



TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY KENNETH HITE

BASED ON THE GUMSHOE SYSTEM BY ROBIN D LAWS

DEMO GAME



Pelgrane Press

Ritual Pursuits

a demo for Trail of Cthulhu

by Steve Dempsey

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Credits

Ritual Pursuits is a 15 minute demo for *Trail of Cthulhu* written by Steve Dempsey.

Artwork - Jerome Huguenin

Layout Template - Jerome Huguenin

Layout - Beth Lewis

Trail of Cthulhu Core Rulebook written by Kenneth Hite

Based on the **GUMSHOE System** by Robin D Laws

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Ritual Pursuits

BACKGROUND

This is what is going on. Vincent Crane is a graduate of the Miskatonic University. He read some things in the library that have unhinged him, part of the Necronomicon. He decided that he wanted to contact Abdul Alhazred in order to understand things better. He has managed to contact Alhazred and warn him off his impending doom. Crane has also tracked down a descendant of the Mad Arab's into whom his spirit can be summoned, namely Woodrow Chadwick. Crane has holed up in his family's old farm outside Muncie, IN. He has arranged for Chadwick to come to him by faking a haunting and inviting Tyler to Indianapolis. Tyler has missed the rendezvous and welcomed party so Crane has summoned up and despatched a Night Gaunt to fetch Chadwick for the ritual. This involved the killing of many farm animals as an offering and the inscription of a large Elder Sign on the side of his barn. This ruckus worried the neighbours who called the police. Two policemen arrived. One, Officer Taylor, was killed by Crane with a shotgun. The other, Hicks, escaped the carnage by running away. It is he that the PCs will meet on the road.

INTRODUCTION

It's 1931 and the Indianapolis Indians have just opened their new Perry Stadium on 16th St. Also the newly reformed Indianapolis ABCs are playing in the Negro National League. Travelling to Indianapolis cross country from New York in a quite a decent car, a Ford Model A Sedan, are you five people looking to take advantage of these exciting times. There are 2 ball

players, a sports journalist, a doctor, an author whose car it is and the driver. It's not been an easy journey. Unmarried women travelling with men and whites travelling with blacks are viewed with great suspicion.

You took a slight detour in Ohio to check out a haunting in Lima. You had hoped to make better time because you need to be in Indy tonight. You've been forced to push on into the night and now you're just South of Muncie. It is a moonless night. It is clear and cold, being March and the stars are bright.

SCENE 1 – THE POLICE OFFICER

Scene type: Core (Cop Talk)

Suddenly there is a roadblock up ahead. A police officer flags the car down with a torch and Woodrow is asked to get out of the car. Anyone who wants to **Sense Trouble** and will see a flickering as something occludes the stars.

Woodrow and the officer stand talking in the headlights when some large creature swoops down assaults the officer and disappears into the night with Woodrow in its clutches (**Stability** 4 for those who can see the Night Gaunt, 5 for Tyler who's friend has been abducted).

Officer Hicks, #7435, is dead (**Stability** 2 for those who didn't see the Night Gaunt). His head almost twisted off. On the floor next to him is a torch and his notebook. **Medicine** or **Shooting** (supplementary clue) reveals that the officer had some shotgun pellets in his side that were inflicted under an hour ago.

Decoding the notebook requires **Cop Talk** (core clue) and shows that he was investigating a disturbance at the Crane farmstead. Their neighbours, the Dicky's, reported (10-67) strange noises and screams (10-91b) coming from the farm, possibly a prowler (10-70). The Dicky's have the only phone in the area and Old Mother Dicky wasn't too keen on investigating.

The officer's vehicle is nowhere to be seen but across the fields you can the lights in a farmhouse.

SCENE 2 – THE FARMHOUSE

Scene type: Core (Evidence Collection)

Time is of the essence, the group must find Chadwick before Crane completes his terrible ritual. Arriving at the farm house, the group finds the yard awash with the blood and flesh of many animals (**Stability** 3). Parts bear human bite marks and parts have been nailed to the barn, in and around a strange symbol that has been inscribed. A pipe from a large water tower has created a small stream that runs into the barn. **Occult** (supplementary clue) will confirm this is some kind of summoning ritual.

To one side is parked a police car, both doors are open. A dead police officer lies slumped and bloody across the front seat. His chest has a large shotgun wound. His gun lies on the floor.

Inside the homestead is a bloody mess, the remains of Crane's research and experiments. Mad scrawlings adorn the walls, papers are strewn everywhere

and various body parts and other indescribable things are scattered here and there.

Evidence Collection (core clue) allows a quick assessment. Simple searching will find all the clues but the group will arrive at the quarry after the ritual has failed. The perpetrator is not here but there is a drawing on the wall that is some kind of map. Outdoorsman allows the speedy identification of the location, a quarry somewhere to the north of here.

A spend of **Evidence Collection** will allow the investigator to recognise that the various notes, books and images, if collected, amount to a Mythos Tome, the Crane Archive, giving a pool of **Occult 2** and **Cthulhu Mythos 1**. It is a mixture of English and Arabic. There are three spells present, Call Dark Servitor (Summon/Bind Night Gaunt), Summon Ancestor (a Resurrection variant requiring a descendant of the deceased into whom the spirit of the dead is summoned) and Blessing of the Dark (enchant knife). Using **Languages** (Arabic) will spot that the Summon Ancestor spell has been mistranslated. Occult would then indicate that the ritual is likely to fail.

SCENE 3 – THE RITUAL

Scene type: Resolution

Crane has prepared an old quarry for his ritual. There are long strips of copper wire that radiate out from the centre to the rim and channel whatever unearthly power Crane is using (see map). Unearthly energies coruscate in the night sky (see handout).

If the PCs used a simple search in the Farm, they arrive after the ritual has failed finding both participants unconscious and slumped to the ground, the Night Gaunt, prancing and picking at their bodies.



Otherwise, as the PCs reach the quarry, their car is attacked by the Night Gaunt (p144 of the *Trail of Cthulhu* core rulebook), sent to stop them by Crane. It will attempt to carry PCs off and drop them into the quarry (it has to make a scuffling roll to avoid dropping them in the water).

Athletics checks are necessary to make it down into the quarry quickly. The target is 4 with a torch, 5 without (-1 to target if going more slowly).

Otherwise a difficult **Drive** roll (7) with one wheel bumped up on one of the copper strips can get the car down to the bottom in one round.

The PCs have three rounds to reach Crane before he finishes his ritual. And it will take them this long to get in range to shoot him. Other ways of interrupting the ritual include disrupting the copper wires in some way. Touching them directly incurs a blast of ethereal energy doing 1d6 damage and permanently blasting away

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Ritual Pursuits

1 **Sanity** as the unfortunate's brain is directly exposed to the otherworldly nexus. However this will stun Crane and knock him down for a round.

In any case, the ritual will not succeed because Crane doesn't have the correct spell. It will pull Al Hazred from his proper place in time and space, as if invisible creatures were devouring him. He will be mostly trapped in limbo but some portion of his being will enter Chadwick and corrupt him. He will respond by using the Shrivelling spell (p117 of *Trail of Cthulhu*) on any who come near, first using it to severely hurt Crane.

Chadwick will be on -1 **Stability** by this point. He will shrivel the first PC to approach (4pts to cast, 5 pts to the damage roll) leaving him on -11 **Sanity**, almost completely mad. He will last one round of gibbering before he too collapses.

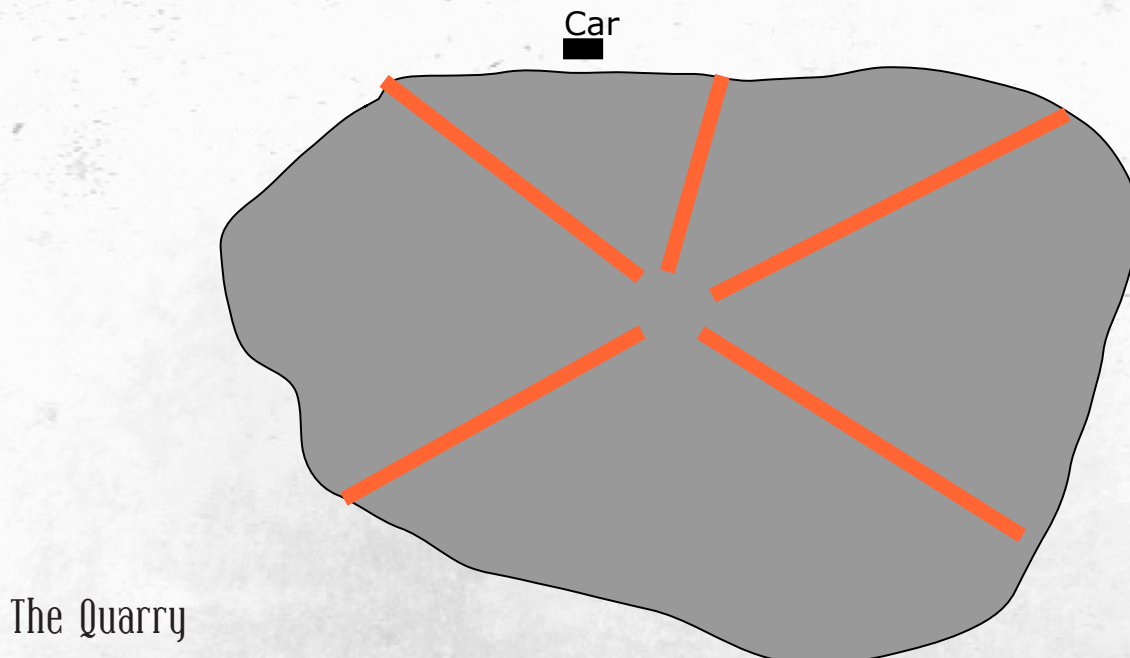
THE NIGHTGAUNT

This is straight from the book although you might like to change things a bit to make it more interesting for the players. Nightgaunts use a 'tickle' ability to immobilise. There are several ways this can be represented in the game:

- the Nightgaunt applies pressure to points on the character paralysing them and causing their face to contort in a terrible rictus;
- the Nightgaunt does not swoop but presents itself initially as a ridiculous idea to the character who can't help but chuckle at the enormity of it. When the character laughs, they let down their guard and the Nightgaunt can insinuate itself into reality and carry them off, helpless as they are with the terrible humour of what is happening.

PRE-GENERATED CHARACTERS

Print off the following 5 pages as name tags for your table, and distribute them with the character sheets to your players.



Amanda Jones

Journalist

Amanda Jones – Eager Journalist

Your family is from Brooklyn and your dad played for the Dodgers. You travelled the country with him as he plied his trade. Now you're a journalist looking for a break. If that wasn't hard enough for a woman, you're a sports journalist. You've managed to get a job in Indianapolis, writing copy on the local AAA team, the Indians.

Brad Heller

Baseball Player

Brad Heller – Journeyman ballplayer

Originally you're from California but you've travelled all over the States plying your trade as a catcher in the Negro Leagues. The ABCs are looking for a seasoned pro to help develop their young players and you've landed the job. Recently you've been working as a bible salesman so that's much better. You helped Fran with some baseball myths when you played for the Louisville Colonels.

Eugene Stafford Baseball Pitcher

Eugene Stafford – Ex-con baseball pitcher

You're from Queens where you had a job as a locksmith. You practised on the side a bit, cracking safes for the mob. On Sundays you played amateur baseball in the park and that's where you were spotted by a scout for the Indianapolis Indians. Hopefully you can stay out of trouble and make a name for yourself.

Wandering Author

Fran Tyler

Fran Tyler – Wandering Author

Originally from Louisville, KY, you travel across America, collecting myths and legends and writing them up as horror stories for the pulp magazines. Recently you've heard some strange things about Indianapolis so you're checking it out. You don't like to travel alone so you advertised in the paper and have some interesting companions for the trip from NY.

Alan Lansdale Doctor

Alan Lansdale – Poor farmboy made good as a doctor

From a poor family of farmers from up-state Massachusetts, you've made it good to become a doctor. The trouble is, you've not got any money to buy a place in a swanky new practice but the Indianapolis Indians need a doctor to go with them on the road and you've got the job. You hope to save enough to start your own practice.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

BY KENNETH HITE

Player Name:

Sanity¹

0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Hit Threshold³

Stability

-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15

Health

-12	-11	-10	-9
-8	-7	-6	-5
-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3
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² Occupational abilities are half price. Mark them with a * before assigning points.

³ Hit Threshold is 3, 4 if your Athletics is 8 or higher

⁴ These General abilities double up as Investigative abilities

⁴ Usually, you can't start with Cthulhu Mythos. Sanity is limited to 10-Cthulhu Mythos.

⁵ In a Pulp game If your Firearms rating is 5 you can fire two pistols at once (see p. 42)

⁶ Assign one language per point, during play. Record them here.

⁷ Any Fleeing rating above twice your Athletics rating costs one point for two.

⁸ Only Alienists and Parapsychologists can buy Hypnosis, and only in a Pulp game

⁹ You start with 4 free Sanity points, 1 Health and 1 Stability point.

Investigator Name: *Alan Lumsdale*

Drive: Adventure

Occupation:² Doctor

Occupational benefits:

Access to medical records

Improved first aid

Description:

Build Points:

SOURCES OF STABILITY:

PILLARS OF SANITY

The American Dream is there for me
The Hippocratic Oath

Academic Abilities

Accounting	2
Anthropology	1
Archaeology	
Architecture	
Art History	
Biology	2
Cthulhu Mythos ⁴	
Cryptography	
Geology	
History	
Languages ⁶	2

Interpersonal Abilities

Assess Honesty	2
Bargain	
Bureaucracy	1
Cop Talk	3
Credit Rating	
Flattery	
Interrogation	
Intimidation	
Oral History	
Reassurance	4
Streetwise	

General Abilities

Athletics	
Conceal	
Disguise ¹⁰	
Driving	2
Electrical Repair ¹¹	2
Explosives ¹²	1
Filch	
Firearms ⁵	4
First Aid	8
Fleeing ⁷	6
Health ⁹	8
Hypnosis ⁸	0
Mechanical Repair ¹³	4

Technical Abilities

Law	
Library Use	1
Medicine	4
Occult	
Physics	
Theology	
Art	1
Astronomy	
Chemistry	1
Craft	
Evidence Collection	
Forensics	2
Locksmith	
Outdoorsman	1
Pharmacy	2
Photography	

Piloting	2
Preparedness	2
Psychoanalysis	6
Riding	4
Sanity ⁹	8
Stability ⁹	10
Scuffling	6
Sense Trouble	2
Shadowing	
Stealth	1
Weapons	

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Investigator Name: *Amanda Jones*

Drive: Adventure

Occupation:² Journalist

Occupational benefits:

Access to newspaper records

Description:

Build Points:

SOURCES OF STABILITY:

PILLARS OF SANITY

Our elders are worthy of respect
The truth will should be heard

Academic Abilities

Interpersonal Abilities

General Abilities

Accounting

Anthropology

Archaeology

Architecture

Art History

Biology

Cthulhu Mythos⁴

Cryptography

Geology

History

Languages⁶

Assess Honesty

Bargain

Bureaucracy

Cop Talk

Credit Rating

Flattery

Interrogation

Intimidation

Oral History

Reassurance

Streetwise

Athletics

Conceal

Disguise¹⁰

Driving

Electrical Repair¹⁰

Explosives¹⁰

Filch

Firearms⁵

First Aid

Fleeing⁷

Health⁹

Hypnosis⁸

Mechanical Repair¹⁰

Piloting

Preparedness

Psychoanalysis

Riding

Sanity⁹

Stability⁹

Scuffling

Sense Trouble

Shadowing

Stealth

Weapons

Law

Library Use

Medicine

Occult

Physics

Theology

Technical Abilities

Art

Astronomy

Chemistry

Craft

Evidence Collection

Forensics

Locksmith

Outdoorsman

Pharmacy

Photography

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Investigator Name: *Brad Heller*

Drive: Arrogance

Occupation:² Baseball Player (Dilettante)

Occupational benefits:

Use Credit rating to call on personal contacts

Description:

Build Points:

SOURCES OF STABILITY:

PILLARS OF SANITY

Jesus is my salvation
Work is good for the soul

Academic Abilities

Interpersonal Abilities

General Abilities

Accounting

Anthropology

Archaeology

Architecture

Art History

Biology

Cthulhu Mythos⁴

Cryptography

Geology

History 1

Languages⁶

Assess Honesty 1

Bargain 2

Bureaucracy

Cop Talk

Credit Rating

Flattery 2

Interrogation

Intimidation 3

Oral History 2

Reassurance 1

Streetwise 2

Athletics 12

Conceal 1

Disguise⁴

Driving 2

Electrical Repair⁴ 6

Explosives⁴

Filch 2

Firearms⁵ 6

First Aid 2

Fleeing⁷

Health⁹ 9

Hypnosis⁸

Mechanical Repair⁴ 6

Piloting

Preparedness 2

Psychoanalysis

Riding

Sanity⁹ 8

Stability⁹ 8

Scuffling 8

Sense Trouble 2

Shadowing

Stealth 4

Weapons 4

Law

Library Use

Medicine

Occult

Physics

Theology 2

Technical Abilities

Art

Astronomy

Chemistry

Craft 1

Evidence Collection

Forensics

Locksmith

Outdoorsman 2

Pharmacy

Photography

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Investigator Name: *Eugene Stafford*

Drive: Duty

Occupation:² Criminal

Occupational benefits:

Conceal, filch, shadowing, spend after roll

Description:

Build Points:

SOURCES OF STABILITY:

PILLARS OF SANITY

Love of baseball
A good life is its own reward

Academic Abilities

Interpersonal Abilities

General Abilities

Accounting

Anthropology

Archaeology

Architecture

Art History

Biology

Cthulhu Mythos⁴

Cryptography

Geology

History

Languages⁶ 1

Assess Honesty 2

Bargain 2

Bureaucracy

Cop Talk 1

Credit Rating

Flattery 1

Interrogation

Intimidation 2

Oral History 1

Reassurance 1

Streetwise 2

Athletics 14

Conceal 4

Disguise¹⁰

Driving 2

Electrical Repair¹⁰ 1

Explosives¹⁰

Filch 6

Firearms⁵ 1

First Aid

Fleeing⁷

Health⁹ 10

Hypnosis⁸

Mechanical Repair¹⁰ 1

Piloting

Preparedness

Psychoanalysis

Riding

Sanity⁹ 8

Stability⁹ 8

Scuffling 8

Sense Trouble 4

Shadowing 4

Stealth 8

Weapons 4

Technical Abilities

Law 1

Library Use

Medicine

Occult

Physics

Theology 1

Art

Astronomy

Chemistry

Craft 2

Evidence Collection

Forensics

Locksmith 2

Outdoorsman

Pharmacy

Photography

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Investigator Name: *Fran Tyler*

Drive: Thirst for Knowledge

Occupation:² Author

Occupational benefits:

Academic pool refresh

Description:

Build Points:

SOURCES OF STABILITY:

Woodrow Chadwick

PILLARS OF SANITY

Knowledge is to be cherished
Humanity is special

Academic Abilities

Accounting	
Anthropology	1
Archaeology	
Architecture	1
Art History	2
Biology	
Cthulhu Mythos ⁴	
Cryptography	
Geology	
History	2
Languages ⁶	2

Interpersonal Abilities

Assess Honesty	1
Bargain	
Bureaucracy	
Cop Talk	
Credit Rating	5
Flattery	
Interrogation	2
Intimidation	
Oral History	2
Reassurance	
Streetwise	

General Abilities

Athletics	
Conceal	4
Disguise ⁴	2
Driving	8
Electrical Repair ⁴	
Explosives ⁴	
Filch	
Firearms ⁵	4
First Aid	2
Fleeing ⁷	6
Health ⁹	8
Hypnosis ⁸	
Mechanical Repair ⁴	2

Law

Library Use	2
Medicine	
Occult	2
Physics	
Theology	

Technical Abilities

Art	1
Astronomy	1
Chemistry	
Craft	
Evidence Collection	2
Forensics	
Locksmith	
Outdoorsman	
Pharmacy	
Photography	2

Piloting	
Preparedness	4
Psychoanalysis	
Riding	
Sanity ⁹	8
Stability ⁹	12
Scuffling	4
Sense Trouble	4
Shadowing	4
Stealth	6
Weapons	