cult primarily consists of degenerate townsfolk, the Deep Ones, and the malformed progeny of their interbreeding.



CHAPTER 10: DARK PLACES

The fiction of the *Cthulhu Mythos* is filled with disturbing ancient places that challenge the human race's view of history, the universe, and themselves. This section describes some of the places that are most significant to the Mythos or appear frequently throughout Mythos stories.



Arkham & Miskatonic University

Arkham is a colonial settlement in north-eastern Massachusetts. It is home of Miskatonic University, an institution which finances various expeditions to ancient Mythos sites. The research carried out by the university and the field work it funds is so groundbreaking that many local residents feel they are delving into things that should be left alone. Other notable institutions are the Arkham Historical Society and the Arkham Sanitarium. Arkham's main newspaper is the Arkham Advertiser (previously called the Arkham Gazette), which has a circulation that reaches as far as Dunwich. Arkham's most notable characteristics are its gambrel roofs and the dark legends that have surrounded the city for centuries. The worryingly frequent disappearance of children around May Eve and other "bad doings" are superstitiously accepted as a part of life for the poorer citizens of the city. The town was devastated by a typhoid outbreak in 1905, around which swirl many dark rumours.

Dreamlands

The Dreamlands is a vast, alternate dimension that can be entered through dreams, similar to astral projection. Experienced dreamers are among the most

powerful inhabitants of the Dreamlands and may become its permanent residents after their physical deaths.

To reach the Dreamlands, a sleeper must find an unusual stairway in a conventional dream and walk down the *Seventy Steps of Light Slumber* to the *Cavern of Flame*, where they face the judgment of powerful gatekeepers named *Nasht* and *Kaman-Tha*. If judged worthy the dreamer is allowed to descend the *Seven Hundred Steps of Deeper Slumber* and emerges in the *Enchanted Wood*. From here, the dreamer can travel to the city of Ulthar on the river Skai, the shining Cerenean Sea, and the valley of Ooth-Nagai wherein lies the fabulous city of Celephias. Here the dreamer will find Zar, land of forgotten dreams and beauty, and Mighty Thalarion, city of wonders from which no dreamer returns. Far to the south lies Xura; land of pleasure unattained, Sona-Nyl, the Land of Fancy, marked by a great crystal arch rising out of the sea, and the huge Basalt Pillars through which a strong current is said to lead to Cathuria, the Land of Hope.

Time flows at a different rate in the Dreamlands; consequently, a traveller can spend months in the Dreamlands during a single night's sleep on earth. Fortunately for dreamers, inhabitants of the Dreamlands are either long-lived or immortal, provided they avoid injury or disease. Despite its accelerated time, the Dreamlands rarely experiences change. Its geography, politics, and population remain fairly static. Dreamers, however, can exert great change over the topography, such as by creating entire cities with accompanying populations.

A complete description of the Dreamlands is beyond the scope of this book, but there is no better introduction to them than H.P. Lovecraft's short novel, *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*.

Dunwich

Dunwich is located in north central Massachusetts, a lonely and curious country broken with ravines and stretches of unpleasant marshlands. The few farmhouses around the region are aged, squalid and dilapidated. The locals are furtive and suspicious of outsiders. The village itself is reached across a covered wooden bridge and is huddled between a stream and the slope of Round Mountain. The houses have gambrel roofs and are of an earlier architectural period than those of the neighbouring region. Most are deserted and falling into ruin. The broken-steepled church now houses the one slovenly mercantile establishment of the hamlet. There is a faint, malign odour about the village street, as of the massed mould and decay of centuries.

Hyperborea

Hyperborea is a legendary continent in the Arctic, written about by ancient Greek scholars . Before it was overwhelmed by the advancing ice sheets of the Pleistocene age, Hyperborea was warm and fertile with lush jungles inhabited by the last remnants of the dinosaurs. A race of yeti-like bipeds known as the Voormi once populated Hyperborea, but were wiped out by the pre-human settlers that migrated here from the south. These pre-humans built the first capital of Hyperborea at Commoriom – a grand city built of marble and granite whose skyline was marked by a multitude of spires. Later the inhabitants moved to Uzuldaroum when prophecies foretold of Commoriom's destruction. The toad-god Tsathoggua, dwells in Mount Voormithadreth, a four-coned extinct volcano in Hyperborea, which is also the dwelling place of a host of other horrors. The sorcerer Eibon wrote his great book of spells in his great tower made of a strange black stone.

Kingsport

The town was founded in 1639 by colonists from southern England and the Channel Islands. It soon became a thriving seaport and centre for shipbuilding. Influenced by the Salem Witch Trials the town hanged four alleged witches in 1692. During the American Revolutionary War, the port was briefly blockaded by the British when the town's merchants turned to privateering against the British fleet. In the 19th century, sea trade dwindled and the town turned to fishing as the main industry. It has been an insular and isolated community for so long that its residents have taken on a peculiar squat and wide-faced look, not unlike the residents of Innsmouth up the coast. There are rumours of strange rituals performed in Kingsport on pagan holidays, drawing participation from the entire population and involving ancient rites in caves below the town. The same rumours speak of contact with unwholesome minions of the abyss.

Innsmouth

Innsmouth is a small Massachusetts coastal town founded in 1643, tucked around a small harbour beneath inland cliffs. Its buildings are old and poorly kept, and it has maintained little of the colonial charm that has made the nearby town of Kingsport a tourist destination. In fact, the people in the towns around Innsmouth avoid it if they can, and they also avoid the only public transportation that passes through Innsmouth - an old private bus that makes the circuit between Arkam and Innsmouth a few times a day.

In 1840, Obed Marsh started a cult in Innsmouth known as the *Esoteric Order of Dagon*, basing it on a religion practiced by certain Polynesian islanders he had met during his travels. Shortly thereafter, the town's fishing industry experienced a great upsurge. Obed Marsh had entered into a contract with Deep

Ones, offering them sacrifices in exchange for plentiful gold and fish. There was a period of interbreeding resulting in numerous deformities and giving many of the locals a singular look, with wide faces and bulging eyes. Records indicate that in 1846 a mysterious plague struck the town, causing mass depopulation. The town has faded ever since, it's few hundred remaining residents generally shunning outsiders.

The people of Innsmouth now make a living selling strange artwork and jewellery made of gold, presumably left over from some long-gone pirate's hidden cache; those in the know realize that the people of Innsmouth still have ties with the Deep Ones to this day.

Leng, The Nightmare Plateau

The Plateau of Leng is a dark, foreboding, cold and arid place where different realities converge. It's location is described variously as hidden in central Asia or Antarctica, or even somewhere in the fabled Dreamlands. Perhaps it touches on numerous locations. Rumours suggest that it is inhabited by the *High Priest Not to Be Described*. This nameless figure dwells alone in a prehistoric monastery, whose walls are covered by detailed frescoes that are disturbing to read. There is also an abandoned city seemingly built by Elder Things and now inhabited by a race of degenerate, goatish humans (possibly ghouls) who are feared by all other men.



Pnakotus, Library City of the Great Race

A vast, abandoned underground city lies below Western Australia's Desert. This was the library city of Pnakotus, where the great race lived 150 million years ago. It was a city of wide roads and giant buildings, curving up to rooftop gardens overlooking cavernous plazas. The chambers of the largest buildings were lined with metal cases containing large books of celluloid paper. In these books the great race recorded historical and cultural details from the past and future of the Earth and other nearby planets. In other parts of the city, enormous cylindrical towers, black and windowless, stood guard over doorways that led down to the vast subterranean chambers of the ancient and terrible enemy of the great race, the flying polyps. Many of its buildings still stand, and many of the ancient books still rest in their cases ready to be discovered.

R'lyeh

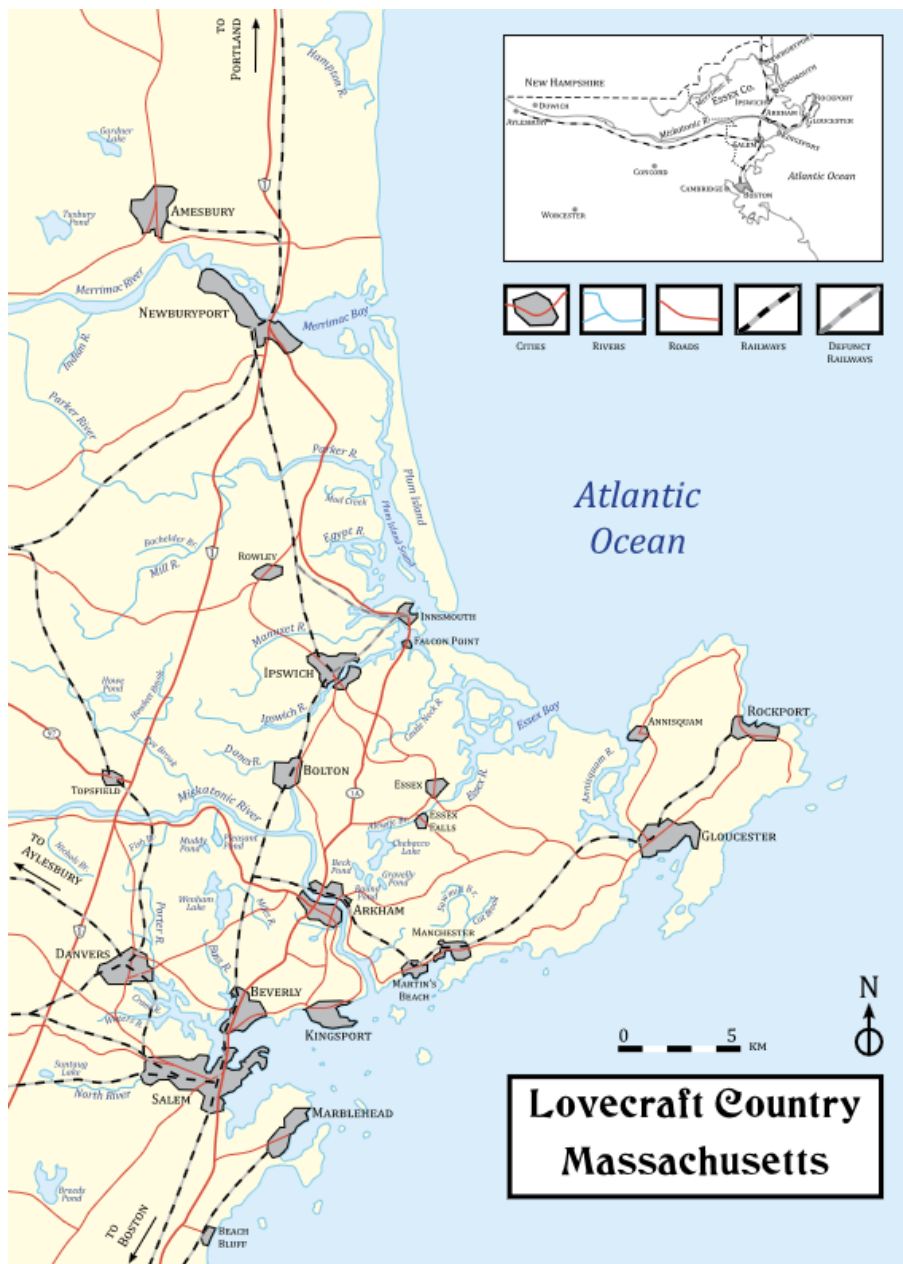
R'lyeh is the city of Great Cthulhu. It rests on the ocean floor of the far South Pacific, approximately 3,000 miles west of Cape Horn and 3,500 miles east of New Zealand. Cthulhu and his minions slumber in a colossal, monolith-capped vault beneath this city's dark, ooze-covered, non-euclidean architecture. When the stars are right, Cthulhu will stir from his dormancy and the entire city of R'lyeh will rise above the ocean. Great Cthulhu's call of nightmares and visions will go out to the world, and cults of his followers, will come to R'lyeh to draw him forth from his vault.

Yuggoth

In ancient pre-human writings the planet we know as Pluto is referred to as Yuggoth. It is inhabited by the fungoid mi-go race of crab-like aliens. The mi-go live in great cities with multiple tiers and terraced towers of black stone and ice, built by an even more ancient race that abandoned the planet long before man walked upright. Yuggoth is so far beyond anything in human experience that just seeing it causes a loss of sanity (TN 15, SAN loss 1D6/1D10).

Y'ha-Nthlei

The cyclopean and many-columned undersea metropolis of Y'ha-Nthlei lies below Devil's Reef off the coast of Massachusetts, near the town of Innsmouth. The oldest Deep Ones have lived in its phosphorescent palaces and terraced gardens of strange coral for tens of thousands of years. In 1928 the U.S. government torpedoed Devil's Reef in 1928 as part of a raid on the town of Innsmouth, and Y'ha-nthlei was presumably destroyed.



CHAPTER 11: MONSTERS

NPCs are all generic versions of the types of folk the characters may meet in their investigations. You can create tougher versions of these folk by giving them experience levels and extra HD.

The following is a quick reference guide for how to read monster and NPC descriptions:

Defence Rating

DR is similar to DR for the PCs. A small fast critter may have a higher DR than a larger slower critter.

Attacks

“Attacks” lists the number of attacks an opponent has and the damage they inflict.

Hit Dice

“Hit Dice” is the number of dice (D6) rolled to determine an individual creature’s HP. If there is a plus or minus after the number, add or subtract that number once from the total rolled.

Note: In Black Books, the monster’s normal “to-hit” bonus is equal to its hit dice. For example, a monster with 3 HD attacks with a +3 “to-hit” bonus.

Move

“Move” is the monster’s movement rate and is handled like it is for PCs.

Saving Throw (Save)

All creatures and NPCs have only one saving throw. It is equal to the HD of the creature.

Special

“Special” is just a “flag” of sorts for the Keeper that serves as a reminder that a monster has a special ability.

The *Outer Gods & Great Old Ones* all have spells and powers at their disposal, so that even if characters don’t go insane immediately on encountering them, they are likely to suffer some sort of psychic or spell effect. Any such abilities are at the Keeper’s discretion. The physical attacks of these deities will cause so much damage that any hit on an investigator is likely to result in immediate death. If it is ever necessary to assign attributes to them, they are all above the human maximum of 19.

Mythos Monsters

The *Cthulhu Mythos* includes races of sentient creatures that pre-date humanity by eons, mindless beasts that slip through the cracks between dimensions, and powerful gods that would quickly destroy us if we ever drew their attention.

This is by no means a complete list of creatures in the Mythos, nor does it contain every creature type or power represented in Lovecraftian literature.



The Outer Gods & Great Old Ones

The Outer Gods and Great Old Ones are, collectively, either members of several different alien races or are unique and powerful alien creatures. All of them came to the planet at different points in the distance past, long before humans where more than ape-like creatures in the trees. Some Great Old Ones accept human (or inhuman) worshippers for reasons that no one fathoms.

These creatures or gods used to rule the earth but lost their hold millions of years ago and were either scattered across the galaxy or hidden in remote areas.

There are no stats included for these horrors – they cannot be killed by any means currently (in the 1920's) known to man. The best you can hope for is to learn a spells to banish them from Earth for a while.

Azathoth (Outer God)

Azathoth exists as a chaotic intelligence that is completely and utterly alien to the human mind. Its form is of a swirling chaos floating in the outer reaches of space, in another dimension of existence. The deity is not matter or “living” in any familiar way. Encounters with Azathoth will almost certainly be through intermediaries or through some dark ritual that taps into just a fraction of the entities’ mind or being. SAN save: 30; SAN loss: 1D8/3D10.

Cthulhu (Great Old One)

Cthulhu is a dark god that lives in the sunken city of R’yloth and communicates with his worshippers telepathically. He is a large, grotesque, green-scaled aquatic humanoid creature with numerous tentacles above the mouth, resembling a squid. He has rudimentary black reptilian wings. Cthulhu’s

intentions are to return to the world as the ruler of Earth and subjugate the human race. SAN save: 30; SAN loss: 1D10/4D10.

Dagon (Great Old One)

Dagon (and his mate Hydra) is one of the last of the *deep one*/Great Old One hybrids. Dagon resembles a deep one in all ways, except that he is massive and extremely loathsome. He will rarely be encountered above the sea, as he spends most of his time in slumber awaiting the return of Cthulhu. Dagon is worshipped by Deep Ones. SAN save: 25; SAN loss: 1D8/2D10

Hastur (Great Old One)

(The Unspeakable, He Who is Not to be Named, The King in Yellow, The Feaster From Afar)

A vast, black and shriveled, flying monstrosity, vaguely octopoid with tentacles tipped with razor-sharp talons that can pierce a victim's skull and siphon out the brain. SAN save: 30; SAN loss: 1D10/4D10

Hydra (Outer God)

Hydra is Dagon's mate. Like Dagon, she resembles a deep one in all ways, except that she is vast, has large membranous wings that allow her to fly and she is equally hideous to look upon. She too slumbers awaiting the return of Cthulhu, but appears among Deep Ones with greater frequency than Dagon. Like Dagon, Hydra is worshipped among Deep Ones as a descendent of Cthulhu and is an intermediary to his power. SAN save: 25; SAN loss: 1D8/2D10.

Mordiggian (Great Old One)

(The Charnel God, The Great Ghoul)

Mordiggian is worshipped by ghouls. When he appears, all fire and heat is sucked into his swirling void-like body, instantly filling the area with a deathly cold and still air. All within the presence of the Great Ghoul, are blinded by the weird changing and dazzling form of the necromantic god. SAN save: 25; SAN loss: 1D10/3D10

Nyarlatheotep (Outer God)

Of all the gods, Nyarlathotep is the most active and he frequently walks the Earth in the guise of a human being, usually a tall, slim, joyous man, although he has a thousand forms. Whilst most of the other gods use strange alien languages, Nyarlathotep uses human languages and can be mistaken for a human being (in this form, there is no SAN loss). Unlike the other mythos deities, causing madness is more important and enjoyable than death and destruction to Nyarlathotep. SAN save: 20; SAN loss: 1D8/2D10

Shub-Niggurath (Great Old One)

(The Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young)

Shub-Niggurath is a perverse fertility deity said to appear as an enormous cloudy mass which extrudes black tentacles, slime-dripping mouths, and short, writhing goat legs. Small creatures are spat forth, which are either re-consumed into the miasmatic form or escape to some monstrous life elsewhere. Of all the mythos deities, Shub-Niggurath is probably the most extensively worshipped. SAN save: 25; SAN loss: 1D8/2D10

Ubbo-Sathla (Outer God)

Ubbo-Sathla is a huge protoplasmic mass resting in a grotto deep beneath the frozen earth. It guards a set of tablets believed to contain the secrets of the Elder Gods. SAN save: 25; SAN loss: 1D10/3D10

Yog-Sothoth (Outer God)

(The Lurker at the Threshold, The Key and the Gate)

Yog-Sothoth is a cosmic entity that takes the form of a conglomeration of glowing spheres. It is co-terminus with all space-time, and yet is locked outside of the universe we inhabit. It is possibly the most widely-worshipped deity in the Cthulhu Mythos. Yog-Sothoth cannot remain in our dimension for long periods, so he works primarily through his cults, servitors and spawn. Supposedly, Yog-Sothoth knows all and sees all and to "please" this deity could bring knowledge of many things. SAN save: 25; SAN loss: 1D10/3D10.



Other Mythos Monsters

Animated Corpse

Defence Rating: 10

Hit Dice: 2

Save: +2

Attacks: By weapon

To Hit: +2

Special:

Move: 9

SAN save: 10

SAN loss: 0/1D4

Animated corpses are dead human bodies that have been brought back to life with their memories and skills intact, though they often acquire a serious psychotic disorder in the process. Animated corpses retain all their traits from life, but they no longer have a constitution score. These are not mindless zombies, but intelligent beings restored to the living and often able to resume their place in society.

Beings of Ib

Defence Rating: 14

Hit Dice: 4

Save: +4

Attacks: Claws x2, Bite (D6 each attack) To Hit: +4

Special: Dimensional Travel

Move: 12

SAN save: 15

SAN loss: 1/1D8

Beings of Ib are named for the legendary city from which they originated, which is rumored to have descended from outer space. These humanoid creatures are revolting to human sensibilities, with skin the color of seaweed, large puffed lips, large bulging eyes, and low hanging ears. They are equally at home above and below water, but their communities are formed on land near freshwater lakes. They may have the ability to travel back and forth from our reality to another; whether this other reality or universe is the *Dreamlands* is unknown. They worship *Bokrug*, a large aquatic lizard-like creature that is believed to have followed the Beings of Ib from the stars.

Byakhee (Winged Servitors)

Defence Rating: 14

Hit Dice: 4+1

Save: +4

Attacks: Claws x2, Bite (D6 each attack) To Hit: +4

Special: Blood Drain

Move: 12/24

SAN save: 10

SAN loss: 1/1D6

Byakhees are pitch black and bipedal, with ant-like limbs, great bat-like wings, and a head like a vulture or crow. Their hands and feet are armed with razor-sharp claws, and their long, pointed tongues can pierce any flesh to suck blood. Some appear almost undead, with patches of missing or peeling flesh and gaping holes in their wings. The Byakhee's ability to fly is partially supernatural, allowing their seemingly slight frames to carry riders up to medium size. If a Byakhee successfully bites an opponent, it remains attached and drains blood each subsequent round, doing 1 point of Strength damage.



Deep Ones

Defence Rating: 15

Hit Dice: 3

Attacks: Claws x2 (D4 each attack)

Save: +3

To Hit: +3

Special: See below

SAN save: 15

SAN loss: 0/1D3

Deep Ones are an ancient race of human sized amphibians with fish-like heads and scales. They have large webbed feet and are a deep greeny-brown colour. They have long arms and long-clawed fingers and move with a combination of hops and ape-like knuckle walking; in the water they are fast and graceful. Deep Ones live in vast cities under the sea. When a group of 20 or more Deep Ones are found, there will be a leader with 5 HD. When 40 or more are encountered, there will be an additional leader with 7 HD. Groups found outside their communities will be accompanied by a 6 HD deep one with D6 spells.

Dholes

Defence Rating: 16

Hit Dice: 9+6

Save: +8

Attacks: Tentacles x8 (D4 each attack)

To Hit: +8

Special: Soporific chant

SAN save: 20

SAN loss: 1D4/2D6

Dholes are immense squids, with elongated worm-like bodies coated with slime. Despite their squid-like appearance, Dholes are actually land-dwellers and are even harmed by water. Dholes are powerful burrowers which can live for more than a thousand years. A low chanting sound accompanies every dhole; this can cause a listener to fall into a deep slumber – a Will save is required to resist.

Dimensional Shamblers

Defence Rating: 17

Hit Dice: 3+3

Save: +3

Attacks: Claws x2 (D6 each attack)

To Hit: +3

Special: Hypnosis, incorporeal form

SAN save: 15

SAN loss: 1/1D8

These creatures appear as short crouching humanoids with tight grey mummy-like skin. They have ape-like heads with crooked fangs and deeply recessed eyes, with long arms with huge claws. Dimensional Shamblers appear solid, but can become incorporeal in our world at will; making them unable to touch or be touched. Shamblers can be called to our dimension with certain spells to hunt a victim. When they have chosen (or been directed to) a victim they will attempt to suck them into their own dimension calling as many of their cohorts as needed. While they do seem to grab at the victim they actually use a form of hypnosis too – the save TN is 15.

Elder Things

Defence Rating: 18

Hit Dice: 5+3

Save: +5

Attacks: Tentacles x5 (D4 each attack)

To Hit: +5

Special: Superior intelligence

SAN save: 15

SAN loss: 1/1D6

Elder things are a race of highly intelligent aliens that seem to be roughly amphibian and vegetable in biology. They are very different from humans in physique, standing about 8' tall and being roughly barrel-shaped with starfish-like appendages at each end. They have five leathery, fan-like retractable wings and five sets of branching tentacles that sprouted from their torsos. Elder

Things came from the stars using some form of technology that was later lost to them as their society degenerated. They can hibernate for long periods of time and can survive the pressures deep under the oceans.

Flying Polyps

Defence Rating: 19

Hit Dice: 6+3

Attacks: Bite (D10)

Save: +6

To Hit: +6

Special: Invisibility, incorporeal form, alien senses, control winds

SAN save: 15

SAN loss: 1D2/1D10

Flying polyps appear as flying masses of nauseating matter covered in eyes, mouths, and dangling tentacles. Their bodies shift form, growing, splitting, changing, and sometimes vanishing

altogether suggesting they do not exist completely within our dimension. In spite of their eyes, flying polyps are blind and have no concept of light, instead sensing their surroundings through unnatural air currents which constantly swirl around their being. A howling distinctive wind surrounds them always, allowing creatures to hear them even if they cannot be seen. They attack with blasts of desiccating hot wind, and tentacles which seem to phase through matter. Strange five-toed footprints are sometime left on the ground beneath their bodies as they move. Flying polyps are intelligent but possess such alien minds and thoughts that their motives and language is impossible to understand. They seem to possess a telepathy between each other, but otherwise do not speak nor respond to any attempts at speaking with them, even with magic.



Ghoul

Defence Rating: 13

Hit Dice: 1+1

Attacks: By weapon or bite (D4)

Save: +1

To hit: +1

Special: Infectious bite

SAN save: 15

SAN loss: 0/1D6

Ghouls are blasphemous human sized creatures that have dog-like visages and drooling lips. Their diet is almost exclusively limited to human corpses, which they obtain by raiding graveyards. When very hungry they may attack living beings. Ghouls prefer to move about at night or underground. Their bite can infect the victim with ghoulishness; the Fort save against this is TN 10 +1 for every HP taken from being bitten. Initially, an infected person may develop unusual cravings for raw and rotting flesh, but as time goes on the infected character will gradually develop canine features until the transformation is complete after 2D4 weeks.

Hounds of Tindalos

Defence Rating: 15

Hit Dice: 5

Save: +5

Attacks: claws x2, bite (D6 x2, D8)

To Hit: +5

SAN save: 15

SAN loss: 1/1D8

There is a place spoken of called Tindalos, a red planet of horrors unspeakable. It is from this place that it is believed the hounds of Tindalos come. They are large, hairless creatures that have leathery hides, long reptilian tails, and eyes of a frightening ophidian nature. Their snouts are filled with long fangs and their paws end in sharp talons. They hunt in packs and seek to devour with an insatiable hunger.

Hunting Horror, The Hunter of the Dark

Defence Rating: 18

Hit Dice: 9

Save: +9

Attacks: claws x2, bite (D8 x2, D10)

To Hit: +9

Special: Aging gaze, incorporeal form

SAN save: 20

SAN loss: 1D3/1D10

The hunting horror is a giant black winged creature that can take incorporeal form as a dense black cloud. It has claws and teeth to rend with, but its victims often die of fear when faced with the terrible realities this creature can conjure in their minds. Hunting Horrors speak the language of those who called them. If any creature looks into the hunting horror's face while it is in corporeal form, the hunting horror may inflict premature aging (2D6 years) on that creature (Difficulty 25 FORT save).

Mi-go, The Fungi From Yuggoth

Defence Rating: 14

Hit Dice: 3

Save: +3

Attacks: Electric weapon or pincers x2 (D6 each attack)

To Hit: +3

Special: Flight, electrical weapon

SAN save: 20

SAN loss: 1/1D8

Long before the human race evolved, mi-go came to Earth from their colony on the planet Yoggoth, known today as Pluto. They are plant-like in many ways, but behave more like intelligent flying crustaceans. Though they vary widely in appearance, a typical mi-go is a pink crustacean about five feet long, with a large pair of membranous wings extending from the centre of its back. It has many pairs of chitinous limbs ending in pincers, and a tapering tail used for balance in flight and when walking upright on only the hindmost limbs. Its head is an oblate spheroid covered with short antennae that glow different colors when communicating with other mi-go. The electrical weapon they wield is like some sort of weird gun that causes 2D6 electricity damage.

Nightgaunts

Defence Rating: 14

Hit Dice: 2+1

Save: +2

Attacks: By weapon or tail (1D8)

To Hit: +2

Special:

SAN save: 15

SAN loss: 0/1D6

Nightgaunts dwell in the Dreamlands and have a vaguely human shape, but are thin, black, and faceless. Their skin is slick and rubbery. They sport a pair of inward-facing horns on their heads, a long barbed tail, and prehensile paws. They can fly using a set of membranous wings but make no sound.



Rat Things

Defence Rating: 13

Hit Dice: 1

Save: +1

Attacks: Bite (D4)

To Hit: +1

Special: None

SAN save: 10

SAN loss: 0/1D3

Rat things are twisted combinations of humans and rats. They are the size of a large rat and the same basic shape, but they have elongated human faces and tiny human hands at the ends of all four of their legs. Rat things live for hundreds of years and often serve wizards and priests as familiars.

Shoggoths

Defence Rating: 16

Hit Dice: 7+3

Save: +7

Attacks: Pseudopods x2 (2D4 each attack)

To Hit: +7

Special: swallow

SAN save: 15

SAN loss: 1D3/1D10

These are large amorphous creatures, originally created by Elder Things. They are capable of changing their shape and extruding pseudopods to undertake tasks or to make attacks. They built vast underwater cities for their masters, before they evolved intelligence and rebelled. They are equally at home above or below water. If they grab their victim (by hitting with both pseudopods in the same round) the victim must make a TN15 REF save to avoid being dragged completely into their mass. Unable to attack from within, victims are digested in 2d4 rounds unless freed by others. Fire or heat-based attacks cause double damage and shoggoths get no bonus to their save against fire.

Star Vampires

Defence Rating: 18

Hit Dice: 5+5

Save: +5

Attacks: Talons x4 (1D6 each attack)

To Hit: +5

Special: bite

SAN save: 15

SAN loss: 1/1D8

These loathsome, hovering things are six-foot orbs of writhing claw-and-mouth tipped tentacles. They are normally invisible but sometimes give themselves away with a ghoulish tittering before feeding. After feeding, star vampires become visible; suffused and bloated with the blood of their victim. They are gluttons for blood and often haunt hillsides where there are herds of cows or sheep. They attack by swooping down invisibly from the night sky. If they hit with at least one talon, they can bite in the same round at +8 to hit. The bite

does D4 damage and D3 strength drain. Powerful wizards and other beings who possess the hubris or lore needed to control them summon star vampires from the depths of space to slay their enemies. Such as, say, meddling Investigators.

Zombies

Defence Rating: 10

Hit Dice: 2

Save: +2

Attacks: claws x2 (1D3 each attack)

To Hit: +2

Special: infectious bite

SAN save: 10

SAN loss: 0/1D4

If the zombie hits with both claws it has grabbed its victim and can bite them next round at +4 to hit, if they fail to free themselves from the zombie's grasp. The bite causes D4 damage and, if the victim is killed as a result of a bite, will infect the victim. This infection turns the victim into a zombie in 1D6 hours. Zombies cannot cross salt, so laying a line across a doorway or similar will prevent the zombie passing. In addition, throwing a handful of salt at a zombie will cause 2D4 damage to it.



Mundane Critters

PCs might come across some animals in their travels, which might present unexpected dangers.

Bear, Black

Defence Rating: 13

Hit Dice: 3+6

Save: +3

Attacks: Claws x2, Bite (D6 each attack) To Hit: +3

Special: Grapple

Move: 14

If it hits with both claws it can then start to grapple, where it does automatic damage of 2D6 per round. The PC needs to make a STR or DEX roll of TN15 to escape.

Bear, Grizzly or Polar

Defence Rating: 14

Hit Dice: 5+6

Save: +5

Attacks: Claws x2, Bite (D6 each attack) To Hit: +5

Special: Grapple

Move: 14

If it hits with both claws it can then start to grapple; it does automatic damage of 2D6 per round. The PC needs to make a STR or DEX roll of TN15 to escape.

Cougar (or Jaguar)

Defence Rating: 14

Hit Dice: 3+1

Save: +3

Attacks: Claws x2, Bite (D4 each attack) To Hit: +3

Special: Pounce

Move: 14

If the big cat hits with both of its claws, it rakes for an additional 2d4 damage.

Crocodile

Defence Rating: 16

Hit Dice: 4+2, 5+2, 6+2

Save: +4, +5 or +6

Attacks: Bite (D6, D8 or D10) To Hit: +4, +5 or +6

Special:

Move: 9/16 (swim)

If a crocodile scores maximum damage on its damage roll, it goes into a 'death roll' while latched onto its prey, doing automatic damage in later rounds. The victim must make a TN 15 FORT save to take any action that round.

Shark

Defence Rating: 15

Hit Dice: 3+3, 5+5 or 7+7

Attacks: Bite (2D6, 3D6 or 4D6)

Special: Track (blood)

Move: 18 (swim)

Save: +3, +5 or +7

To Hit: +3, +5 or +7

Snake, Constrictor

Defence Rating: 13

Hit Dice: 3

Attacks: Bite (D3)

Special: Constriction

Move: 9

Save: +3

To Hit: +3

If it hits with its bite it can then start to constrict, where it does automatic damage of 2D6 per round. The PC needs to make a STR or DEX roll of TN15 to escape.

Snake, Rattler

Defence Rating: 14

Hit Dice: ½

Attacks: Bite (D2)

Special: Venomous bite

Move: 9

Save: +0

To Hit: +0

The PC must make a FORT save of TN 10 or become nauseous and start vomiting, if bitten. This continues for an hour after which another FORT save is required or the PC becomes paralyzed. After another hour, another FORT save is required – success means the PC recovers over the course of the next hour. Failure means the character will die within the hour unless aid is received. At any stage, if the victim receives proper medical attention the character will recover within an hour.

Wolf

Defence Rating: 13

Hit Dice: 1+1

Attacks: Bite (D6)

Special: Track (scent)

Move: 16

Save: +1

To Hit: +1

Wolves track by scent as 5 HD creatures.

NPC Types

Here are stats for a few sample NPC types – feel free to adjust to suit.

Cop

DR: 11

HD: 1D6

Save: +0

Attacks: By weapon

To Hit: +1

Special:

Move: 12

This is a beat cop. He will carry a truncheon and a hand gun.

Cultist

DR: 10

HD: 1D6

Save: +1

Attacks: Dagger D4

To Hit: +0

Special: 1 in 6 chance of a spell (roll 6 on D6)

Move: 12

This is a worshipper of the Great Old Gods. He or she has probably started the descent into madness.

Cultist High Priest

DR: 10

HD: 3D6

Save: +3

Attacks: Dagger D4

To Hit: +0

Special: 2D4 spells

Move: 12

This is a leader of a cult that worships the Great Old Gods. Some can have more HD and a wider array of spells. Most have been driven to insanity by their researches.

Goon

DR: 11

HD: 1D6+1

Save: +1

Attacks: By weapon

To hit: +1

Special: None

Move: 9

This guy has been around a bit and knows the score. This type is usually hired just to fill out the ranks. He's not expected to think for himself.

"Joe" Average

DR: 10

HD: 1D6

Save: +0

Attacks: Fist D3

To Hit: +0

Special: None

Move: 12

These are just your ordinary everyday folk; shop assistants, parking attendants, businessmen, office workers, bar tenders, farmers and so on. They aren't usually armed.

Mobster

DR: 12

HD: 2D6+2

Save: +2

Attacks: Weapon

To Hit: +2

Special: +1 initiative

Move: 12

This guy is a tough guy who is part of a large outfit of organized criminals. He has seen his fair share of violence. He's likely to have a few goons with him and probably has a tommy gun.



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Authors Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, Andy

Collins, David Noonan, Rich Redman, Bruce R. Cordell, John D. Rateliff,

Thomas Reid, James Wyatt, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and

Dave Arneson.

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