

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

The Apocalypse Machine

by Graham Walmsley



CTHULHU APOCALYPSE



Pelgrane Press

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CTHULHU APOCALYPSE



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Introduction



On November 2nd, 1936, the world died. Humanity perished, women and men died in their millions. Finally, the stars had come right, and the things that had lurked under the seas for eons rose to claim their rightful place. Now, they rule the earth, stalking it like titans.

Yet you survived this destruction. Some miracle or design left you alive to watch the destruction of everything humanity built. You are doomed to wander the devastated ruins, discovering what little you can. What went wrong? Are there others like you? How can you stay alive? Can you fight back? And, most importantly of all, is there a way to put this right?

The Apocalypse Machine continues the investigations of Trail of Cthulhu in a post-apocalyptic world. In these pages, you will find instructions on designing your own apocalypse; new Occupations, Skills and Drives, and explanations of how the old ones function in this post-apocalyptic world; and many ways for the Mythos to take over the world.

Note that these rules add to, rather than replace, the Trail of Cthulhu ruleset. Unless otherwise noted, everything in

the original rules applies. Specifically, The Apocalypse Machine uses the rules for the Pulp mode of play. For example, First Aid refreshes your health pool up to maximum (rather than a third, as in the Purist mode of play). You'll need it. Note also that, although we use the Pulp rules, the tone of post-apocalyptic adventures differs greatly from pulp fiction.

Additionally, The Apocalypse Machine makes a distinction of its own: between Aftershock adventures and Wasteland adventures.

Aftershock

Aftershock adventures are set in the immediate aftermath of the apocalypse. Perhaps the adventure begins with the apocalypse; perhaps it begins immediately after. Either way, civilisation is destroyed. The Investigators wander their newly-destroyed homeland, searching for the truth and for those they love.

On their journeys, they meet others, coping with the collapse of society in various ways: with compassion, with violence, by helping themselves, by helping others. Aftershock adventures

draw literary inspiration from sources such as H. G. Wells' The War Of The Worlds and John Wyndham's The Day Of The Triffids.

Where something applies to Aftershock adventures, it is marked with this symbol:



Wasteland

Wasteland adventures are set some time after the apocalypse. The old civilisation has gone: a new, rougher society has risen in its place. The Investigators travel across the wasteland, through frontier townships, destroyed buildings and poisoned farmland. As they travel, they meet individuals and communities, who will help and hinder them. Wasteland adventures take their fictional cue from David Brin's The Postman, the movie Mad Max and the Fallout games.

Rules intended for Wasteland adventures are marked with this symbol.





The Apocalypse Machine



It is time to discover how the world was destroyed. What was the nature of the apocalypse that left civilisation in ruins? Besides humanity, what else did it destroy? And who or what was ultimately responsible for the apocalypse?

Now, not every disaster qualifies as an apocalypse. An apocalypse in The Apocalypse Machine must meet the following requirements.

- It kills at least 99.99% of humanity. Hardly anyone is left. There are, at a maximum, thousands left in any country, perhaps merely hundreds or dozens. Certainly, there are not enough people to keep society running: power plants stand idle; water cannot be sanitised; communication lines are dead. Human civilisation is no more.
- It is global. The apocalypse affects everyone that the Investigators know about. The Investigators cannot hike across country or fly over the ocean to find civilisation. Everyone they contact is in the same situation. Perhaps, perhaps there is a hint of a better society, far across the sea, out of reach. More probably, however, the world is destroyed. The Investigators are alone. Nobody is coming to save them.
- Mythos entities are rising. Perhaps they caused the apocalypse; perhaps they are reacting to humanity's destruction; perhaps it is simply their time. Either way, potent and incomprehensible horrors are stalking the Earth.
- The Investigators survive. Despite the apocalypse, the Investigators

remain alive: free to wander the wasteland, witness the destruction and investigate. Hence, although eldritch horrors have arisen, they are not coming for the Investigators yet. Why? Are they confined to the sea? Do they not care about a few straggling humans? Are they biding their time? Do they need the humans alive, for some reason?

With those conditions, we can decide how the apocalypse happened.

USING THE MACHINE

The Apocalypse Machine lets you create an apocalypse. You will start by choosing a Cause. What was ultimately responsible for the apocalypse? Was it humans, overreaching themselves? The Mythos, whom humans were powerless to stop? Or nature, against whose fury man had no defence?

Each Cause leads lead you to **Disasters**: the things that destroyed society, killed humans and created the wasteland. The Disasters are: Monsters, Technology, Disease, Nuclear, Heat, Cold, Floods, Winds, Meteor, Earthquakes and Winds.

Ancient terrors

In The Apocalypse Machine, the Mythos does not just include the imaginings of H. P. Lovecraft and his followers. It also encompasses other horrors from post-apocalyptic fiction. Hence, H. G. Wells' Martians are considered honorary members of the Mythos; John Wyndham's Triffids are similarly promoted; Richard Matheson's vampires, and the virus that creates them, also join the Mythos club. In short, any monster becomes part of the Mythos.

Often, this requires reimagining the monsters. Like those of Lovecraft, every creature is considered eldritch and unimaginable. So, in The Apocalypse Machine, Wells' Martians are prehistoric horrors, finally awakening after countless millennia. The Triffids grow from an ancient seed, revived by modern scientists. In this apocalypse, every horror is ancient.

Even human science is not new, but an insight into an ancient, terrifying truth. For example, the Martian's heat ray is not futuristic, but an ancient and incomprehensible weapon. General relativity is a glimpse into the fundamental and warped geometry on which the universe is built. In developing their science, humans perceived an underlying reality, which they could not understand and were not meant to know.

Throughout The Apocalypse Machine, the terms "monster" and "Mythos entity" are used almost interchangeably. Everything in the Mythos is monstrous. All monsters are part of the Mythos. Because apocalypses often involve many Mythos entities, it is often more convenient to talk about "the monsters".

The Apocalypse Machine

Monsters are mandatory: whatever your apocalypse, it must have monsters.

Eventually, you come to Casualties. Apart from humans, what did the apocalypse damage? The Casualties are: Reality, Biology, Water, Food, Books and Soil. Choose as many or as few as you wish.

Now, some parts of the apocalypse will be obvious to Investigators: for example, if an earthquake caused the apocalypse, everyone will know there was an earthquake. Other aspects of the apocalypse are not immediately obvious: for example, if the Cthonians caused the apocalypse, the Investigators will begin the game without knowing that fact. When an aspect of the apocalypse is not obvious (and hence a worthy subject for investigation) it is marked with this symbol:



To begin creating your apocalypse, choose a Cause.

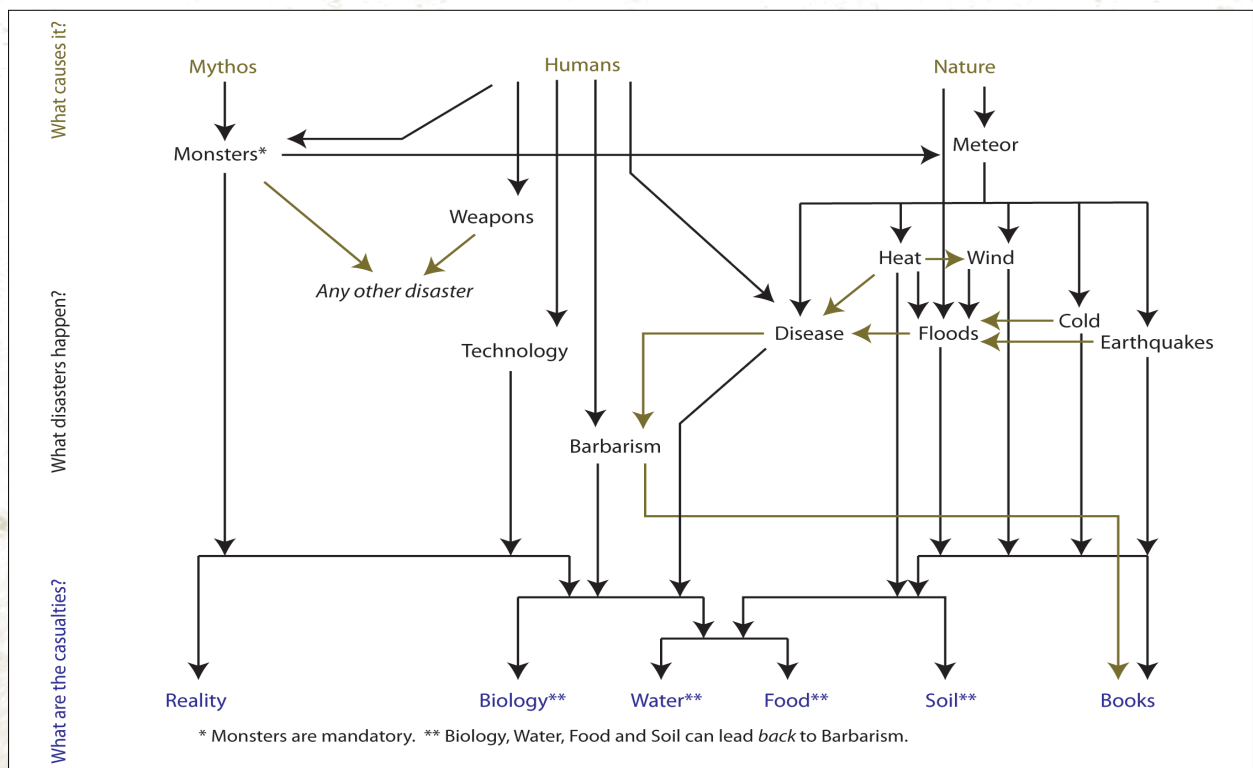
Apocalyptic Dating

Some apocalypses are fast and some are slow. If Mythos entities destroy the human race, its demise is probably quick. All over the world, things rise from the sea, and everyone dies within a day. If the world floods, on the other hand, it probably happens slowly. Gradually, the water level rises, first covering the low-lying areas, then getting higher and higher.

When apocalypses are fast, we assume they happen on November 2nd, 1936. When they are slow, we assume they start on 22nd January 1936, reaching their climax on November 2nd. These dates are chosen to interrupt history at an interesting moment: the Hoover Dam is complete; the Hindenburg airship is making transatlantic voyages. Because of the apocalypse, some historical events do not happen: the Spanish Civil War does not end; the Japanese do not invade Shanghai; King Edward VIII of the United Kingdom never abdicates.

In the United States, we make one tweak to history: President Roosevelt dies in the apocalypse. This leaves the tantalising possibility that the Investigators meet "Cactus Jack" Garner, an outspoken Texan who, at least nominally, is President of the United States.

Disasters that might happen slowly are marked with the following symbol:





Causes

HUMANS

In the end, humanity destroyed itself. It had created folly after folly and the apocalypse was its final act. Perhaps people invented a technology that later destroyed them; perhaps, exploring too far, they woke ancient and powerful creatures; perhaps greed led them to attempt to harness the power of the Mythos. Those few left alive can only look back and marvel at their race's stupidity.

When the humans died, the creatures of the Mythos rose to reclaim the Earth, dividing it among themselves. Nature, too, staked its claim: animals returned to the cities and grass grew on the highways. The remaining humans wander their destroyed cities, which stand as monuments to their hubris.

If you choose Humans as your cause, the theme underlying your games will be: we did this to ourselves. As the Investigators investigate, they will uncover evidence that humanity destroyed itself. For example:

- If a monster destroys the world, it was released, awoken or provoked by humans.
- If a virus destroys the world, it was released or created by humans.
- If cold destroys the world, it is a product of human technology, perhaps because an explosion creates a "nuclear winter".

In this scenario, humanity is seen as powerful, although it has abused its power. This is not cosmic horror, in which humanity is powerless against the

Mythos and its demise was inevitable. On the contrary, humanity could have survived, but killed itself through stupidity.

Is there hope? Perhaps not. Perhaps all races must die and this is humanity's time. But perhaps people can learn from their mistakes, building a new civilisation, carving out their place among the monsters. Perhaps there is a way to fight back.

Humanity can cause the following disasters.

- Technology.
- Weapons.
- Barbarism.
- Disease.
- Monsters (by summoning/waking them).

THE MYTHOS

In the end, humanity's destruction was inevitable. There were things vastly more powerful than humans and, when the stars were right, they returned. Perhaps Cthulhu awoke and his servitors butchered the humans; perhaps Colours feasted on the soil; perhaps the Lloigor tortured the humans to death. The few survivors can only hide from this vast, unknowable power.

After a Mythos creature destroys humanity, the other races emerge to claim the Earth. For example, perhaps Cthulhu kills everyone, then the Mi-Go set up mining operations in areas previously occupied by humans, while Deep Ones turn the East Coast into a

swamp. Hence, the Investigators will meet many Mythos entities in their investigations, not just the one that destroyed the world.

If you choose the Mythos as your cause, your underlying theme will be: we are powerless against the Mythos. Humanity's destruction was inevitable. The Investigators will investigate the ancient creatures that have destroyed the world and, eventually, will destroy the survivors. In this scenario, then:

- If a monster destroys the world, it was inevitable, perhaps because it awoke when the stars were right.
- If a virus destroys the world, it is an ancient disease against which humans have no defense.
- If cold destroys the world, it is a byproduct of a Mythos entity, perhaps Ithaqua gaining in power.

Thus, humanity is powerless. Perhaps people can eke out survival, running like rats while greater creatures walk the Earth. More likely, though, their demise is inevitable, just as the destruction of the rest of their race was inevitable. Humans are tiny when set against the rest of the cosmos. There is no hope.

The Mythos can cause the following disasters.

- All of them.



Causes

NATURE

In the end, humanity had overestimated its control of nature. For years, humans had lived on a knife-edge, one natural disaster away from extinction. When it happened, humanity was unprepared. It had thought itself separate from nature, not realising it was part of it. Its short evolutionary reign was cut short in a flash.

After the humans were gone, nature moved unhurriedly to reclaim its territory. Grass grew over the highways. As the cities fell, plants grew on them, too. And the creatures that had long lived under the sea rose and roamed the Earth. As the few surviving humans wander, they marvel and fear the power of the natural world.

If you choose Nature as your cause, your underlying theme will be: we are powerless against nature. Describe roads matted with grass; seeds growing from cars; animals prowling the streets; tree roots toppling buildings. Meanwhile, the Investigators will investigate the alien races that now control the world.

If Nature caused the apocalypse, then:

- If a monster destroys the world, it was roused by a natural disaster, such as an undersea earthquake.
- If a virus destroys the world, it is a strain that evolved naturally, a testament to nature's ingenuity.
- If cold destroys the world, it is an inevitability of the natural world, perhaps a new ice age.

Although humanity is powerless against nature, there may still be hope. Perhaps humans can rebuild their civilisation, with a new respect for nature's power.

Nature can cause the following disasters.

- Meteor.
- Disease.
- Heat.
- Wind.
- Floods.
- Cold.
- Earthquakes.





Disasters

Each disaster, below, starts with a brief fictional description. Following that, there are questions listed in italics. Some sample answers are given: either use these or invent your own. For example:

What benefit did the technology promise?

- It stopped the aging process.
- It would cure all known disease.
- It allowed us to see the structure of the universe.

After these questions, there is more information on the disaster. Some disasters take different forms, depending on what caused the apocalypse. For example, when humans cause the apocalypse, any technology-based disasters will be failures of modern science. However, when the Mythos causes the apocalypse, technology-based disasters involve alien, ancient machines.

If the disaster can lead to other disasters, these are listed. Finally, all the things that the disaster can damage are listed.

Influences

In the fictional descriptions and example answers, you might recognise direct references to post-apocalyptic fiction, especially that of John Wyndham, John Christopher and J. G. Ballard. In the Bibliography, I give more details of the books that influenced The Apocalypse Machine.

MONSTERS

The monsters rose up and annihilated humanity. Whether they came from the stars or the sea, they were greater than any threat we had seen before.

Which monster or monsters destroyed the world?

- Great Cthulhu.
- Triffids.
- Martians.

Why did they invade now?

- They were awoken by explorers.
- They struck when the humans were weak.
- The stars were right.

Why do they not kill the survivors?

- They cannot find them.
- They are too insignificant to matter.
- They need them for experimentation.

Monsters hold a special place in the Apocalypse Machine: whatever your apocalypse, it must always include monsters. If you see the Mythos section, later in the book, for ideas of how each monstrous entity could destroy the world.

As mentioned above, you will choose one Mythos entity or race to destroy the world. After that happens, the other races rise up to reclaim the Earth, so that Investigators will encounter many Mythos creatures.

Monsters can cause:

- Floods.
- Earthquakes.
- Barbarism.

Monsters can damage:

- Reality
- Biology

TECHNOLOGY

The technology was a brilliant leap forward. Yet we had overreached ourselves. Looking back, it seems so obvious, but at the time, everyone thought only of the benefits. The scientists, driven by greed and pride, took us past the point of no return, and we watched helpless as everything we fought for was destroyed.

What does the technology look like?

- A green lichen.
- Invisible.
- A vast array of cogs and wiring.

What benefit did the technology promise?

- It stopped the aging process.
- It would eradicate smallpox.
- It allowed us to see the structure of the universe.

If the Mythos caused the apocalypse, then the technology is ancient or alien. Perhaps it is a Mi-Go machine; perhaps it is a machine of the Elder Things; perhaps it is an ancient bacterium masquerading as a cure.



Disasters

If Humans caused the apocalypse, the technology was invented by human scientists. Perhaps the discovery, promised great benefits, but eventually proved horrifically harmful, like the virus in *I Am Legend*. Perhaps the technology is so beneficial that people cannot control themselves: they tear each other apart to get it or destroy it.

Or perhaps the technology harmed vested interests. For example, a cure for all known disease would harm the medical establishment. Perhaps the problem was not the technology itself, but the drastic action that happened because of it.

Technology can lead to:

- Barbarism.

It can damage:

- Reality.
- Biology.
- Water.
- Food.

WEAPONS

We knew our governments were preparing for war, but did not know about the weapon. If we had, would we have stopped them? Probably not: our fear of Hitler overwhelmed all rationality. We never thought to worry about our own side first.

What did the weapon look like, when it triggered?

- A blinding light, followed by a cloud.
- A beautiful display, like that of fireworks.
- A purple cloud, which drifted gradually across the world.

What type of weapon was it?

- Biological.
- Chemical.
- Nuclear.

What does the land look like afterwards?

- A dusty wasteland, the skyline punctuated by broken buildings.
- A fused mass of black glass.
- Dark and cold, the sun hidden behind an endless black cloud.

People in the 1930s feared war and, more specifically, the weapons to be used. They especially feared chemical weapons, such as mustard and tear gas, which had seen use in the Great War. These fears were not without reason: after the First World War, German chemical weaponry had been washed ashore, after being dumped in the sea.

The greatest fear, however, was biological warfare, spreading diseases such as bubonic plague and anthrax. Although banned by the Geneva Convention in 1925, biological weapons had been used in the Sino-Japanese War, and tested on American prisoners. Such weapons could transmit diseases by contaminating food, infecting animals or, worst of all, tainting the water. To simulate such weapons using the

Going Nuclear

Nuclear war, and its aftermath, has featured in post-apocalyptic fiction for nearly a century. H G Wells imagined an atomic bomb in 1914; Nevil Shute wrote about a nuclear aftermath in 1957; today, electronic games such as the *Fallout* series continue to imagine a nuclear wasteland. Add to that the reality-bending nature of atomic physics and, clearly, *The Apocalypse Machine* must allow a nuclear apocalypse.

To do so, we must bend reality. Nuclear fission was, in fact, discovered in 1938. The Manhattan Project, to develop an atomic bomb, began in 1939. Realistically, it is implausible that nuclear weapons could have devastated the world in the 1930s.

So, to make nuclear apocalypses possible, *The Apocalypse Machine* moves the discovery of nuclear fission forward, by stealing from H. G. Wells' *The World Set Free*. In 1933, Holsten discovered nuclear fission by "a wonderful combination of induction, intuition and luck". Immediately, the German and American governments began research into nuclear weaponry.

By 1936, there was a prototype bomb. Its first test, on November 2nd, began the apocalypse. Afterwards, it was the radioactivity that killed the rest of the world. It spread through the water, infecting the soil and the crops. A great radioactive cloud spread. Only a few survived: perhaps because they sealed themselves underground, perhaps through a strange immunity.

Alternatively, perhaps that first atomic test invoked Azathoth, the nuclear chaos at the heart of the universe. If this appeals to you, see the *Mythos Entities* section, on page 52. (Note that, when Lovecraft described Azathoth as the "nuclear chaos", he was probably not thinking of nuclear weaponry. Nevertheless, the association is too good to miss.)

Finally, rather than taking nuclear imagery from reality, why not steal more from fiction? H. G. Wells imagined nuclear bombs as two-foot iron spheres. Once thrown from the side of the plane, they devastated cities by creating miniature active volcanos. Thereafter, they continued exploding for days, in bubbling craters, a mile across.



The Apocalypse Machine

Apocalypse Machine, follow the line to Disease.

Nevertheless, the greatest weapon in post-apocalyptic fiction is the atomic bomb (see *Going Nuclear*). Once detonated, accidentally or deliberately, such a bomb will wipe out a city. Thereafter, the radioactivity might poison the soil and drift, like a cloud, to kill the entire world.

Weapons can lead to:

- Disease.
- Heat.
- Cold (via a “nuclear winter”).
- Earthquakes.

They can damage:

- Reality
- Biology.
- Water.
- Food.
- Books.
- Soil.

Or, to put it another way, everything.

DISEASE

When the news reports started, we felt sorry for the foreigners affected by it. We watched their countries descend into anarchy, but they were far-off places, and we didn't feel threatened.

Eventually, the first case was reported in this country. Still, we thought we were immune: the government moved quickly to establish a quarantine, while scientists worked on a cure. Soon, the first case was reported nearby, and gradually our society crumbled, just like the others had.

What did the disease target?

- All species of grass.
- Humans.
- 90% of animals.

What did it do to them?

- Kill them.
- Turn them into vampires.
- Make them poisonous to humans.

When something became infected, what did it look like?

- Black, lank and slimy.
- Grey and bald.
- Hairless, with open cuts that refuse to heal.

If the Mythos caused the apocalypse, the virus is ancient, perhaps found at the bottom of the sea or in a meteor. Humans have no resistance to it.

If Humans caused the apocalypse, they probably invented the disease, perhaps as a weapon. Alternatively, they may have accidentally released the disease during scientific research.

If Nature caused the apocalypse, the disease evolved naturally: every attempt to cure it merely caused a new, incurable strain to emerge. Perhaps it is a known disease, such as smallpox or influenza. (Note that the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic killed over 50 million people worldwide and infected ten times that number. It is arguably the biggest killer in history.)

Disease can lead to:

- Barbarism.

It can damage:

- Biology.
- Water.
- Food.

HEAT

The world died slowly. At first, we noticed only that the summer sunshine persisted into September and October. Later, the weather patterns changed, so that winds and snow came unpredictably. I remember seeing my first mosquito: they were vanishingly rare, this far north, but they are common now. As the world heated more, the equator became uninhabitable, and our woodlands became tropical jungles.

What does the heated world look like?

- Tropical, with humid air and buzzing flies.
- Desert-like, the sun burning mercilessly through the day.
- Blackened, with smoke drifting from the few trees left burning.

If Humans caused the apocalypse, then the world heated as a result of humanity's presence. Perhaps the smoke, from burning coal, caused the earth to warm like a greenhouse; perhaps the proliferation of factories and machines simply heated the world.

If Nature caused the apocalypse, then the heating is beyond human control. Perhaps the sun simply grew hotter; perhaps a change in the Earth's orbit sent it closer to the sun.

As the world heats, it becomes unrecognisable. The light changes. Tropical animals are seen in formerly temperate regions. Some crops no longer grow. Social customs change to suit the heat: the midday sun is no longer safe; clothing is selected to ward off heat; buildings are adapted to repel the sun. Gradually, the people of the 1930s see their civilised cities grow to resemble the heathen towns of foreign, godless countries.



Causes

Finally, humanity dies a slow death. As lands become uninhabitable, populations flee north. Millions die in refugee camps. Fires burn unchecked. As the heat pushes people farther and farther north, there is less land and resources to share. Gradually, by attrition, people die. At the last, only a few remain, waiting for their death in turn.

Heat leads to:

- Floods.
- Disease.
- Wind.

It can damage:

- Food.
- Soil.

FLOODS

At first, it was an oddity, the high tides reaching ever higher. The coastal towns were the first to go. We became scared when Venice went under: the pictures in the newspapers showed St Mark's Square standing nearly a metre deep in water. When Amsterdam drowned, the governments moved to protect New York and London. For a while, sandbags kept back the water, armies of volunteers building the barriers ever higher. But eventually, the weight of the water was too much. When a breach came, there was no way back.

The water drowned the cities. For a while, it was only a foot deep. People moved to the upper floors, swapped cars for boats, and continued their business. But the floods kept rising. An early casualty was drinking water: clean water mixed with sewage and seawater, making the cities uninhabitable. Populations rushed to higher ground. In the United States, everyone moved west: Denver, with its reputation as the Mile High City, was besieged. In Britain, Harrogate became the new capital. Today, if you take a boat,

and look down through the water, you can see the drowned buildings we used to inhabit.

What does the flooded world look like?

- Tropical, with jungles surrounding lagoons.
- Cold, with the tops of buildings poking through vast expanses of water.
- Wrecked, with debris and wreckage floating past.

If the Mythos caused the apocalypse, the seas probably rose as the monsters arose.

If Humans or Nature caused the floods, the most likely explanation is a rise in temperature. As the Earth heats, the grounded Antarctic ice melts, and the waters rise. The water also expands, like other materials, as the temperature rises. As the sea expands, the sea level rises.

Floods can damage:

- Water (although this sounds strange, floods do damage the supply of clean, drinkable water)
- Food
- Books
- Soil

EARTHQUAKES

When the first shocks hit, we knew what was coming. There was nothing we could do. In the middle of the city, you are never safe: you are always close to a wall, gas pipe or rolling vehicle. We stayed still, then watched, as the city we knew crumbled beneath us. Monuments fell, trees were uprooted and a network of cracks ran through every wall, road and marble facade.

What does the aftermath of the earthquake look like?

- A mass of warped, leaning buildings.

- An endless carpet of debris.
- A smoking, soaked bowl of ash, dust and blackened water.

An apocalyptic earthquake will level the cities of the Earth in hours, then burn the remnants in the following days. It strikes without warning. Buildings fall as the ground beneath them liquifies. That initial shock destroys bridges, roads and lines of communication, which prevents the medical and fire services responding. Power lines and gas pipes are severed.

Thereafter, a series of aftershocks hits the city, again and again, until only rubble is left. In the days after, fires spread. With no communication and impassable roads, response is nearly impossible.

Note that, according to modern seismology, a global earthquake is impossible. But seismology in the 1930s was in its infancy. By the standards of the day, no-one would be surprised if an earthquake shook the world.

If the Mythos caused the apocalypse, there are many potential culprits. Perhaps Cthulhu, rising from his grave beneath the Pacific, causes the sea to boil and the earth to tremble.

If Nature caused the apocalypse, then the earthquake was simply inevitable. There was nothing humanity could have done to prevent it.

Earthquakes can lead to:

- Floods.

They damage:

- Water.
- Food.
- Books.
- Soil.



The Apocalypse Machine

❖ COLD

The snow never stopped falling. At first, the roads were passable, and we got by with snow-chains. Later, the cars froze into the ground, and nothing we could do would get them out. As the snow deepened, we retreated into the upper floors of buildings. Millions died from exposure, but most remained happy, walking on rivers that had not frozen for years.

Next, the water froze in the pipes. Most of our power was spent melting snow to drink, but then the power lines went, and nobody could dig far enough to repair them. Fortunately, what little water we produced was clean: sewage could not contaminate it, because the sewage was frozen. Skis and sleds became part of everyday life.

As time went by, the crops refused to grow and the glaciers, encroaching from the north, destroyed cities. People retreated south, walking on the frozen sea, fighting over land and food. Many forged forward to the equator, hoping to establish themselves as the first. Soon, however, all of what remained of humanity converged on that small band of habitable land. Now, the nights grow colder, and humanity awaits its end.

What does the icy world look like?

- A snowfield, with the tops of once-familiar buildings poking through the top.
- A crystal paradise, with icicles glittering in the clear sun.
- Grey, with snow falling endlessly from the dark clouds above.

If the Mythos caused the apocalypse, the culprit is almost certainly Ithaqua. As the icy wastes extend South, his territory grows, and eventually the Earth will be his.

If Humans caused the apocalypse, the cause is most likely a nuclear war and the resulting nuclear winter, as smoke prevents sunlight from heating the earth. As the ice grows, it reflects the sunlight still more, and so a vicious circle begins.

If Nature caused the apocalypse, then there are various ways the cold could have arrived. Perhaps the sun's activity simply diminished. Perhaps the world is heading for another Ice Age. (As recently as the 19th Century, a Little Ice Age, which had lasted for centuries, gripped the northern





Causes

hemisphere. In New York, the Harbour froze, allowing people to walk to Staten Island from Manhattan; meanwhile, Londoners held frost fairs on the frozen Thames.)

Cold can damage:

- Water (that is, the supply of water)
- Food.
- Books.
- Soil.

METEOR

As the meteor approached, it became an astronomic and popular curiosity. Doomsayers predicted it would pass close enough to pull the Earth out of orbit. Most people anticipated the spectacle with glee.

We never expected it to hit. Weeks before, our fate became clear. There was nothing we could do: no rocket or bomb would divert its course. Finally, we braced for impact, and every country hoped it would hit another.

What did the meteor look like?

- An unimaginably large rock, like a mountain in the sky.
- A comet, burning through the stars.
- A red, fuzzy light, like nothing astronomers had seen before.

If the Mythos caused the apocalypse, there is something alien in the meteor. Perhaps it is a virus; perhaps a monster. Perhaps, even, the meteor is a spaceship, transport for Martians or Mi-Go. Either way, it will leave a

crater. People will stand at the rim, marvelling; scientists will edge inside, exploring; the army will stand at the ready. Whatever emerges will kill them all.

If Nature caused the apocalypse, the meteor is huge enough to destroy the world, through earthquakes, tidal waves and floods. Perhaps it throws up ash, causing a “nuclear winter”.

Meteors can lead to:

- Monsters.
- Disease.
- Cold.
- Flooding.
- Earthquakes.

They damage nothing directly (apart, of course, from the thing they land on).





The Apocalypse Machine

WIND

The wind tore the buildings from their foundations and sent masonry flying through the air. There was no escape. Those that survived the buildings falling were crushed by flying rocks; those that sheltered from the rocks were sliced apart by glass shards.

What does the windswept world look like?

- Bare rock and clay, the topsoil all but torn away.
- A wasteland of uprooted trees and broken buildings.
- A featureless desert, punctuated occasionally by piles of unidentifiable debris.

Has the wind stopped?

- Yes. A few survivors live in the ravaged wasteland.
- No. The survivors have adapted to a life of shelter.

An apocalyptic wind is greater than any hurricane or tornado in living memory. Perhaps it is an endless hurricane, the air whirling chaotically in eddies, hurricane emptying into hurricane, always turbulent, never calm. Perhaps it is an endless gale, rushing around the world, gathering pace like a snowball. Whichever way the wind blows, its powers of destruction are immense. Certainly, it will destroy buildings. It may strip away the topsoil, too.

If the Mythos caused the apocalypse, find a suitable candidate and pin the blame for the wind on them. Ithaqua and the Flying Polyps are prime suspects.

If Nature caused the apocalypse, the wind may have a more immediate cause, such as solar activity. Alternatively, it may simply be inexplicable. The winds grew, day by day, until they destroyed the world.

Wind might lead to:

- Flooding.

It might damage:

- Food.
- Books.
- Soil.

BARBARISM

As society broke down, people tore each other apart. We did not realise what we were capable of. The apocalypse did not just destroy the world: it destroyed our humanity.

How does the world look, after the raging mobs destroyed each other?

- It is littered with naked and bloody corpses.
- Cities are covered in dried blood, the corpses long having been taken for food.
- Dismembered corpses are hung on walls, as warnings to travellers.

Perhaps the greatest danger is humanity itself. When resources run short, whether food, land or water, people kill to get them. The Great War killed 16 million: is it unimaginable that war could kill 2 billion?

And killing breeds killing. In a world where anyone might shoot you, you must have a gun. When you encounter a stranger, the safest thing to do is shoot first. After all, resources are scarce, and they may have things you need.

As food grows scarce, too, cannibalism becomes practical. Dead bodies are, after all, an abundant source of meat. Another practical solution is slavery. Since farming, travel and fighting take work, why not force others to work for you?

Barbarism can damage:

- Water.
- Food.
- Books.

Additionally, if any of the following are damaged, barbarism can result:

- Biology (as people attack those with unknown mutations)
- Water.
- Food.
- Soil.





Casualties

What does the apocalypse damage? It kills people, of course, and destroys society. What are the other casualties?

(Some of these casualties include questions to answer, others do not.)

REALITY

How does damaged reality manifest itself?

- A psychic maelstrom, which everyone can sense, although only some can use it.
- Strange geometries and dreamlike movement.
- Occasional flashes of the true and terrifying universe.

The apocalypse ripped a hole in reality. Humanity is beginning to perceive the universe as it actually is. The strange physics and mathematics that hold the universe together seep, gradually, into our awareness.

BIOLOGY

What do people with changed biology look like?

- They have golden eyes.
- They appear distant and unnatural conversation.
- They are visibly mutated, with stretched, shrunken or additional body parts.

Weird

When Biology and Reality are damaged, the Weird Dial (see below) has a high setting. For guidance on mutations and psychic powers, see The Affected, later in the book.

Somehow, the apocalypse damaged human biology. Perhaps radioactivity caused mutations; perhaps alien experiments produced alterations. Although some humans escaped the changes, many have irrevocably changed.

WATER

The apocalypse damaged the supply of clean, drinkable water. Probably, the water is contaminated by sewage, although it may be frozen or poisoned. When the Investigators find water, they must boil and strain it before drinking. Even then, contaminants can get through.

When a human does not drink water, their life expectancy is measured in days: the exact survival time depends on temperature and activity. An Investigator riding a horse across the wasteland needs plenty of water; an Investigator searching a deserted and cool library needs less.

FOOD

There is nothing to eat. At first, food can be looted from shops and warehouses, but soon the tins run out. People scabble inside abandoned houses, hoping to find an overlooked can. Guns are drawn in battles for food. Finding a cache of tins and clean water is a godsend.

BOOKS

The libraries have gone. Books, accumulated over centuries, has been lost. Initially, the loss seems insignificant: when you need to survive, what can a book teach you? Later, the realisation grows. How can you learn to farm, without someone to teach you? How can you find your way, if not with a map?

Fortunately, not everything has gone. Fragments remain: though books are charred, some pages are readable. Physics textbooks are gone, but circuit diagrams remain. Maps are torn, but they can be pieced together.

In your games, destroyed libraries change investigations only slightly. An Investigator can still use Library Use, but they will search the fragments of destroyed books, rather than browsing shelves. Maps will be scribbled, rather than accurately printed; but will still guide the Investigators.

The main change is in the way you describe the world. In this blasted land, all knowledge has been lost, and you must start again.

SOIL

Nothing will grow in the soil: at least, nothing edible. When the food runs out, there will be no more. What hope is there for humanity now? Is cannibalism the only option?

Hungry and thirsty

Use the lack of food and water as background information and plot material. For example, the Investigators might hallucinate a reservoir or, hoping to find an underground river, enter an ancient temple. They might be tempted by food caches or cannibalism.

However, be wary of letting drought and hunger distract from Mythos investigations. In particular, avoid penalising Investigators for hunger and thirst or insisting they break their investigation to find supplies.



Breaking the Machine



As you use the machine, you will invent ideas that it cannot encompass. Perhaps you want a monster, like Lovecraft's Colour Out Of Space, that damages the soil. Perhaps you want a disease, like John Christopher's Chung-Li virus, that damages food. But there is no line connecting Monsters to Soil or Disease to Food. What should you do?

Just do it anyway. Draw in a new line. The Apocalypse Machine is a source for ideas, not a constraint. The lines show the obvious links, but many more are possible. If you can think of a way for cold to damage the fabric of reality, do it.

In fact, look on the Apocalypse Machine as a challenge. For example, there is no link from Monsters to Heat or from Heat to Biology. Why not? Can you imagine a way to make that link? If so, use it.

Try inventing your own disasters, too. What happens if light cannot reach the Earth and the world goes dark? What happens if the world stops spinning? Use the disasters given as a guide: for example, if the world stops spinning, perhaps one half suffers a Heat-based apocalypse, while the other grows Cold. Again, see the Apocalypse Machine as a challenge, inventing things it does not cover. I can't think how a fire-based disaster would destroy the world, but if you can, use it.

So go beyond the ideas in The Apocalypse Machine. By doing so, you create post-apocalyptic stories of your own.

THE DIALS

The Apocalypse machine has four dials, which answer four questions about the apocalypse. How has humanity reacted to the apocalypse? When did the Apocalypse happen? How weird is the post-apocalyptic world? And is the game gritty or exhilarating to play?

By setting the dials, and answering these questions, you set the tone of your game.

The Humanity Dial

How does humanity react to the apocalypse? Does it bond together or tear itself apart? The higher you set the Humanity dial, the more the apocalypse throws people together. The lower you set it, the more it drives them apart.

When the Humanity Dial is set to Zero, everyone else is a threat. Most people survive alone. Crimes happen as a matter of course: murder is the way to survive. Resources are guarded jealously: if you want something, you take it from someone else.

This post-apocalyptic world is like that of Cormac MacCarthy's *The Road*. If you meet a stranger, you hide. You only approach them if they are obviously not a threat.

When the Dial is set to Low, civilisation has collapsed. Communities form for survival, but people who cannot work are abandoned. If someone is injured, they are left behind. Crimes happen and are a fact of life: you cannot help the victims, so you do not try. Resources are guarded: you share them only if you get something in return.

Here, the post-apocalyptic world is like that of John Christopher's *The Death Of Grass*. If you meet a stranger, your first instinct is to raise your gun. If they are useful to you, you might work together, but would never trust each other.

When the Humanity Dial is set to Medium, there is both decency and inhumanity. Communities form, but do not agree on the best way forward: some attempt to impose military discipline on the others; some believe they are the true government. Crimes happen and go unpunished: murder, torture, slavery, perhaps sexual violence. Resources are guarded, although you might share them with the needy. This post-apocalyptic world resembles that of David Brin's *The Postman* or John Wyndham's *The Day Of The Triffids*. Here, if you meet a stranger, your first instinct is to ask questions. If they mean no harm, you would be happy to cooperate.

When the dial is set High, the apocalypse has brought out the best in people. Communities form and work together. The few offenders are dealt with reasonably. Resources are shared: food is rationed fairly and lasts a long time.

This post-apocalyptic world resembles that of the movie *I Am Legend*. In this world, if you meet a stranger, your first instinct is to help them. After all, the few survivors must work together.

Try setting the Humanity Dial somewhere in the middle, avoiding the two extremes. When everyone else is a threat, investigating is difficult; when everyone else is good, investigating is dull. Things get interesting when people might either be bad or good.



Breaking the Machine

The Time Dial

When did the Apocalypse happen? Yesterday? A year ago? A generation? Or so long ago that people cannot remember it?

If you set the dial to Zero, the apocalypse happens at the beginning of the first investigation. Afterwards, survivors wander through their devastated cities. Some group together for survival.

If you set the dial to 1, the apocalypse happened one year ago. Communities have formed in the wasteland, as people adapt to their new roles in the post-apocalyptic world. Mostly, people eat tinned food, collected by raiding parties. There is enough for everyone. If the Humanity dial is set high, then nobody goes hungry; if it is set low, then the better-armed groups begin stockpiling. Nevertheless, as yet, nobody starves.

If you set the dial to 3, the apocalypse happened three years ago and resources are running out. The crucial question now is: was the soil damaged? If it was, then resources are getting low. If not, then farming becomes a source of food. If the Humanity dial is set low, then pitched battles are fought over stockpiles and land.

If you set the dial to 10, a new generation is emerging. Older adults remember the apocalypse, but children do not. The Old Days, before the apocalypse, are becoming mythical. Now, post-apocalyptic life is well-established and agriculture is a regular source of food. Towns are constructed that were not there before the apocalypse. Occupations that mattered before the apocalypse, such as “artist” and “journalist”, do not matter now.

If you set the dial to 30, the apocalypse happened a generation ago. The Old Days are legendary. Now, investigations may concern preapocalyptic knowledge: for example, there might be an investigation to discover an intact library.

If you set the dial to 100, nobody alive remembers the apocalypse. The Old Days are the stuff of history. (For guidance on how the post-apocalyptic world changes over time, see After The Apocalypse, below).

Finally, this dial suggests whether you are playing an Aftershock or a Wasteland campaign. If the dial to Zero, 1 or 3, use the Aftershock rules; if it is set to 10 or greater, use the Wasteland rules.

The Weird Dial

How plausible is the post-apocalyptic world? Is it like today’s world, aside, of course, from the monsters stalking the Earth? Or is it strange and wonderful?

If you set the dial to Low, the apocalyptic world resembles that of the 1930s. The technology is 1930s technology. Humans appear human and have everyday skills and abilities.

If you set the dial to Medium, there are strange changes in the world. Some people are mutants or psychics (see The Affected, below). Strange technologies exist, including the superweapons proposed by Tesla: the Investigators might find death rays and electrical spheres. Nevertheless, such strangeness is rare. The world, at least superficially, is like that of the 1930s.

If you set the dial to High, the apocalypse has changed everything completely. Mutations, psychic abilities and strange technologies are an integral part of the post-apocalyptic world.

The Adrenaline Dial

Is your post-apocalyptic world exciting or grim? Will your Investigations be pulpy adventures, racing through devastated lands? Or will they be bleak, filled with death and the struggle for survival?

If you set the dial to Low, your Investigations will have an elegiac tone. The Investigators will walk through crumbling cities, as the great buildings of the Old Days slowly decay. If they find their loved ones dead (see Sources Of Stability, later), the scene will be a sad one. Such investigations will feel like Purist scenarios, from the original Trail of Cthulhu, although you will use the Pulp rules.

If you set the dial to Medium, there will be moments of sadness and reflection, but also moments of excitement.

If you set the dial to High, there will be no time for reflection. The Investigations will drive at speed through crumbling cities, shooting as they go. If they find their loved ones dead, they will vow revenge. Such adventures will feel like Pulp scenarios in Trail of Cthulhu.

THE FINAL PICTURE

Finally, look again at everything the Apocalypse Machine has given you. Look especially at the answers, to earlier questions, about what things looked like. Use these to build a picture of your post-apocalyptic world.



Occupations



After the apocalypse, your occupation defines who you are, how you think and what you can do. In an Aftermath campaign, it describes what you did before the apocalypse. In a Wasteland game, it defines what you do now.

Not all the occupations from *Trail of Cthulhu* survived the apocalypse: Alienist, Archaeologist, Dilettante, Author, Parapsychologist, Private Investigator and Professor bit the radioactive dust. The remaining occupations are listed below, with a description of their place in this new world. Each of these occupations has a new special ability: the abilities from the original rules no longer apply. Some have new Occupational Abilities, too, which are listed in italics.

Additionally, there are new Occupations: Armourer, Agitator, Drifter, Farmer, Outcast, Outdoorsman, Socialite, Survivalist, Trader and Veteran. Each is listed with Occupational Abilities and a Special ability. Note that, because The Apocalypse Machine does not use Credit Ratings, values for this skill are not listed.

Finally, professionals know where to find whatever they need for their job. For example, doctors know where to find medical supplies; armourers know where to find guns. Hence, most Occupations have a Scavenging Speciality. When the Investigator looks for the type of equipment described in their Scavenging Speciality, the Difficulty Number is reduced by 1 (see Scavenging, below). Of course, if an Investigation depends on finding a particular item, the normal investigation rules are used.

Agitator

You are a born leader, one who has risen to the challenge of the post-apocalyptic world. Perhaps you are benevolent, perhaps you are tyrannical, but people do what you say. Although you may not solve the investigation, you will direct it, leading people into danger.

Occupational Abilities: *Assess Honesty, Bargain, Interrogation, Intimidation, Outdoorsman, Reassurance, Sense Trouble, Urban Survival.*

Scavenging Speciality: None.

Special: Using *Outdoorsman* or *Urban Survival*, you can find a location to rest. You can, at the Keeper's discretion, make this location secure against normal, human invaders. These secure locations may, at the Keeper's discretion, be safe havens where General ability pools can be refreshed.

Antiquarian

You are obsessed with ancient treasures. Indeed, the apocalypse is a partial blessing, having brought strange and ancient artifacts to the surface. Now, museums can be freely viewed or plundered; wealthy houses, with their private collections, are open to you; long-drowned cities are accessible for the first time in millenia.

In an Aftermath campaign, you hold one of the professions suggested in the main *Trail of Cthulhu* rules, perhaps a curator or antiques dealer. In a Wasteland campaign, you are probably a trader in old curiosities and artifacts. Indeed, if the Time Dial is set high, you may trade in objects from the 1930s: perhaps a Zippo lighter is a valuable antique.

Occupational Abilities: *Architecture, Art History, Bargain, History, Languages, Law, Library Use, one other Investigative ability and Scavenging.*

Scavenging Speciality: Old curiosities. In an boat, you would be the first to find the antique brass sextant

Special: In cities, you can locate and name museums.

Armourer

In a lawless world, the gunman is king: and, even if he is not, he is respected and useful. Perhaps you owned a gun shop; perhaps you collected antique guns; perhaps you make guns yourself. In any case, your gunmanship is more than a skill or profession. It is your enthusiasm, your obsession and part of who you are.

Occupational Abilities: *Medicine, Assess Honesty, Interrogation, Intimidation, Craft (gunmaking), Mechanical Repair, Explosives, Firearms, Strategy.*

Scavenging Speciality: Guns and ammunition.

Special: You know where to find gun shops and military bases.



Artist

The post-apocalyptic world is awesome in its strangeness. Although your skills will not help you survive, your mindset may. You have taught yourself to look beneath the obvious, to see what others do not see. Perhaps, as you wander this devastated and astonishing world, your insight will see you through.



Occupations

Occupational abilities:

Architecture, Art, Art History, Craft, Disguise, Flattery, Photography, any other two Academic or Interpersonal abilities and Intuition.

Scavenging Speciality: None.

Special: You may use your Intuition before any other Investigator uses a scientific ability.

Clergy

More than ever, in this blasted world, people want something to believe in. Whether you are a brilliant rabbi or a fire-and-brimstone preacher, you comfort those people. But how do you explain the creatures that have risen? Are you tempted to abandon your rituals and mythology? Or are they the only things keeping you sane?

Occupational abilities: History, Languages (as appropriate to your religion, such as Latin, Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew, Arabic or Sanskrit), Library Use, Psychoanalysis, Assess Honesty, Reassurance, Theology, one other Interpersonal ability and Intuition.

Scavenging Speciality: Items specific to your religion.

Special: You know where to find buildings associated with your religion, such as mosques, churches or synagogues.

Criminal

You live by lying and stealing. Sometimes, this means breaking the laws of communities; often, it means ignoring the few remaining moral codes. In an Aftermath campaign, decide what the apocalypse does to your criminal career: do you change your ways or continue living through deceit? In a Wasteland campaign, decide how your character lives: do you live in a community until they cast you out; do

you ambush unwary travellers; or live through murder and cannibalism?

Occupational abilities: Bargain, Intimidation, Locksmith, Scuffling, Sense Trouble, Shadowing, Stealth, Streetwise, one other Interpersonal or Technical ability, Scavenging and Urban Survival.

Scavenging Speciality: None.

Special: You can find good hiding places, for equipment or for yourself (only).



Socialite

The world you knew is irretrievably gone. Never again will you host a dinner, attend a party or listen to music: at least, not with the cultured people that made it worthwhile. For a while, you can comfort yourself with the availability of champagne and caviar. After all, who would not enjoy a world where any luxury is there for the taking? After that, though, there are decisions to be made. What can you do? How will you live? Who will you become now?

Occupational Abilities: Architecture, Art History, Credit Rating, Languages (Latin and Greek), Flattery, Reassurance, Driving, Riding.

Scavenging Speciality: Luxuries.

Special: You can locate any place previously frequented by high society, such as theatres, gentleman's clubs and houses of the rich and famous.

Wanderer

Whatever you did before the apocalypse, it has no relevance now. You wander from town to town, surviving as best you can, hiding from the monsters. There must be many more like you: people who suddenly found themselves plunged into a strange and

dangerous land. Perhaps occupations are meaningless in this wasted world. Perhaps all that matters is that you survived.

In an Aftermath campaign, you resemble the protagonist of many post-apocalyptic stories: an everyman figure, trying to survive. In a Wasteland campaign, you are a drifter, passing from town to town, surviving through the generosity of people who see your essential decency. Hence, this occupation works best when the Humanity dial is set high.

Occupational Abilities: Any three Academic or Technical abilities, to represent your previous occupation, plus Assess Honesty, Intuition, Reassurance, First Aid, Urban Survival, Preparedness and Scavenging.

Scavenging Speciality: Household items and groceries.

Special: None.

Doctor

Never has your profession mattered so much. Diseases spread like wildfire: poor sanitation, nutrition and hygiene will kill people long before the monsters. Making do with salvaged and makeshift equipment, you hold the power of life and death: or, at least, the power to prolong life a little longer.

Occupational Abilities: Accounting, Biology, First Aid, Forensics, Languages (Latin), Medicine, Pharmacy, Assess Honesty, Reassurance.

Scavenging Speciality: Medical supplies.

Special: You can find hospitals and medical facilities and navigate your way around them.



The Apocalypse Machine

Hobo

You have seen many things, on your travels, but they never stopped you travelling. The apocalypse did not stop you, either. Sure, you can no longer ride the rails; sure, you scavenge rather than relying on charity. But, at heart, your life is the same. You wander and see the world.

Importantly, Hobos may take points of the ability Social Standing (which, in *The Apocalypse Machine*, replaces Credit Rating). Indeed, someone who lives on the road may command considerable respect. After all, as a hobo, you have seen many places and know how to survive.

Occupational Abilities: Athletics, Bargain, Filch, Outdoorsman, Sense Trouble, Stealth, Streetwise, Urban Survival and Scavenge.

Scavenging Speciality: Food and water.

Special: You understand how towns are laid out and can find any common buildings, such as churches, hospitals or shops.



Journalist

Someone must record what is going on. Perhaps you are the only one left who can. Whether you are a radio journalist, magazine columnist or newspaper reporter, you must write or go mad. Probably, these will be the last events you record: soon, either because nobody will want to read what you write or nobody will be alive to do so.

Occupational abilities: Cop Talk, Disguise, Evidence Collection, Languages, Oral History, Photography, Assess Honesty, Reassurance, Shadowing and one other Interpersonal ability.

Scavenging Speciality: Printed records, including books and newspaper archives.

Special: You can find newspaper archives and radio broadcasting stations.

Military

With the military gone, you feel lost. You have no orders to follow; no plan for your life. At least you can shoot and, indeed, there is much to shoot. Will you find something new to fight for? Or can you make your own way in the world? With a gun by your side, anything is possible.

Occupational abilities: Athletics, Firearms, Intimidation, Outdoorsman, Scuffling, Weapons plus others according to rank and service (see *Trail of Cthulhu* main rulebook). Also, Strategy.

Scavenging Speciality: None. You have been given guns before, but are not sure where you would find them.

Special: You can find and navigate within military facilities.

Nurse

In the post-apocalyptic world, medicine is a prized art, and your skills are being stretched to the full. When there is no doctor, your skills can keep someone alive. Perhaps, indeed, your practical skills are better than a doctor's theoretical knowledge. Where doctors would know the latest medical fad, you know the solutions that have worked for years.

Occupational abilities: Biology, First Aid, Medicine, Pharmacy, Assess Honesty, Reassurance, plus, at the Keeper's discretion, Bureaucracy and Flattery.

Scavenging Speciality: Medical supplies.

Special: You have a special affinity for children: you know how to keep them entertained, reassure them and make them behave.



Outcast

Perhaps you stole, perhaps you blasphemed or perhaps they discovered your mutation. However it happened, you were cast out into the wasteland. Probably, you were branded or mutilated, so that other communities would avoid you.

Living in the wasteland has been both a blessing and a curse. You know, better than anyone, how to scratch a living from the wrecked earth. Yet, having grown used to your own company, you are unused to the presence of others. Perhaps you sleep apart from the other Investigators; perhaps, objecting to your stink, they sleep apart from you. Nevertheless, they keep you around, because you know how to survive.

Occupational abilities: Anthropology (you understand how societies function, although your understanding is not an academic one), Assess Honesty, Intimidation, Outdoorsman, Urban Survival, Filch, Fleeing, First Aid, Scavenging.

Scavenging Speciality: Food and water

Special: Using Intimidation, you can terrify others. In addition to making them reveal information (the standard use of Intimidation), they may, at the Keeper's discretion, run away, cooperate or hide.

Outdoorsman

You are one with the land: you can not only survive in the outdoors, but live well. Perhaps you are angry at whatever turned your country into a wasteland; perhaps you are phlegmatic, knowing nature will adapt and thrive. Your love, respect and fear for nature shines in your actions.

In an Aftermath campaign, you worked professionally on the land: perhaps you were a forester, a groundsman or even a cowboy. After the apocalypse, living in the wilderness was a sensible



Occupations

and practical solution. In an Wasteland campaign, you have always lived on the land. Perhaps, indeed, you were born to others who lived in the wilderness, and have learned your skills from childhood.

Occupational abilities: Astronomy, Geology, Outdoorsman, Athletics, First Aid, Preparedness, Riding, Sense Trouble, Stealth.

Scavenging Speciality: Anything, when in the open countryside.

Special: You can navigate through the wilderness, by stars, winds, sun or the lie of the land.

Pilot

If you play a pilot, in The Apocalypse Machine, you accept you may never have a plane. Although this sounds odd, it is essential: post-apocalyptic stories require slow, difficult travel by land. A pilot, with a plane, can break the game. Why worry about the monsters, when you can simply fly over them? Why stay and investigate, when you could fly around the world, finding other survivors?

Hence, by choosing Pilot as your occupation, you are signing up to be the Keeper's tool. For much of the game, you will be a frustrated pilot. Any planes left after the apocalypse will probably be grounded: by rust, by monstrous sabotage or by a mysterious and implausible plot device. Your character will be useful chiefly for other skills than Piloting. Because of this, the list of Occupational Abilities below is expanded from that in the main Trail of Cthulhu rules.

Why, then, does Pilot appear in this list? Because, once or twice in a campaign, a pilot can be essential. When the monsters finally overrun the country, and escape is essential, you may find a working place mysteriously appears. At this point, you will take everyone to safety, and become a hero.

Finally, in a Wasteland campaign, it is remotely possible that a pilot might have a working plane. In such a campaign, your pilot will fly a rickety plane across the wastelands, trading and ferrying passengers. One day, your plane will break beyond repair, but for now, it is your living.

Occupational abilities: Astronomy, Driving, Electrical Repair, Mechanical Repair, Piloting, Sense Trouble, Firearms, Languages.

Scavenging Speciality: Aviation equipment, maps, and airfields.

Special: If the Keeper has allowed an Investigator to be a Pilot, once per campaign you are guaranteed access to a working airplane.



Police Detective

Until the apocalypse, the law was on your side. Whether you believed in your job, or exploited your power, you knew your superiors would back you. Now the government is gone, what is your purpose? Are you simply a thug with a gun? Do you uphold the laws as they were or abandon all pretence?

Occupational Abilities: Athletics, Driving, Evidence Collection, Firearms, Interrogation, Law, Assess Honesty, Sense Trouble. (Note that Cop Talk does not appear in The Apocalypse Machine.)

Scavenging Speciality: Police equipment and records.

Special: You can find police stations and navigate your way around them. You may also designate one neighbourhood of a particular town as your former patrol route. You know this area very, very well and get a +2 bonus to Scavenging within it.

Scientist

If anyone can put this right, you can. There are centuries of human knowledge at your disposal, if you can find them. With that knowledge, you can discover how to fight the monsters. You can work out how to make crops grow. With time, patience and equipment, you can ensure humanity's survival.

However, perhaps the apocalypse has changed the laws of the universe. Is reality changing? Does anything you know still apply? Were those centuries of learning in vain?

As a scientist, three features of the Apocalypse Machine will affect your role. Firstly, if the apocalypse damaged Reality, then the laws of science have changed. You must discover what is the same and what is different. Secondly, if the Weird dial is set high, you can use your science to learn about weird phenomena, such as ray guns, mutations and psychic phenomena. Finally, if Humans are responsible for the apocalypse, your science will be viewed with suspicion. It is probable that people like you, perhaps even you yourself, caused the world's destruction.

Scientists may never possess the Intuition skill.

Occupational abilities: Electrical Repair, Evidence Collection, Languages, Library Use, Photography and any two of Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Cryptography, Forensics, Geology, Physics and Botany.

Scavenging Speciality: Scientific equipment.

Special: You can use your scientific methodology to investigate beyond your area of expertise. When you need to spend a point of a scientific skill (Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Cryptography, Forensics, Geology, Physics or Botany) you do not possess, you may, instead, spend two of another scientific skill.



The Apocalypse Machine



Survivalist

You are a warrior of the wastes, equipped to defend yourself against nature, humans and monsters alike. Self-sufficiency is your watchword. You have equipped yourself to survive alone.

Why, then, do you cooperate with other Investigators? Perhaps because you have a Drive to investigate, which gnaws away at you. Perhaps, after one more Investigation, you will become self-sufficient again.

Occupational abilities: Intimidation, Outdoorsman, Athletics, Driving, Electrical Repair, Explosives, Firearms, Mechanical Repair, Preparedness, Urban Survival.

Scavenging Speciality: Weapons and ammunition.

Special: None.



Trader

You are a travelling merchant, making your living through barter and haggling. Perhaps you are a scavenger and purveyor of junk. Perhaps, alternatively, you have a speciality, such as medicines, books or mechanical parts. (If you want to sell curiosities, be an Antiquarian instead; if you want to sell guns, be an Armourer).

Yet something drives you to investigate. In your investigations, the skills you have gained will be invaluable: you travel well and can ingratiate yourself with communities in seconds.

Occupational abilities:

Accounting, Assess Honesty, Bargain, Flattery, Reassurance, Streetwise, Urban Survival, Driving, Scavenging and Preparedness.

Scavenging Speciality: Anything that is part of your trading speciality. If you have no speciality, you get a bonus for finding light, easily tradeable items.

Special: You have access to some form of transport, perhaps a car or horse-drawn caravan. It is large enough to carry your stock.





Occupations

Veteran

You've dealt with the Mythos before and it broke you. Afterwards, you retired to live a quiet life. Now, however, humanity needs you. You must force yourself, one last time, to battle the ancient evil.

When you start the game, your Sanity may be no higher than 6. You must also have a Mental Illness (see the Trail of Cthulhu main rules). Use of this Occupation is entirely at the Keeper's discretion: in any case, do not have more than one Veteran in a team of Investigators.

Occupational abilities: Cthulhu Mythos, Occult, Theology, Languages, Astronomy, Explosives, Firearms, Scuffling, Athletics, Preparedness, Strategy.

Scavenging Speciality: None.

Special: Working with the Keeper, choose one Mythos entity you have encountered before. It is the one that broke you, mentally, causing your retirement. When making Stability Checks involving this entity, the Difficulty Number is increased by 1 (which will usually increase it to 6). You can recall sundry facts about this entity: how it moves, what it eats, what it looks like. For anything more complex, spend a point of an appropriate Skill.

Farmer

Although your job seems humble, the future of humanity depends on you. If people want to eat, they must farm, and you can show them how. You, and

people like you, have the knowledge to grow crops, raise animals and run a dairy.

If the apocalypse damaged the Soil, avoid Farmer as an occupation, unless you want a particularly hopeless character.

Occupational abilities: Agriculture, Botany, Astronomy, Outdoorsman, Athletics, Mechanical Repair, Firearms, First Aid, Riding.

Scavenging Speciality: Farming equipment and machinery. Also, anything within a farm.

Special: You can find good farmland and establish a farm.





Drives



In this post-apocalyptic world, what drives you to investigate the horror? Why not simply avoid it, trying to survive amongst the ruins as best you can? As in *Trail of Cthulhu*, the answer is your Drive. Something makes uncovering the truth more important than your life or your sanity.

In *The Apocalypse Machine*, Drives are particularly important. After an apocalypse, most people would run from danger, but your Investigators must head towards it. If there are monsters stalking in the sea, the story requires that, somehow or other, people are there to observe them. If all the Investigators retreat inland, as sensible people would, things become dull.

The following Drives from *Trail of Cthulhu*, less suited for post-apocalyptic adventures, do not appear in *The Apocalypse Machine*: Artistic Sensitivity, Bad Luck, Ennui, Scholarship, Sudden Shock and Thirst for Knowledge. In their place are new Drives: Self-preservation, Chased, Fate, Humanity, Regression, Love, Wandering, Preservation of Knowledge and Witness.



Adventure

Life is a grind, a dull struggle for survival. Is it any wonder you take to the open road, seeking out danger, never shirking from a fight? Even if your life is short, it will have been a life worth living.

This Drive works best when the Adrenaline dial is set high.

Antiquarianism

Because of the apocalypse, unimaginably old artifacts have risen to the surface. You are captivated by them. Sometimes, you wonder whether you are living in the present or the past: certainly, when you look around, all you see is an ancient, decaying world. No matter. You must explore further and delve deeper into history.

Arrogance

Nothing can hurt you. After all, when the whole world died, you survived. You have faith in yourself. Whatever the Mythos has done to the world, it cannot harm you.

Curiosity

You need to know what is out there. It is like a scab you cannot stop picking: a hook in your brain, pulling you towards the horror.

Sometimes you wonder whether this urge is unnatural. Perhaps you are going mad or the creatures are controlling your mind. No matter. You must go and see the things that have destroyed the world. You must look.

Duty

It does not matter if the people you followed are dead. You have a code to uphold. Whether you believe your duty is to God, science or the United States, you are driven by your obligation.

Sometimes, you wonder whether your fight has any meaning. Are you fighting for dead institutions, a dead cause? Perhaps, however, people need

an ideal to believe in. By fighting for something, you will rally people to your banner, whether the thing is real or not.

Example: The postmasters in David Brin's *The Postman*.

Fate

You didn't meant to get into this. You just wander the post-apocalyptic world, always finding yourself staring at the monsters. Whenever something happens, you are there to witness it. You seem to be a centre of gravity, around which things happen.

All post-apocalyptic heroes are, to some extent, driven by Fate. Somewhat improbably, the protagonists in post-apocalyptic fiction witness every major event of the apocalypse. Nevertheless, you are entirely dependent on fate. Things just happen to you.

Example: Gordon in *The Postman*.

Follower

The only way you will survive is by sticking together. Specifically, you are sticking with that person over there. Perhaps they're stronger than you; perhaps they're smarter; perhaps you trust them; perhaps they are the first person you encountered. Whatever your reason, you will stick with them through thick and thin.

Example: Roger in *The Death Of Grass*, Josella in *The Day Of The Triffids*.



Drives

Humanity

This isn't just an investigation: it's a battle for human survival. The fate of humanity lies in your hands. Humans have weathered crises before, but nothing as bad as this. It is time to fight and you must lead the fight.

First, you must defend yourself. Then, you must find out about the monsters. Finally, when the time is right, you will use your knowledge to fight back.

Example: Bill in *The Day Of The Triffids*.

Hunted

They are coming for you. Your life is an endless cycle of running and hiding: wherever you go, they will find you eventually. They killed all the others: now they are coming to finish the job.

Your only hope is to find out about the things, get them before they get you. What's that noise outside? Get your things. It's time to move.

A warning: using this Drive completely changes the scenario. Firstly, it implies that the creatures are coming after all the Investigators. (This need not mean that everyone takes Hunted as a Drive).

Secondly, this Drive requires the Keeper to pace the investigation cleverly. Although the Investigators are constantly hunted, the scenario must not be one continuous chase: not only would this be dull, but it would prevent investigation. Although hunted, the Investigators must have opportunities to meet others, find safe havens and bandage their wounds. Action scenes must be alternated with quieter scenes. Hence, although the atmosphere of the investigation will be tense, there will still be quiet moments, to allow everyone to catch their breath.

Example: Jim in *28 Days Later*, David in *The Chrysalids*.

In The Blood

You keep finding yourself here. You can't explain why. But night after night, you are drawn towards the monsters and the horror. It satisfies an urge inside you, something you have felt since a child.

As in *Trail of Cthulhu*, In The Blood is an invitation for the Keeper to mess with your Investigator.

Love

In a shattered world, you have found someone. You must devote yourself to them, protecting them against harm, putting them first. For their sake, you must find out what you can, and use your knowledge to fight the monsters. Not for you, not for humanity, but for the one you love.

The person in question must be a Source of Stability (see below). They must not be another Investigator: if you want to be in love with another Investigator, take Follower as your Drive.

If your love interest dies, you may replace this drive with Revenge. Alternatively, you may continue with this drive: from now on, the memory of your love will drive you to investigate.

Example: The Narrator in *The War of the Worlds*, The Man in *The Road*.

Preservation of Knowledge

Your best weapon is knowledge, accumulated by humanity over centuries. It must be preserved: yet, all around you, you see it being destroyed.

The only hope is to follow the trail, book to book, library to library, preserving what you can. Even if you are destroyed, you will leave a legacy for those who follow.

If Knowledge was destroyed in the apocalypse, this Drive is about collecting the scraps of what remains. If not, this Drive is about preserving books before they are destroyed.

Example: Almost everyone in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*.

Regression

The more you live in this dead world, the more your mind changes. Primeval nightmares haunt your sleep: you awake unrefreshed, your head bursting. You are unexplicably drawn to dark places. You find yourself wandering towards danger, oblivious, withdrawn and perversely fascinated. It satisfies some deep hunger inside of you.

Deep inside your mind, layers of brain, established thousands of years ago by evolutionary processes, are coming alive again. As the world regresses to a prehistoric state, so your mind follows. Your brain is becoming that of an animal: you are like a deer in headlights, like a mosquito drawn to a flame. Even if the danger destroys you, you must approach it.

Example: Kerans in *The Drowned World*.



Revenge

The apocalypse killed someone you loved. Your revenge will be cold and calculated: first, you will discover their weak points; then, you will strike.

Hate runs in your blood like opium. You will kill them, even if it kills you. Indeed, perhaps it would be best if they killed you. After all, your life would have little meaning if the monsters were dead.

Self-preservation

Only a few will survive, in a world starved of resources, and you are damned sure you will be one of them.



The Apocalypse Machine

Both the laws and the pretence of civilisation have gone. Humanity has reverted to its natural state, fighting for survival, and you must kill or be killed.

Your greatest enemy is the monsters. Your priority, then, is to find out about them, to kill them before they kill you. You will band together with others, but from necessity, not comradeship. You must stick together to survive, but in the end, your own survival is your priority.

Example: John in *The Death Of Grass*.

Witness

This needs to be recorded. It is the most important event in the history of the world: perhaps, indeed, it is

the last. Perhaps no-one will read it, but you must note everything down, as it happens. If anyone survives, they will read how the end of the world occurred.

Perhaps you are a journalist, trained by instinct to report the news, and unable to shake the habit. Perhaps you are an author. Perhaps you were not a writer before, but have decided to become one now.

Sometimes, you wonder whether you are only writing for yourself: perhaps to process what has happened; perhaps to remind yourself it is real. Whatever the reasons, there is always more to explore and more to record.

Example: Mike in *The Kraken Wakes*.

Switching Drives

When your Investigator changes their Drive, it is a powerful moment in their development. You thought you were driven by Curiosity, but now you realise your fascination is In The Blood. You tire of being buffeted by Fate and realise you have an underlying Duty.

Hence, when you improve your Investigator, at the end of a scenario, you may also change their Drive. You may do this once, during the lifetime of the Investigator: they have realised what really drives them. Be sure to roleplay the change.





Investigative Abilities

These are the skills that will see you through the apocalypse and let you discover its secrets. Some abilities from *Trail of Cthulhu* do not fit into post-apocalyptic fiction: hence, we say goodbye to Accounting, Art History, Law (there isn't any), Cop Talk (there aren't any) and Credit Rating (you won't get any).

Instead, we get new Investigative Abilities: Agriculture, Botany, Intuition, Navigation, Leadership, Seduction and Strategy. There is one new General Ability, the immensely important Scavenging.

Having an ability does not mean you have the equipment needed to use that ability (a change to the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules). Just because you are skilled in Agriculture does not mean you have a farm; just because you have Evidence Collection does not mean you have fingerprinting equipment.

Here, then, is the new list of abilities. Some abilities, such as Flattery, have changed little from *Trail of Cthulhu*. These are mentioned only briefly. Some, such as Bureaucracy and Cryptography, function significantly differently after the apocalypse. And some are new.

For each ability, examples are given of how it might be used. These examples are in addition to those given in the *Trail of Cthulhu* rulebook: for example, Anthropology still allows identification of artifacts and rituals of living creatures, as mentioned in the original skill listing. Now, however, it allows understanding of alien anthropology.

Anthropology

You can understand human cultures. More significantly, you can begin to understand alien cultures. You will never fully comprehend the cultures of other races, but you can figure out enough to be useful.

You can:

- realise, by watching the monsters, that they are a hive mind rather than a collection of individuals.
- spot that the cultists' sacrificial ritual resembles a Catholic Church mass.
- hypothesise that the woman was tortured because she is a mutant.

Agriculture

You know how to farm land. You can:

- tell why crops will not grow.
- sense a change in weather.
- identify whether soil is fertile.
- grow your own food, given a patch of good soil and equipment.

This ability covers a practical understanding of plants, where the ability Botany covers an academic understanding. Agriculture lets you grow crops, which Botany does not.

Nevertheless, the two skills overlap. You can both identify a species of plant.

Archaeology

You understand historical objects and structures. You can:

- realise that an ancient object has been thrown up from deep beneath the sea bed.
- navigate within a Cyclopean city that rose from the sea.

Architecture

You understand how buildings are constructed. You can:

- spot whether a building would crumble in an earthquake.
- spot why a building crumbled in an earthquake
- reinforce a building against the monsters' next attack.

Art

You can create art, as detailed in the main *Trail of Cthulhu* rulebook. Before doing so, you must find the materials to do so.

If you are the Keeper, think of prized works of art as targets for destruction.

Assess Honesty

You can tell if someone is lying and guess why they are lying.

When this ability is used on someone possessed by monsters, the person may seem indefinably wrong. This use of Assess Honesty is at the Keeper's discretion. It will mysteriously fail at narratively convenient moments: for example, when you meet a librarian, your use of Assess Honesty may fail, if revealing he is possessed by a Mi-Go would ruin the investigation.



The Apocalypse Machine

Astronomy

You know the movements of stars, planets and comets. You can:

- Predict where a meteor would have landed.
- Know that the chances against anything manlike on Mars are a million to one.

Beyond Science

A scientific ability can reveal that something is beyond science. Thus, Chemistry may reveal that the meteorite contains unknown elements.

Bargain

You can strike a deal in the post-apocalyptic wasteland. See also Bartering, below.

Biology

You understand living organisms, whether human, animal or alien. You can:

- suspect that a dissected corpse is a hybrid between a human and a Deep One.
- understand that Mi-Go anatomy resembles that of a crustacean.
- guess the function of part of an alien's anatomy.

The skill Botany, below, is a more specialised version of Biology, focussing on plants.

Botany

You understand plants. You can:

- tell whether a plant is alien.
- hypothesise how a plant might be killed.
- tell whether a plant's behaviour is governed by known science.

This ability covers academic understanding of plants, while Agriculture covers practical understanding. You can dissect an unknown plant and compare it to others, which someone skilled in Agriculture cannot.

Nevertheless, the two skills overlap. You can both identify a species of plant.

Bureaucracy

You can follow paper trails, left within abandoned offices. This ability mainly focusses on written records (in *Trail of Cthulhu*, it covered speaking to bureaucrats, but most of them are dead). You can:

- work out who ordered something to be done.
- find out what really happened, beneath layers of bureaucratic obfuscation.
- find a memorandum in the depths of a filing system.

Chemistry

You can perform chemical analyses. You need a lab for particularly specialised work, but can use makeshift facilities, such as a gas burner and a mug, for most tasks.

Craft

You can make things of practical use. Perhaps you make them from spare parts of other things (guns, explosives); perhaps from raw materials (bows, clothing).

Cryptography

If someone in the wasteland is sending codes, you can decipher them.

More interestingly, you can begin to decipher alien communication. For example, you might analyse the chattering of the Mi-Go, recorded on a wax cylinder; the calls of the Martians,

as they echo across the countryside; or the tapping of the Triffids.

Such research takes days or weeks of painstaking analysis. To complete it, you must study many examples of alien communication, either recorded or not. You can never learn the alien language (see Languages, below) and, indeed, much of the language will remain strange to you.

Nevertheless, when you spend a point of Cryptography deciphering such communication, you either gain a benefit, such as:

- You can predict where the monsters' next attack will come from.
- You recognise how their communication changes just before they attack.

Alternatively, you may gain a piece of information, such as:

- The monsters' communications centre around one point.
- They are following you and waiting for a moment to attack.
- They are guarding a particular area.

Naturally, such benefits are at the Keeper's discretion: if a scenario requires that an attack be a surprise, then no amount of analysis will predict it.

Cthulhu Mythos

You are beginning to understand the horrific reality underlying the universe. This ability covers knowledge of all monsters: not just Cthulhu, Hastur and the Deep Ones, but Martians, Triffids and the Chung-Li virus. All these horrors are manifestations of the same underlying reality.

As in *Trail of Cthulhu*, you can get points of Cthulhu Mythos by witnessing



Investigative Abilities

horrific events, such as eldritch creatures rising from the sea. Since, in *The Apocalypse Machine*, these sights are common, they are the primary means of learning the Cthulhu Mythos ability.

As Keeper, consider what the Cthulhu Mythos ability represents in your campaign. Is it simply knowledge? If so, encountering one Mythos entity gives little insight into the others: for example, seeing Mi-Go gives no insight into the Deep Ones. Or is the Cthulhu Mythos ability a general and terrible insight? If so, encountering Mi-Go gives you a mysterious understanding of the Deep Ones and, indeed, everything.

Finally, for a peculiar take on the Cthulhu Mythos ability, see Daoloth, under the section “Mythos Entities”.

Evidence Collection

You know how to search an area systematically, unearthing every secret it has to offer. In *Trail of Cthulhu*, this ability mainly covered crime scenes; in *The Apocalypse Machine*, it covers any systematic manual search for clues, over a limited area. Hence, you can:

- Find how the monsters broke into the house.
- Find where the documents are hidden.
- Find the patch of slime that indicates the monsters were here.

Note that Evidence Collection covers searches for clues, whereas Scavenging (see below) covers searches for anything else. To find the archaeologist’s field notes, which lead you to the dig site, use Evidence Collection. To find her gun, to shoot what you find at the dig site, use Scavenging.

Flattery

Using your looks and charm, you can befriend, persuade and seduce.

Forensics

You can gain information from corpses. You may have learned this from books; you may be professionally trained; or you may simply have dissected many bodies.

Probably, your techniques are cruder than those available before the apocalypse. Nevertheless, you can:

- Determine the approximate time of death, from the body’s temperature.
- Know whether the weapon that inflicted the wounds was blunt, sharp, heavy or light.
- Know whether the body was moved after death.
- Cut open the body to find anything odd inside.

If your knowledge is that of a police forensic expert, not just a layman who has seen many bodies, you might perform more complex analysis.

Geology

You know your rocks. You can:

- Realise a particular rock is unearthly.
- Suspect that a Cyclopean city is millions of years old.
- Understand the natural processes behind volcanic eruptions and earthquakes.

Additionally, you understand geological radioactivity. You know which rocks are naturally radioactive and which would retain radioactive water. Given a Geiger counter, you can tell whether radiation is significantly or dangerously above the background level.

Finally, you can determine if soil is suitable for farming. However, only Agriculture will determine whether other conditions, such as weather and location, are favourable.

History

You know, or think you know, about human history.

In *Aftermath* campaigns, your knowledge is based on 1930s academic knowledge. In *Wasteland* campaigns, you know what others know. If, for example, educated people think George Washington discovered America, your knowledge encompasses that fact.

Interrogation

Given appropriate equipment, you can perform an interrogation. This ability covers all interrogations (whereas, in *Trail of Cthulhu*, it covered police-style interviews). You can threaten, beat or torture the truth out of someone.

If the Humanity dial is set high, threats will normally reveal the truth. If is low, torture will probably be needed.

Intimidation

Using a threatening manner, you induce people to reveal information and do what you say.

Intuition

Through common sense, you see the consequences of science and technology. You understand the things to which the scientists are blind.

You can:

- Realise that a nuclear bomb will tear apart reality.
- Intuit that the disease that killed the world was a biological weapon.
- Understand that solving a mathematical equation creates a pathway for a monster.

Often, your intuition will be vague: for example, you see that solving this equation lets something through, but you cannot explain what or how. In such cases, Intuition resembles a poor, but safe, version of Cthulhu Mythos. You glimpse a terrifying reality but, thankfully, do not understand it.



The Apocalypse Machine

Languages

In languages other than your native tongue, you are fluent, literate or both.

You cannot learn alien languages, which are immeasurably complex and beyond your understanding. Only Cryptography (above) gives some limited insight into such communication.

Leadership

When you speak, people do what you want. They obey you almost without thinking, even before they know who you are.

You can:

- Order someone to tell you what they know.
- Tell someone to lower their weapon.
- Make them give you something you want.

It does not, of course, work on Mythos entities.

You may use Leadership without knowing what you are talking about. For example, you can tell people to man the barricades, even if you do not know how to mount an effective defence.

Library Use

You can find information from written records.

If Knowledge was destroyed in the apocalypse, you will search scraps of burned paper; if not, you will search decaying, deserted libraries. In any case, if the information is there, you will find it.

Locksmith

You can skilfully force an entry.

Of course, in the post-apocalyptic world, many people force their way into abandoned buildings. Anyone can break a door, smash a window or crowbar a lock. You, however, can:

- Pick a lock quietly.
- Force an entry, which will not later be detected.
- Open a safe without destroying it.
- Bypass particularly complex locks.

Navigation

Whether by the wind, stars, terrain or sun, you can find your way. Even in the complete darkness of the apocalyptic night, you know where to go.

Navigation can be used in two ways. Firstly, it is used in investigations, where the information to be uncovered is a physical location. For example, you can locate:

- The cave you are looking for, in the snowy mountains.
- Ryleh, given the longitude, latitude and an airship.
- The former location of the Eiffel Tower, after Paris is destroyed by an atomic bomb.

Secondly, Navigation can be used to gain a benefit related to a known location, such as:

- Finding the farmhouse you visited as a child, which you think will be a safe haven.
- Finding the cache of food, where you buried it before the earthquake.

Note that tracking and hunting are covered by the Outdoorsman ability.

Occult

You know strange folktales and beliefs. In an Aftermath campaign, your interest might be academic; in a Wasteland campaign, you have heard or read many myths and legends.

You can:

- Recall legends about a particular creature.
- Know the folklore for a particular area.
- Understand the beliefs underpinning cult rituals and practices.

Oral History

People tell you their stories, giving you details they would not tell others. In Aftermath campaigns, they will tell you how they survived the apocalypse.

Outdoorsman

You can survive in the outdoors. If such things are available, you can find the following by spending Outdoorsman, rather than rolling Scavenging:

- Food, both animals and plants.
- Shelter, possibly even concealed shelter.
- Water, which you can render drinkable, unless it is severely contaminated.
- Firewood.

You can also:

- Build and light a fire.
- Skin and cook an animal.
- Tell how the weather will change.
- Track someone or something across land.

In short, you can survive outdoors, without tinned food or man-made devices. You can not only survive, but live with some comfort.

You can also survive within a deserted, decaying city. You can:

- Find enough food to survive.
- Make water safe or collect rainwater.
- Find an inconspicuous place to shelter.
- Avoid dangerous wild animals.
- Rig an electrical generator.
- Track people or other creatures through an urban area.

Pharmacy

You understand and can identify drugs and medicines.



Investigative Abilities

Photography

You are a skilled camera operator. You can:

- Develop film using household chemicals, such as orange juice, coffee and ammonia.
- Rig an infrared filter, using developed slide film or chemicals painted on glass.
- Work how to use a movie camera.
- Spot unusual aspects in an existing photograph.
- Rig a simple camera to perform complex operations: for example, using an alarm clock and a Box Brownie, you can take a picture four hours from now.

Physics

You have a good knowledge of physics, the laws that you believe govern the universe. You are familiar with:

- Tesla's outlandish plans for electromagnetic weapons.
- Holsten's discovery of nuclear fission.
- Einstein's theories of relativity, which propose that neither time nor space are absolute quantities.

You can:

- Understand how a nuclear bomb might, conceivably, work.
- Measure the level of radioactivity and tell whether it is dangerous.
- Get a piece of scientific equipment working.

If the Weird dial is set high, you may encounter outlandish technologies. Using this ability, you can begin to understand them.

Reassurance

Your calming presence stops people panicking and encourages them to reveal information.

Seduction

You use your charm and physical attractiveness to worm information out of people.

You can:

- Find information with an implied promise of sex.
- Get someone into bed, then find what you want to know through pillow-talk.

As with any Interpersonal skill, Seduction does not always succeed. Just as not everyone can be reassured or flattered, not everyone can be seduced.

Strategy

You understand military strategy and can, with some success, apply it to monsters. You can:

- Defend an area in an optimal fashion.
- Know how best to attack the monsters.
- Pinpoint the weak spot in a line of defences.
- Relate the attacks of monsters to historical battles.
- Suggest how to weaken the monsters: for example, by severing or confusing their communications.

Streetwise

You know how to talk to the baser elements of the post-apocalyptic world. You also know how they operate. You can:

- Safely enter communities of thieves, smugglers and slavers.
- Smooth over breaches of etiquette by other investigators.
- Deduce how criminal operations work.

GENERAL ABILITIES

As with Investigative Abilities, possessing a General Ability does not grant the equipment to use it. Hence, having Driving does not imply owning a car; having Firearms does not imply having a gun.

The abilities Hypnosis and Shadowing do not appear in *The Apocalypse Machine*. If you want to shadow someone, use Stealth instead. There is just one new General Ability: Scavenging.

Scavenging

Scavenging lets you find and salvage equipment. In the post-apocalyptic ruins, most things can be scavenged: guns, cars, rope, capacitors, pharmaceuticals, typewriters and much more.

The Scavenging ability works similarly to Preparedness. The Keeper sets a Difficulty Number, based on how difficult the item would be to find. If you beat that number with a Simple Test, you get the item. See Equipment, below, for further details.

Almost everything is available after the apocalypse: after all, you can simply walk into army bases and research laboratories. A Tommy gun, for example, is relatively easy to find in a military encampment. However, as with the Preparedness ability, Scavenging cannot find unique or specialised items: thus, Scavenging will never find a nuclear bomb.

Sometimes, a Scavenging roll is not needed. If you can locate a hospital, finding a syringe is normally easy. Finding bandages may be harder, if someone else has been there before you.



Stability and Sanity

SOURCES OF STABILITY

Whether the people you love are alive or dead, they are terribly important. Every Investigator, in *The Apocalypse Machine*, has Sources of Stability. This is how they work.

For each three full rating points you possess in Stability, you have one slot for a Source of Stability. You need not fill all these slots when you create your character. That is, you need not name all your Sources of Stability at character creation.

Instead, when you create your character, name one Source of Stability. This person must not be another Investigator and your Investigator must believe they are alive. You may fill the remaining slots, at any time, by specifying another Source of Stability.

At the end of each scenario, you may refresh your Stability pool by dedicating an action to your Source of Stability. You can do this whether they are present or absent, alive or dead. For example, you might:

- Write them a letter.
- Press your suit, remembering how they insisted on you looking your best.
- Go to sleep, with their photograph beside you.

Meanwhile, the Keeper should see Sources of Stability as targets. If you are the Keeper, kill Sources of Stability whenever is dramatically appropriate. (When an Investigator finds the body of a Source of Stability, they must make a Stability Test as per the *Trail of Cthulhu* rules. Gruesome deaths are particularly recommended.)

Once your loved one is dead, you may keep them as a Source of Stability. Moreover, you may continue refreshing your Stability pool, at the end of each scenario, by dedicating an action to them. You might:

- Bury their body.
- Clean your gun, vowing revenge.
- Go to sleep, with their photograph beside you.

However, at the beginning of each scenario, you must have one Source of Stability whom you believe to be alive. If all your Sources of Stability are dead, fill an empty slot with a new, living Source of Stability. If all your slots are full, remove one dead Source of Stability and replace them with a new, living one.

Additionally, you may add one Investigator (just one) as a Source of Stability. After all, the people with you keep you sane. You cannot do this when you create your character, but may do it at any time thereafter.

Example: When the Investigator Parker Mattheson is created, his Stability is 10. Hence, he has three slots for Sources of Stability. He fills only one: his first Source of Stability is his wife, Jennifer, who is not an Investigator.

Reserve supplies (Optional rule)

When your Stability goes below zero, you may run out of ammunition for your gun, gasoline for your car, batteries for your flashlight or something similar. See Equipment, below.

In the first scenario, Parker sees Jennifer killed by a Martian heat-ray, and loses much Stability as a result. However, he keeps her as a Source of Stability. At the end of the scenario, he refreshes his Stability pool by dedicating an action to her: he polishes the silver cross she gave him.

Before the next scenario, Parker needs a new Source of Stability whom he believes to be alive. He takes Gertrude Lambert, another Investigator, who reminds him of Jennifer: she fills his second Source of Stability slot. During the second scenario, Parker decides to fill the third and final slot with Michael Mattheson, his brother. Miraculously, both Gertrude and Michael make it through the scenario. To refresh his Stability pool, Parker dedicates an action to Gertrude: he treats her to a candlelit dinner of tinned meat and expensive wine.

In the third scenario, Gertrude dies, battling a Martian. Gleeefully, the Keeper kills off Michael, too: he is choked by a Martian red weed, as it spreads over the surface of the planet. Parker fails Stability rolls for both deaths, which nearly sends him irrevocably mad, but not quite. At the end of that scenario, Parker refreshes his Stability pool by dedicating an action to Jennifer: he buries her silver cross.

Now, Parker has three dead Sources of Stability. He must remove one and choose a new Source of Stability, whom he believes to be alive. He removes Michael and replaces him with Paul Mattheson, an estranged cousin, who was last heard of in France.



Stability and Sanity

Stability table

Use these Stability losses in addition to those listed on page 71 of *Trail of Cthulhu*.

| | |
|---|---|
| Realising you are deluded or in denial about a mundane fact. | 2 |
| Being the target of psychic powers. | 3 |
| Seeing someone use an Affliction with which you are not familiar. | 3 |
| Getting Insight (see below) | 3 |
| Realising you are deluded or in denial about a fact important to you. | 3 |
| Using an Affliction for the first time. | 4 |
| Seeing a Source of Stability use an Affliction. | 5 |
| Glimpsing inside the mind of a Mythos entity. | 5 |
| Realising you are deluded or in denial about a Source of Stability. | 5 |
| Seeing many, many supernatural creatures. | 6 |
| Seeing huge creatures striding about the earth. | 6 |
| Realising you have been possessed by an alien. | 6 |
| Finding proof that the human race is doomed. | 8 |

PILLARS OF SANITY

Pillars of Sanity work as they did in *Trail of Cthulhu*, with one additional twist.

When you create your character, choose one Pillar of Sanity for every three full points of Sanity you possess. For some examples, see the sidebar.

These Pillars of Sanity, like Sources of Stability, act as targets for the Keeper. Hence, if you are Keeper, design scenarios to question, undermine and smash the things that keep the Investigators sane. For example, if Parker Matheson's Pillar of Sanity is "Love of Chicago", you might design a scenario to reveal that Chicago gained its former power from a buried monster. When a Pillar of Sanity is smashed like this, the Investigator loses 6 Stability and 2 Sanity.

Alternatively, once an Investigator has lost 3 Sanity from other causes, the player may decide a Pillar of Sanity crumbles from within. For example, having lost 3 Sanity, Parker Matheson may decide his "Love of Chicago" Pillar has crumbled. He should roleplay this, perhaps by leaving Chicago or tearing up a beloved photograph. This avoids the huge loss associated with the Pillar being smashed. A canny Investigator, who suspects the Keeper is about to smash a Pillar, may tactically decide to let the Pillar crumble.

When an Investigator has no Pillars of Sanity, they take Stability tests at +1 Difficulty.

Finally, *The Apocalypse Machine* adds another twist. In post-apocalyptic fiction, Pillars of Sanity can be difficult to smash. For example, if an Investigator

has "The United States" as a Pillar, it is difficult to fully smash this Pillar, short of revealing the US was established by aliens. However, it is easy to question the Investigator's belief in the United States: for example, by revealing that the atomic bomb that caused the apocalypse was a Government research program.

So *The Apocalypse Machine* allows the Keeper to hit a Pillar of Sanity. To do this, reveal something that would cause the Investigator to question, but not abandon, the thing their Pillar of Sanity embodies. Each time a Pillar is hit, put a cross against it. The third time the Pillar is hit, it crumbles, as above. Again, canny Investigators may decide to let their Pillar crumble the second time it is hit, avoiding a third hit, which would smash the Pillar.



The Apocalypse Machine

MENTAL ILLNESSES

When monsters rise and take over the earth, people go mad quickly. Here, then, are some new and exciting mental illnesses.

They fall into three categories. The first two are delusion and denial, in which the afflicted Investigator believes something false about the world. The third is defence mechanisms: quirks of thinking and behaviour from psychiatry and Freudian psychoanalysis.

Do not allow too many Investigators to become mentally ill. In particular, avoid too many delusions and denials: too many changed facts make games confusing (we're in France, but we're actually in Kentucky, and that rifle is a broomstick because guns don't exist).

As a rule, two mental illnesses is enough. After that, consider using the Insight rule (see sidebar).

Remember that, in *Trail of Cthulhu*, mental illnesses are usually portrayed by the other players and Keeper. When your Investigator has a mental illness, the others send you out of the room and decide how to portray that illness. For example, they may decide that Arkham never existed and react with disbelief when you mention the city.

The following descriptions of mental illnesses, then, assume you are using this collaborative approach to portray them.

Delusion

If your Investigator is deluded, they believe, wrongly, that something is true. To enact this delusion, the other players and Keeper choose a fact that is no longer true. This delusion can concern the Investigator:

- Your "wife", Dorothy, is a figment of your imagination.
- You did not work for the New York Times.
- You are not a doctor, but merely a hobo.

Or it might be about the world:

- The Great War did not happen.
- Theodore Roosevelt does not exist.
- The Hindenberg does not fly (it is merely a ship).





Stability and Sanity

Be careful with delusions about the world. They create the impression that an Investigator has gone very, very mad. They are powerful, but use them sparingly: when the campaign world keeps changing, it is difficult to invest in it. Try them towards the end of a campaign.

Thirdly, the delusion might concern monsters:

- We didn't see a sea-creature. It was all in your mind.

Be even more careful with monstrous delusions, since they implicitly dismiss the previous horror (as if it was all a dream). Occasionally, however, they work well.

Despite the change in the Investigator, continue to use the character sheet as before: for example, if the the deluded

Investigator has a non-existent Source of Stability, let them continue to use that Source; similarly, allow the Investigator to keep the same Occupational Abilities as before. It may not be realistic, but it is easier.

Delusions create real tensions between Investigators: as when, for example, the hobo attempts a medical examination of a patient. Some players will object to having their Investigator messed with, but, for many, it will be wonderfully intriguing.

Denial

If your Investigator is in denial, they deny that something is true or that something happened. To enact this delusion, the other players and Keeper invent something that happened or that is true. You, playing the deluded Investigator, deny this new fact.

It is particularly effective if this fact is about the apocalypse:

- The world was at war in 1936.
- The water level is rising and London is underwater.
- Before the monsters came, green meteors were seen, falling to Earth.
- The grass is black and lifeless.
- The Investigators saw California sinking into the sea.

Both delusions and denial can add much to your game. Do not overuse them, particularly if the Weird dial is set low: when reality keeps changing, it becomes less believable and harder to invest in. Nevertheless, used in moderation, delusions and denial can make Investigators seem completely and pleasingly insane.





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Some Common Pillars

Most Pillars of Sanity fall into five categories: God, Country, Nature, Humanity and Knowledge. These are outlined further below.

Use these categories to generate ideas for Pillars of Sanity. In doing this, pick Pillars of Sanity that would be particularly challenged by your apocalypse. For example, if humans have just destroyed the world, try “The Goodness of Humanity” or “Science leads to progress”.

Additionally, if you are the Keeper, use these categories to hit or smash Pillars of Sanity. If two Investigators have Pillars within the same category, it is often possible to smash both at once, killing two beliefs with one stone. For example, if one Investigator has “Knowledge leads to progress” and another has “Science is the only true way”, show both how science has produced biological or nuclear weapons.

Here are the categories in more detail. You will find God and Country particularly relevant when the Mythos causes the apocalypse; Nature relevant when Nature causes the apocalypse (of course); and Humanity and Knowledge most relevant when humans cause the apocalypse.

For each category, there are three example Pillars of Sanity and some common methods to attack such pillars.

God

- God has a plan for us.
- God loves us.
- God made the world and everything in it.

To hit or smash:

Show Mythos entities ruling the earth, smashing religious buildings and symbols. For example, show Cthulhu walking the earth, smashing a church to rubble.

Country

- America is the land of freedom.
- Britain will be great again.
- The green, green grass of home.

To hit or smash:

Show Mythos entities ruling the country, smashing national buildings and symbols. For example, show Cthulhu walking the earth, smashing the White House (or, in Britain, Big Ben). Extra points for the landscape being irrevocably and horribly altered.

Nature

- Man and Nature should live in harmony.
- Nature is beautiful.
- One day, I will live in the mountains.

To hit or smash:

Show Nature killing humans, in all its bloody glory: animals preying on humans; avalanches burying villages; people starving because the ground is frozen. This time, extra points for showing the terrifying grandeur of nature.

Humanity

- Humans are essentially good.
- Humanity will shine through in the end.
- Humans were given dominion over the Earth and everything in it.

To hit or smash:

Show humans warring or cannibalising each other; reveal that humanity will soon be extinct.

Knowledge

- Knowledge sets us apart from the animals.
- Science leads to progress.
- One day, we will learn to cure all known diseases.

To hit or smash:

Show science/knowledge/technology leading to bad things, such as nuclear destruction.



Stability and Sanity

DEFENCE MECHANISMS

Most of these new mental illnesses stem from psychoanalysis, which dominated psychiatry in the 1930s. For each, there is a brief description, followed by instructions on how the other players and Keeper can collaborate to portray it.

Derealization

The post-apocalyptic world does not seem real. As you look around, everything appears strange and dreamlike. When you touch things, even that touch seems illusory. You feel as though you are walking through a dream.

Depending on the Mythos entities you have encountered or studied, you will perceive your mental illness differently. You may, for example, believe you are trapped in Cthulhu's dreaming or a Hasturian alternative universe.

To portray collaboratively: the Keeper describes particular elements of the world as though they are unreal. For example: the village shimmers like a mirage; the landscape appears to shift as you look at it.

Depersonalization

You do not believe you are real. When you do something, it is like watching a movie of yourself. Although you see what you are doing, you do not feel in control. Perhaps you think you are possessed; perhaps you believe you are being controlled remotely.

As with Derealization, you will perceive your mental illness differently, depending on which Mythos entities you have encountered. If you know about the Mi-Go or Shan, you will instantly assume there is one inside you. Alternatively, you may assume you are the tool of Hastur or Cthulhu.

To portray collaboratively: the Keeper describes the Investigator's successes as being due to outside influence. For example: you hit with the gun, but you are sure something was controlling your hand, making you aim correctly.

Capgras Delusion

Someone close to you does not seem real: perhaps a Source of Stability, perhaps another Investigator. When they talk, they pretend to be human, but are not. When they smile, the smile is clearly false.

Are they possessed? Are they an alien in human shape? Why cannot your fellow Investigators see what has happened? Are your colleagues fakes, too?

To portray collaboratively: if the person is a Source of Stability, the Keeper should portray them with excessive falseness, smiling fixedly and speaking with exaggerated formality or friendliness. If the person is an Investigator, the player of that Investigator should be similarly false.

Rationalization

The thing that sent you mad? It was all a plan on your part. You allowed the monster

Insight

After a while, playing a mental illness may lose its appeal. This applies particularly if you use the collaborative approach (in which the other players and Keeper portray your Investigator's mental illness). For a while, it is superb fun. After a while, however, the player realises what is going on.

Once a mental illness is no longer fun, the Investigator may gain insight into their mental illness: that is, they realise they are mad. When your Investigator gains insight:

- Make a Stability test, as appropriate for the type of mental illness (see the Stability table, on page 35).
- Stop using the collaborative approach to the mental illness.
- Roleplay the mental illness yourself, but show awareness of being mentally ill. For example, you still believe people are plotting against you, but, when you rationalise, you realise they are not.

to get close, so that you could get a closer look. You wanted your husband to die: you had been married too long, anyway. You summoned the monsters, so that they rose from the sea.

Whatever happened, it was deliberate, and you must explain that to the other Investigators. When bad things happen in the future, you will rationalize those, too.

This mental illness is better roleplayed by the Investigator than played collaboratively.

Displacement

However you felt when you went mad, you now feel that way about another Investigator.

Hence, if you were afraid, you are now afraid of another Investigator. If you were angry, you are now angry with another Investigator. If you felt violent, you now feel violent towards that Investigator.

To portray collaboratively: the Investigator concerned should speak in a particularly scary, annoying or inciteful way towards the mad Investigator.

Projection

However you felt when you went mad, you believe other people feel that way too. Hence, if you were afraid, you think everyone else is afraid. If you were angry, you think everyone else is angry.

To portray collaboratively: the other Investigators should act terrified, angry or violent, but deny that they feel that way. If questioned, all the other Investigators will say they are behaving normally. No, nobody shouted. Everyone's calm. What are you talking about?

Intellectualization

You talk with an unnatural lack of emotion. In doing so, you use much technical language and jargon.

For example: when the amphibious creatures arose from the sea, you were understandably fearful. Fear is, of course, a natural reaction in these circumstances, and very possibly an evolutionary instinct,



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if one accepts Darwin's thoughts on the subject. Naturally, your reaction was to run: perhaps, indeed, it was a biological instinct. At the present moment in time, the balance of your mind is perhaps somewhat disturbed, which is completely understandable and perhaps beneficial.

To portray collaboratively: when you speak, the other Investigators should sometimes react with disbelief, accusing you of being emotionless. You found your wife's body? Don't you care? How can you stay so calm?

Additionally, they should react to any words that are slightly uncommon, as if you are using technical language. There was a blue tinge around her lips? A tinge? You mean her lips were blue? Why don't you just say so?

Reaction Formation

When you feel an extreme emotion, you exaggerate the opposite. So there are sea-creatures on Manhattan island? You can't wait to fight them. You're excited about it. You're not afraid: you're going to beat them, right? Let's go there now!

To portray collaboratively: when you talk, the other Investigators should occasionally react with concern. Sure, we'll go to Manhattan, but why are you smiling? Did you just laugh when you talked about the sea-creatures?

Somatization

There is something inside you. You can feel it. It hurts. Doctors cannot find it, but you know it is there.

Again, the nature of the thing depends on the Mythos creatures you have encountered. Perhaps you believe there is an egg inside you, gradually growing into a Deep One. Perhaps you think a piece of Mi-Go technology replaces your heart. Perhaps you think the Red Weed has infected your arm. You cannot see it, but it is there.

To portray collaboratively: the Keeper informs the Investigator that they feel a pain inside.

Fantasy

When things get too much, you retreat into a fantasy world. It is somewhere from your childhood, somewhere you feel safe. Perhaps you sleep in the rubble of your childhood home, believing it is still standing. Perhaps you believe you have found a garden, but it is radioactive soil. Perhaps you dig tunnels, dreaming of restarting humanity in an underground empire.

To portray collaboratively: the Keeper lets the Investigator discover a pleasant, comfortable place: their childhood home, a garden, an underground network of tunnels. The other Investigators react appropriately when the mad Investigator retreats into this fantasy world.

Regression

The horrors you have seen have made you retreat into childhood. Perhaps you suck your thumb; perhaps you wet the bed. In any case, you have a childish habit, of which you are not aware.

To portray collaboratively: The other Investigators and Keeper choose a childish habit, in which you unknowingly indulge. From time to time, they react to this habit: first, by looking at you oddly; later, by asking you to stop (without, of course, explaining what you are doing).

Eldritch Babbling

When you think you are talking your native language, you occasionally lapse into incomprehensible babbling. The language is nonsensical (and Investigators cannot spend a point of Languages to understand it). It sounds guttural, eldritch and disturbing.

To portray collaboratively: The other Investigators, when you are speaking, should sometimes stare at you as though you have said something incomprehensible. They should look shocked and perhaps scared.

Self-Destruction

Without knowing it, you have begun to flirt with the idea of suicide. Unconsciously, you drift closer to things that might kill you.

To portray collaboratively: The other Investigators decide that, when you perform a particular action, you are actually doing something dangerous. For example, when you think you are cleaning your gun, you are actually pointing it at yourself. When you think you are drinking beer, you are, in fact, drinking radioactive water. The other Investigators react appropriately.

This mental illness, of course, relies on the other Investigators stopping the action. It is perhaps unfair if the Investigator is allowed to unwittingly commit suicide.

Night Terrors

You wake up screaming in the middle of the night. Sometimes, you dream of monsters you have encountered; sometimes, you dream of unknown horrors; sometimes, you awake knowing that something tried to break into your mind. Throughout the day, your head throbs, as though the dream is trying to get back in.

To portray collaboratively: Sometimes, you wake up surrounded by the other Investigators. The other Investigators have weapons drawn and ask why you were screaming.

Sleepwalking

In the middle of the night, you wake in strange places, always fully dressed. Sometimes, when you awake, you are performing an activity: perhaps digging a hole or staring at the sea. It feels as though your unconscious is guiding you, but when you wake up, you cannot remember what it wants you to do.

The activity should be related, tangentially, to the current scenario. For example, an Investigator on the trail of Mi-Go might wake to find herself assembling electronic circuits. If investigating Deep Ones, she might find herself wading in the sea.

To portray collaboratively: Sometimes, the Investigator should wake up in odd places, carrying out strange activities, especially ones they do not understand.



Equipment

After the apocalypse, finding some things is easier than ever. You want diamonds? Take them from a jeweller. You want silk clothing? Walk into a department store. Finding useful equipment, however, is harder. Perhaps it has rusted. Perhaps it has been taken already.

When you want to find something, use the Scavenging ability. First, specify the area you want to search: a town, a house, a military base. The Keeper sets a Difficulty Number, based on the item you want (see the Equipment table) and the following factors:

Some searches, of course, will automatically fail. Searching military bases for guns and grenades is plausible; searching for biological weapons is not. Searching a house for guns is fine; searching for a scalpel or submachine gun is not.

When the Keeper has set the Difficulty Number, the Investigator then attempts a Scavenging test. On a success, the Investigator finds the item. On a failure, the Investigator does not find the exact item. Nevertheless, they may find something.

| Factor | Adjustment to Difficulty Number |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Searching an area where the item would be commonplace (e.g. a military base for a gun, a hospital for bandages) | -3 |
| Searching an area where the item would be expected (e.g. a military base for grenades, a hospital for a scalpel) | -2 |
| Searching an area where the item would be more likely than normal (e.g. a military base for a field telephone, a hospital for anaesthetic) | -1 |
| Searching an area where the item would be unlikely or concealed (e.g. a city for grenades) | +2 |
| Searching for a particular make of an item (e.g. not just a car, but a Jaguar; not just a gun, but a Winchester shotgun) | +1 to +3 |
| Searching quickly (e.g. searching a military base before sundown) | +1 |
| Searching under pressure (e.g. finding a gun, in a military base, while being chased) | +2 |
| Searching in total darkness | +2 |
| Searching in partial darkness or fog | +1 |
| Searching for an item with a Reserve (see below) | +1 per Reserve |

Failed Scavenging

When you fail a Scavenging roll, you may still find something. It depends on how badly you failed the roll.

Below, the numbers are how much you missed the roll by followed by what you find.

1 – Almost what you were looking for. Not quite as good, but useful. For example, a flare pistol rather than a real gun; a sharp knife rather than a scalpel.

Exactly what you were looking for, but broken. To repair it, attempt a Mechanical or Electrical Repair test (the appropriate ability depends on the item). The Difficulty Number is the same as for the Scavenging test.

Exactly what you were looking for, but disturbing. For example, a gun that is still warm; a bloody scalpel.

Exactly what you were looking for, but in a dangerous place. For example, a gun on the other side of that darkened basement. Choose whether to enter the location or abandon the object.

2 – Almost what you were looking for, as above, and broken, as above.

Something like what you were looking for. Definitely not as good, but perhaps useful. For example, a BB gun rather than a real gun; a rusted knife rather than a scalpel.

Exactly what you were looking for, but ominous. For example, a gun with a bloody handprint; a scalpel stuck in a corpse.



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Exactly what you are looking for, but in an extremely dangerous location. For example, a gun in that house behind the Triffid.

3 or more – Exactly what you were looking for, but broken beyond repair.

Exactly what you were looking for, but extremely ominous. For example, a gun covered in black slime; a scalpel that causes your Geiger counter to chatter furiously.

Definitely not what you were looking for, but something that could be used for the same purpose. For example, a baseball bat rather than a real gun, a hacksaw rather than a scalpel.

Although players should make suggestions, the Keeper determines exactly what is found. If you are the Keeper, use this to tempt the players into dangerous and inhuman acts. If they want dynamite, give them barrels of gasoline. If they want medical equipment, give them infected equipment.

As Keeper, be cautious of failed scavenging rolls turning into jokes. If, whenever the Investigators search for guns, they find water pistols instead, the atmosphere of cosmic horror will quickly disperse. Instead, let them find broken equipment or simply fail the roll.

Never Scavenge for Clues

The Scavenging ability is used to find useful items, not essential clues. For clues, use an Investigative Ability, such as Evidence Collection.

Time to Search

Searching a city, for a particular item, takes about a day. Of course, you do not search every building. If you want a rifle, you find an armourer's shop, then search it thoroughly. If you want medical supplies, you search pharmacies and hospitals.

Searching a large building or encampment takes a few hours. Again, you do not search every room: if you want a machine gun, you try to find the armory; if you want a land-mine, you figure out where explosives are kept.

Searching a house takes anything from minutes to hours. If you want a Bible, you check the bookcase. If you want a gun, you check around the bedroom. Searching a street, in the same way, takes an hour or two.

This, then, is a reason to narrow your search to a house. It's quicker. Searching the city takes the whole day, but searching this street takes a quarter of the time.

That said, do not worry about tallying minutes and hours: instead, say how the time will affect the Investigators. For example: "If you just search this house, you'll be out of the city by nightfall. Search the whole city and you'll have to camp here tonight."

If the search is time-constrained, use the modifiers for hasty and desperate searches, above.

Reserves (Optional Rule)

All items come with a limited supply of the thing that makes them work. For example, guns come with ammunition, cars come with gasoline, cameras come with film, flashlights come with batteries. In *The Apocalypse Machine*, these are called Reserves.

When an item needs a Reserve to function, it is marked in the Equipment table: for example, "Guns [Ammunition]". When you find these items, they have one Reserve with them. For example, a gun always has one Reserve of ammunition. When you mark such items on your character sheet, mark the Reserve too: for example, "Gun [with 1 Ammunition]".

You may scavenge for items with more than one Reserve. For example, you might decide to search for a gun with a stock of ammunition. To do this, add 1 to the Difficulty Number of your Scavenging Test for each reserve supply you want. If you succeed, write the number of Reserves on your character sheet, next to the item: for example, Guns [with 2 Ammunition].

For example: Florence Dubois has found an abandoned camp on a high, snowy plateau. She decides to search for a flashlight, for which the Difficulty Number is 4. If she finds it, it will come with a Reserve (i.e. Flashlight [with 1 Battery]). However, she also wants a spare battery, which adds one to the Difficulty Number, making it 5. She rolls a 6. Hence, she finds her flashlight, with an extra battery. On her character sheet, the player marks Flashlight [with 2 Batteries].

Now, these reserves are scarce. They run out at the worst possible moment. When you confront the monster, that's when your flashlight dies, your car runs out of fuel and your gun clicks on an empty chamber.



Equipment

So, whenever a Stability test takes your Stability below zero, choose, at random, any item that:

- You are using, or likely to use shortly, and
- Requires a reserve to keep going.

For example, if you are exploring a temple with flashlight and gun, choose randomly between your flashlight and gun. If you are also holding your camera, hoping to use it, choose randomly between flashlight, gun and camera.

Cross off one Reserve for that randomly item. For example, if your gun was previously marked Gun [2 Ammunition], it is now Gun [1 Ammunition].

If you crossed off the last Reserve, that item stops working, either immediately or the next time you try to use it. For

Choosing Randomly Between Items

To randomly choose an item from a selection of items, roll a die.

For two items: On 1-3, it's the first item; on 4-6, it's the second.

For three items: On 1-2, it's the first item; on 3-4, it's the second; on 5-6, it's the second.

For four items: On 1, it's the first item; on 2, it's the second; on 3, it's the third; on 4, it's the fourth; on 5 or 6, roll again.

For five items: On 1, it's the first item; on 2, it's the second; on 3, it's the third; on 4, it's the fourth; on 5, it's the fifth; on 6, roll again.

example, your flashlight dies; your gun runs out of ammunition; your camera runs out of film.

For example: Florence Dubois has found a deserted camp on a high, snowy plateau. She already has a gun, but decides to search for a flashlight, for which the Difficulty Number is 4. This would let her find a flashlight with a single battery (Flashlight [with 1 Battery]).

However, she also wants a spare battery (a Reserve Supply). This adds 1 to the Difficulty Number, making it 5. She rolls a 6, which is a success. On her character sheet, the player marks Flashlight [with 2 Batteries].

Staying at the camp for the night, she finds a mangled corpse. She fails a Stability test, which takes her Stability to -2. She has two items that use reserves and that she is likely to use: her gun and her flashlight. She rolls a die to choose between them: it's the flashlight. Hence, her flashlight dies. Luckily, she has a spare battery, which she uses, adjusting her character sheet to read Flashlight [with 1 Battery]. Before sleeping, she uses Psychoanalysis to restore her Stability to 2.

Later, she is awoken by howling. Looking out of the tent, she sees mutated, bloody snow-wolves circling the tent. She fails a Stability test, taking her Stability to -3. Again, she must randomly choose between her gun and her flashlight: again, the flashlight is selected. This time, she has no reserve supply, so the flashlight stops working. As the snow-wolves approach, Florence is plunged into darkness.

Difficulties for Finding Equipment

There are some approximate Difficulty Numbers for finding items in the 'Equipment Table' found in the Appendices on page 71. Some are surprisingly easy to find: if you want luxurious clothes, simply walk into any high-class store and take them. Knowing where to find a generator, however, is another matter.

MAKING EQUIPMENT

Rather than scavenging for equipment, practical Investigators may prefer to make it. To make something, roll Mechanical Repair or Electrical Repair, as appropriate. For example, roll Mechanical Repair for a gas mask, Electrical Repair for a flashlight. Use the same Difficulty Number for scavenging a similar piece of equipment.

If you succeed, you make a reasonable substitute for the piece of equipment. For example, instead of a lantern, you manufacture a light, using a car's headlight and battery. Instead of a cigarette lighter, you adapt a flashlight to ignite things with a spark.

For specialised equipment, such as guns and Geiger counters, Keepers should ask players how they intend to manufacture a substitute. If they give a plausible method, then let them do it.

When you miss a roll, you don't make exactly what you want, but you might make something. Check below for how much you missed the difficulty roll by and what item this created.

1 – Exactly what you wanted, but it will break when your Stability goes below zero.

Almost what you wanted, but impaired in some way. For example, your homemade wine tastes disgusting; your flashlight flickers at inconvenient moments.



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Exactly what you were looking for, but it places you in danger. For example, your flashlight attracts a wild animal to investigate. The Keeper will reveal that the item is dangerous, but not specify the danger.

2 – Exactly what you wanted, but it will break when you next fail a Stability roll.

Something like what you wanted, but seriously impaired. For example, your camera exposes the film to light; your flashlight does not work in the cold.

Exactly what you were looking for, but it places you in serious danger. For example, your flashlight causes the monsters to surround you. Again, the Keeper will reveal that the item is dangerous, but not specify the danger.

3 or more – Not what you wanted at all.

For some items, you might use a combination of Scavenging and Mechanical/Electrical Repair. For

example, when constructing a radio, you might scavenge the parts, then use Mechanical Repair to assemble them. To do this, spend a combination of Scavenging, Mechanical and Electrical Repair points to add to your roll.

Barter

For trading items, especially in Wasteland campaigns, use the Difficulty Number for each item as a rough price. For example, after 100 years, two sets of practical clothing (Difficulty Number 7) might be traded for one Geiger Counter (Difficulty Number 15).

In later Wasteland campaigns, some durable object might be used as currency: perhaps old cent pieces, Zippo lighters or pieces of coal. If so, the Difficulty Number for each item represents the cost in that currency. Thus, if old cent pieces are the currency, a Geiger Counter would cost 15 of them.

Bargain

When bartering for clues, use Bargain instead of these bartering rules. You might also use Bargain to get a single object, useful in the investigation: for example, spending Bargain might get you that Geiger counter.





The Afflicted

Since the Apocalypse, some humans have started to change. Sometimes they are visibly altered, with warped bones, discolored skin or a sixth finger. Sometimes, the alteration is invisible: they have strange mental powers. These people are the Afflicted.

Since they are different, either visibly or invisibly, the Afflicted arouse suspicion. If they are permitted in communities, they are rarely trusted. Indeed, many are outcasts, welcome nowhere. For these reasons, many of the Afflicted hide their affliction.

Perhaps, however, it is rational to distrust the Afflicted. After all, some can read minds. Others can tell the future: and who, in this doomed world, wants to know what will happen next? Perhaps their strange, unearthly powers are reason enough to avoid the Afflicted.

Where did the Afflictions come from? If there is radioactive fallout, then perhaps they are mutations. Or perhaps, instead, the Afflictions have a monstrous origin. Perhaps they are caused by Cthulhu's dreaming, as his powers grow and he warps human minds. Perhaps, alternatively, the Afflictions arise from an experiment of the Elder Things.

GETTING AFFLICTED

When you improve your Investigator, at the end of an investigation, the Keeper may decide that your Investigator is Afflicted. Sometimes, this will stem from an event in the investigation: for example, you were captured by the Mi-Go, who placed something in your brain. Sometimes, you will not know the cause of your Affliction.

When this happens, you get Affliction Points instead of Improvement Points. You may add these to the abilities in the table below.

When you add Affliction Points to an ability, mark that ability as Afflicted. Now, your expertise with that ability is unnatural, powered by something beyond human understanding.

AFFLICTIONS AND STABILITY

Afflictions are disturbing. Any of the following events will prompt a Stability roll:

- Using an Affliction for the first time.
- Seeing someone use an Affliction with which you are not familiar.
- Seeing a Source of Stability use an Affliction.

Over time, your Investigators may grow used to people using Afflictions. At first, however, they are alien and mind-breaking.

Investigative Abilities

- o Archaeology.
- o Biology.
- o Cryptography.
- o Geology.
- o Languages.
- o Physics.
- o Astronomy.
- o Chemistry.
- o Craft.
- o Evidence Collection.
- o Locksmith.

General Abilities

- o Athletics
- o Disguise
- o Driving
- o Electrical Repair
- o Explosives
- o Filch
- o Firearms
- o First Aid

- o Fleeing
- o Health
- o Mechanical Repair
- o Piloting
- o Riding
- o Scavenging.
- o Scuffling
- o Sense Trouble
- o Stealth
- o Weapons

The Psychic Abilities

- o Dreaming.
- o Medium.
- o Premonitions.
- o Psychic Scream.
- o Remote Viewing.
- o Telepathy.
- o Mind Reading.
- o Aura Reading.
- o Control.
- o Emotion Projection.



The Apocalypse Machine

WEIRDNESS AND STEALTH

All Afflictions are weird. Using them always looks strange: using Psychic and Investigative Afflictions requires unnatural concentration, while using General Afflictions makes you look physically different. Anyone watching will notice your odd behaviour, even if they cannot understand what you are doing.

Often, you will want to avoid such attention. To use an Affliction without being noticed, make a Stealth roll, against a Difficulty Number decided by the Keeper. If you are fail, your Affliction is clearly visible.

Keeping Afflicted

If you are the Keeper, you have full control in assigning Affliction Points. You may, for example, give Improvement Points to some Investigators and Affliction Points to others. Alternatively, you may let players choose between Improvement and Affliction points. You may even give Affliction Points at character creation.

Thus, if you are the Keeper, you have the power to decide whether one of the Investigators is Afflicted. Be cautious with this power. It will change how that Investigator interacts with others: most obviously, it may make them a social outcast or a target for the other Investigators.

PSYCHIC AFFLICTIONS

The Afflicted are most feared for their psychic abilities. After all, perhaps they are controlling others. Perhaps they are reading people's minds. Perhaps they, themselves, are controlled by ancient monsters.

In *The Apocalypse Machine*, psychic abilities are Investigative Abilities. They can only be bought with Affliction Points.

Dreaming

You dream of strange vistas and terrifying creatures. When you sleep, you penetrate the veil of the Mythos, seeing the universe as it really is. Fleetingly, you glimpse the strange geometries, warped worlds and dark horrors that underpin your fragile existence.

Perhaps your dreams are reflections of Cthulhu's dreams, as he begins to enslave you. Perhaps they are memories, your only insight into an abduction you have been forced to forget. Or perhaps you have brought them upon yourself: you have ventured so far into the fringes of knowledge that you stand on the precipice of madness.

In your investigations, you may use Dreaming to gain insight into the underlying horror. You will gather only vague impressions and confusing glimpses: you cannot consciously dream

I See You Back

When an Investigator sees a Mythos entity, using Dreaming, Remote Viewing or Premonitions, it might see them too. If the Keeper thinks this is possible, make a Stealth roll, against a Difficulty determined by the Keeper. If you succeed, you are safe; if not, the monster knows you are watching.

your way to an ancient city or alternate plane. If you focus on Azathoth (good luck with that), you will likely dream about him, but cannot dream your way to his throne. He controls what he shows you, not the other way around.

As your dreams progress, night after night, they intrude into daily reality. You wake exhausted, with a screaming headache, unsure whether you are dreaming or awake. Often, you see elements from the dreamworld in your investigations: a mocking face, an alien object, a darkened sky. Sometimes, you cannot distinguish what you imagine and what is real.

To use the Dreaming ability, you must sleep when you normally sleep. You cannot take a nap in mid-investigation. Additionally, your dreams are unreliable and barely controllable: they come to you, rather than you coming to them.

Finally, the things you see in dreams can harm your Stability. If you dream about sacrificing babies, you make a Stability roll as if you had genuinely witnessed a sacrifice. And perhaps you did.

Medium

You can contact the spirits of the dead or, rather, things you believe to be spirits. You know rituals and incantations that open doorways to the spirit world. Unlike many spiritualists, you are no charlatan: your gifts are grounded in some terrifying and intangible reality.

For each point of the Medium ability, choose a method:

- Seance. When several people gather, you act as their conduit. You usher spirits into the room and may allow one of them to possess you.
- Ouija. Using a planchette, you allow spirits to spell messages. If your planchette shows letters, the spirit spells words; if it shows "yes" or "no", it answers questions; if the planchette shows other symbols, perhaps from the Tarot or Zodiac, its communication is more cryptic.



The Afflicted

Psychic Investigations

Do not expect psychic abilities to reveal hard facts. You cannot question someone using Mind-reading; you cannot search for evidence using Dreaming; you cannot spy on someone using Remote Viewing. Psychic abilities do not give tangible evidence, but vague and terrifying insights: Mindreading lets you glimpse someone's inner thoughts, Dreaming shows you abominable landscapes.

To be blunt: for serious investigation, psychic abilities are not very useful. Most contain get-out clauses, allowing the Keeper to withhold information. For example, if you are investigating a murder, Medium will give you hints about the killer, but not reveal their identity. If your psychic ability would cut short the investigation, it will fail. If this seems unfair, don't take a psychic ability.

Thus, rather than investigative tools, psychic abilities are roleplaying tools. They give insights that are fun, rather than useful. By choosing, say, Aura Reading over Assess Honesty, you choose roleplay over investigation. Do not expect an easy ride. Psychic abilities make an Investigator's life interesting, rather as meeting Nyarlathotep makes one's life interesting.

Additionally, by taking a psychic ability, you become a conduit for the Keeper's narration. For example, the Keeper may use your Dreaming to give glimpses of a Cyclopean city. Hence, some psychic abilities are passive rather than active: the Keeper, rather than the player, decides when they reveal a clue.

Having said that, some psychic abilities can assist investigations. For example, Mind Reading and Aura Reading can give genuinely useful information. Others, such as Dreaming and Premonitions, are almost useless in serious investigation. They are pure roleplaying tools.

If you are the Keeper, do not let Core Clues require psychic abilities. A Core Clue might be revealed with a psychic ability, but it should not require that ability to be revealed. Psychic abilities gather interesting information, not vital evidence.

- Automatic writing. You put yourself into a trance and you allow a spirit to control your hand. You then scribble furiously. On regaining consciousness, you can interpret what is written.
- Automatic art. As with writing, except you use some form of art.

All these methods require time, preparation and concentration. You cannot, for example, discover a dead body and instantly hold a séance.

Your mediumship contacts spirits in the immediate vicinity: those have recently died and those who want to contact the Investigators. When their emotions are high, messages become obscured: for example, a murdered woman's spirit might make a glass skid off the ouija board and smash.

The spirits, or whatever they are, may attempt to possess you. See the Possession rules for details. You may also allow a spirit to possess you, meaning no Stability roll is needed.

Premonition

You have visions of the future. They are painful, largely uncontrollable and happen without warning.

During these visions, anyone watching notices you behaving oddly. Perhaps you faint; perhaps you flinch and scream; perhaps you clutch at things that are not there. (To suppress this reaction and remain unnoticed, see Weirdness and Stealth, above.)

Premonitions are dreamlike visions, not photographic images. Key points may be hidden: you see the Deep Ones swarming up a beach, but cannot tell which beach; you see someone held captive, but cannot tell where; you see a murder, but the murderer is obscured.

Hence, premonitions never solve the question you are investigating. If you have visions of a beach, for example, you cannot short-circuit the investigation by going straight to the beach. Instead, premonitions are often useful in retrospect, providing corroboration: when you step on the beach, you realise it is the beach from your visions.

Sometimes, premonitions come to you against your will. On meeting someone, you might be struck by a vision of their future; on seeing a city, you see it a year from now; on holding a gun, you perceive how it will be used. In such situations, the Keeper tells you that you have a premonition. If you wish, you may "block out" the premonition, which avoids using your ability.

Sometimes, you can control the premonitions. To attempt a controlled premonition, you focus on a question about the future, such as:

- "What will happen if I open this door?"
- "What will New York look like in a year?"
- "Where will I wake tomorrow?"

Then, if the Keeper has relevant information, you receive an appropriate vision. If not, your abilities remain frustratingly inaccessible. Again, key points may be obscured. For example, you may envision waking in a deserted hospital, but not know which one.



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Finally, the future is malleable and unpredictable. Your actions, and those of others, will change what happens. Indeed, some Mythos entities, such as the Great Race and Lloigor, can manipulate time. Hence, your premonitions indicate what is likely to happen, but give no guarantee. A vision of yourself waking tomorrow does not prevent you dying tonight.

Possession

Some Mythos entities can possess humans. The Great Race of Yith, Cthonians and Shan certainly can: others, including Cthulhu, the Mi-Go and the Lloigor, may also be capable. If you contact or view these entities with psychic abilities, they may try to possess you.

To resist, make a Stability Check, against a Difficulty Number determined by the Keeper. If you succeed, you are safe and the entity may not try again. If you fail, you are possessed.

There are two ways to handle possession in your game. Firstly, the Keeper may control your Investigator until the entity leaves. Each time the spirit attempts something malevolent, you may attempt to regain control with another Stability Check.

Alternatively, you can play your possessed Investigator. (This option is probably more fun for the player). The Keeper should explain what the alien wants and what it will do: for example, the Great Race might ask questions, while the Shan might tempt others to go to their temple.

Psychic Scream

When you are scared or in danger, you scream in your head. Although there is no sound, the scream is deafening to anyone else with psychic abilities. It blots out every other thought, pulling them towards you, like a fishhook tugging inside their brain. Often, they arrive at your location with only hazy memories of getting there.

Whenever your Stability or Health falls to -6 or below, you automatically use your Psychic Scream ability, if you have any points remaining. When you do, psychics nearby are compelled to help you. To resist the compulsion, they must make a Stability check, against a difficulty of 4: if they fail, they must come.

Alternatively, you may scream deliberately, which allows you to control the intensity of your scream. If you scream intensely, other psychics must make Stability checks, as before. If you suppress the intensity, they make no Stability checks, and may choose whether to come.

Those who hear the scream receive vague mind-shapes of whatever is affecting you. As with all psychic abilities, this provides narrative colour rather than useful information: for example, they glimpse the monster attacking you, but do not see the layout of the room.

Remote Viewing

You project your sight, clairvoyantly, to see what is happening in another location. By going into a trance, you send your mind through space.

Remote viewing only allows you to see what is happening, not what has happened or what may happen. Similarly, you can only see locations on this Earth and this plane of existence: you cannot see into Dream realms, alternate realities or space.

The vision you receive is dreamlike, not photographic: as with Premonitions, key information may be hidden. For locations you know, your vision will probably be relatively clear. For unvisited locations, it will become hazier.

For locations inhabited by the Mythos, the visions will be nightmarish and intangible. Thus, once you learn about Ry'leh, you can project your mind there, but you cannot possibly understand its layout. And don't expect it to end well.

Telepathy

You can communicate with other telepaths. It is a rich, rewarding source of communication, a part of who you are: losing it would be like losing your sight.

Explaining telepathy to an outsider is difficult. You might describe mind-shapes or mental music. Really, however, any explanation is like describing colour to a blind person. Telepathy is too rich to capture in words.

Indeed, describing telepathy to outsiders is exceedingly dangerous. Among the Afflicted, telepaths are particularly feared: partly because their Affliction is invisible; partly because their talk is hidden from others. When young telepaths unwittingly reveal their abilities, they rarely survive.

You can do any of the following without effort (that is, without spending a point of Telepathy):

- Sense telepaths in the immediate vicinity who want to be identified.
- Communicate with these telepaths.
- Sense when a telepath disappears.

By spending a point of Telepathy, you can do any of the following:

- Shield your mind from other telepaths.



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- Discover any telepaths, in the immediate vicinity, who have shielded their mind.
- Sense telepaths further afield.
- Communicate with these telepaths.

Here, the Keeper decides how far your telepathy can reach. Clever Keepers may use Telepathy to steer the Investigators towards distant locations.

Note that Telepathy is related to, but distinct from, Mind Reading and Aura Reading. Telepathy allows deliberate communication; Mind Reading allows probing for thoughts and memories; Aura Reading allows sensing of emotion.

Mind Reading

You probe people's minds, against their will, extracting thoughts and memories. When you extract thoughts, the victim feels their loss, like a nail being driven into their temple. When you extract memories, the victim relives them, briefly and unpleasantly.

Since this ability provokes great fear in non-psychics, you almost certainly hide it. If you could read minds as a child, you quickly learned to hide your skills: perhaps your parents isolated you until you understood your power was unnatural.

By spending one Mindreading point, you scan surface thoughts: for example, discovering who a bounty hunter is hunting. Spending another point lets you uncover memories: for example, finding who employed the hunter. Note that people's memories may be inaccurate: for example, if someone believes they saw a dead jellyfish, they remember a dead jellyfish, even if the creature was a Mi-Go.

Spending a third Mindreading point lets you may recover memories of which the victim is not aware. For example, you might notice details of the building where the bounty hunter was hired.

If the person's attention is on you, they know you have read their mind. If their attention is elsewhere, you may try to read their mind stealthily: see Weirdness and Stealth, above. If they are asleep, your task is easier: when they wake, they will know what has happened, but you will be absent.

You cannot read the mind of a Mythos entity: their thoughts are incomprehensible to humans. Reading the mind of someone possessed by a Mythos entity does one or more of the following, at the Keeper's discretion:

- Allows you to read the person's mind, with no indication they are possessed.
- Allows you to read the person's mind, with strong indications something is wrong.
- Lets you glimpse the mind of the Mythos entity (see Stability table, above).
- Lets the Mythos entity try to possess you.

Aura Reading

You see colours others cannot, the wavelengths between wavelengths that surround all humans. Instinctively, you know what the colours and shape of this aura signify.

Reading an aura takes focus and concentration: to the subject, it appears you are staring through them. Once you attune, you can do any of the following (spend one point for each):

- Determine, in broad terms, what sort of person they are: for example, honest, self-interested, vicious, a charlatan.
- Determine, in broad terms, how they feel: angry, scared, calm, curious.
- Determine whether they are healthy or unhealthy.

Additionally, Aura Reading is a tool for the Keeper. At appropriate dramatic moments, it may reveal that someone is hiding something; or in thrall to a higher power; or indefinably wrong.

When a Mythos entity possesses a human subject, they might, at the Keeper's discretion, show a human aura, an alien aura or a human-with-something-wrong aura. Similarly, Deep One hybrids might appear human, alien, wrong or recognisably tainted.

Reading the aura of a Mythos entity, including possessed humans, requires a 5-point Stability test and may allow the entity to possess you.

Control

By placing your mind inside that of another, you become a puppetmaster. Perhaps the power is your own; perhaps you are channelling something darker. Nevertheless, you can wrench the mental gears and levers to control others.

The Control ability makes an NPC (not an Investigator) perform one particular activity. That "one activity" is loosely defined: you can make someone give you their gun; you cannot make them conduct a ritual. Your control is not subtle. The puppet can walk, drive and talk (although strangely), but cannot sign a letter. Additionally, since you cannot access their mind, you cannot make them reveal secrets. All edge cases are at the Keeper's discretion.

To begin your control, you must be able to see your victim. You then enter a state of extreme concentration, focussing and jerking. If someone distracts you, while in this trance, your control is broken. Your puppet remains conscious throughout and, afterwards, knows they have been controlled.

If you attempt to possess someone who is, themselves, possessed by a Mythos entity, the entity may attempt to possess your body.



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Emotion Projection

You can influence someone's emotions. By projecting your thoughts, you inflame them, calm them, make them sad or make them happy. You can instill them with courage or fear.

This subtle ability requires you to spend several minutes talking with or focussing on the person. During this time, the other person is under your spell. If angered, they may blurt out something useful; if calmed, they may be reassured into revealing something. Afterwards, the state of mind persists.

However, when you finish talking, the person will remember a strangeness in your manner, over the previous few minutes. They will guess they have been manipulated, although may not know how. You can, of course, attempt Emotion Projection without being unnoticed, using the rules in *Weirdness* and *Stealth*.

Other GUMSHOE Games

If you are familiar with *Fear Itself*, another GUMSHOE game, you will recognise many of the psychic abilities. Note the differences, however: most obviously, in *The Apocalypse Machine*, psychic abilities are Investigative abilities.

The GUMSHOE game *Mutant City Blues* has an extensive system of mutant powers. These powers are beneficial, controllable and well-understood. By contrast, *The Apocalypse Machine's* Afflictions are difficult to control, frequently harmful and dimly understood. If you prefer your mutant powers pulpier and lighter, like superpowers, try using the mutant powers from *Mutant City Blues*, rather than the Afflictions listed here.

INVESTIGATIVE AFFLICTIONS

When you put Affliction Points into an Investigative ability, you gain an unnatural, ancient insight into that domain. It is not academic knowledge, but something darker. For example, putting Affliction Points into *Geology* lets your mind pour into the rocks, remembering how they felt as they grew over eons.

Such insights give you similar information to the normal Investigative ability. For example, by pouring your mind into rocks, you discover ancient volcanic activity, just as someone with the *Geology* ability would. However, your methods are psychic and unnatural, requiring no tools or books. Sometimes, your insight is instantaneous. Often, it involves a vision of prehistory or the patterns within space-time.

The exact nature of the insight depends on the ability.

Archaeology

You project your mind into the stones, feeling how they fitted together as they were built. You feel the stresses, the fractures and the builder's hands as each stone was placed.

Biology

You mentally feel your way through the creature, understanding how it lives, breathes and dies. Placing your mind within the creature's flesh, you see what is natural and unnatural within it.

Cryptography

You instantly see the reality beneath the codes. Compared with the structure underlying the universe, these codes are child's play.

Geology

Casting your mind into the rocks, you feel them growing over millions of years.

Languages

Without explanation, you begin speaking a language you have never spoken before, fluently and brilliantly.

Physics

You see the fabric of space-time, observing how forces and masses interact within it.

Astronomy

Casting your mind into space and backwards through time, you remember how the stars and planets grew, observing their strange dances as they moved through the universe.

Chemistry

You see the atoms and the chemical bonds within every substance, understanding how they react together.

Craft

Your hands move as if repeating long-remembered actions. (Pick one particular Craft in which to specialise.)

Evidence Collection

Seeing the chains of causality, you understand where everything is, where it must be. Instantaneously, you see hidden items and obscure clues.

Locksmith

Without touching the lock, you place your mind within its workings, feeling every lever and tumbler. In a flash, at the speed of thought, you know exactly what must move, and make it move simply by wishing it so.

Using such Afflictions is, of course, disturbing to anyone watching.

When you use these afflictions, you open your mind to the Mythos. Thus, anything you detect may harm your Stability. For example, in using *Physics* to analyse a nuclear bomb, you might glimpse the nuclear chaos that is Azathoth.



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GENERAL AFFLICTIONS

When you put Affliction Points into a General Ability, you gain physical capabilities that normal humans do not possess. When using it, you move with unnatural grace, strength, skill or flexibility.

If this General Ability holds 10 or more points, you have a physical manifestation of your Affliction, visible even when you are not using the skill.

For example, an Athletics Affliction might give you unnaturally developed muscles; a Firearms affliction might give you eyes with no iris; a Sense Trouble Affliction might give you eyes that constantly scan. Such visible manifestations are subtle rather than obvious, horrific rather than comic (a Sense Trouble affliction does not give you a pair of antennae).

As with Investigative abilities, General Afflictions give you essentially the

same capabilities as the normal ability, but with added weirdness.

Where Investigative Afflictions carry a risk to your Stability, General Afflictions carry a risk to your Health. Push these unnatural abilities too far and your body begins to break apart. If, when rolling, the total you get (the die roll plus the points you spend) is 8 or more, you take damage, equal to the total minus 7.

| Ability | Description | Suggested manifestation |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Athletics | You move faster and more dextrously than a normal human. | Unnaturally developed muscles |
| Disguise | Your features are unnaturally malleable. Perhaps, too, your skin has some limited ability to alter its tone. | Deformed features; strangely coloured skin. |
| Driving | In a car, you become one with the machine, your hands flitting between the wheel and gearstick without conscious control. | A smell of oil; a metallic sheen to the fingertips, as if the machine has bled into you. |
| Electrical Repair | When you repair an electric system, your hands move without volition, connecting wires, spinning screws by hand. | A toughness to the hands, as if your body is protecting yourself against the electricity. |
| Explosives | You connect and manipulate explosives with unnatural speed. | A blackening to the hands, as if burned. |
| Filch | When stealing something, you act with astonishing dexterity, your hands moving faster than the eye can see or the brain perceive. | A tremor in the fingers. |
| Firearms | Your hand-eye coordination is perfect, your gun moving like an extension of your arm. | A strangeness in the eye: a golden colour, lack of iris. |
| First Aid | You fix wounds with strange speed, using knowledge you did not know you possessed. | Strangely hot hands. |
| Fleeing | When escaping, you run unnaturally fast, moving faster than your pursuers could imagine. | Overdeveloped leg muscles. |
| Health | Injuries that would kill a normal human being do not kill you. | Rough, discoloured skin. |
| Mechanical Repair | You manipulate machines with strange dexterity. | Oily, metallic skin on the hands. |
| Piloting | You are at one with planes and boats. | The same metallic sheen as above, as if the machine has seeped into your skin. |
| Riding | Your control over a horse is total and awe-inspiring. | You are becoming horselike yourself: there is a sheen to your skin and a coarseness to your hair. |
| Scuffling | In a fight, you move and strike in a way no human could. | A sharpness and toughness to the knuckles. |
| Sense Trouble | You see and hear things beyond a normal person's capabilities. | Constantly scanning eyes, jumping from one potential danger to the next. |
| Stealth | When you choose, you become almost unnoticeable. You can move with total silence and keep unnaturally still. | You are easy to overlook, as if you were constantly in shadow. |
| Weapons | Your weapon is an extension of your body. Your control over it is perfect. | Without your weapon, your hands are constantly clutching for something to hold. |



Mythos Entities



The creatures of the Mythos rule the Earth. No longer confined to watery prisons or icy wastes, they stalk the Earth unimpeded, plundering its resources and warring with each other. The few remaining humans can only watch, scurrying from bolthole to bolthole, attempting to survive.

Most humans, of course, have not seen the monsters yet. Those who have seen one monster have not seen them all. As the Investigators travel through the post-apocalyptic landscape, they will encounter these horrors for the first time.

When considering Mythos creatures (including those newly admitted to the Mythos, such as H. G Wells' Martians), there are two questions to ask about the apocalypse.

- How might they cause the apocalypse?
- How would they react to the apocalypse?

For some entities, one question is more relevant than the other. For example, Azathoth would cause the apocalypse, if summoned, but would not react to the death of a distant and insignificant race. Conversely, the Mi-Go are unlikely to initiate the apocalypse, but would react to it.

For many creatures, a third question is useful:

- How are they summoned or released?

Thus, Cthulhu might bring about the apocalypse, but must first be liberated from beneath the Pacific. Similarly, if Azathoth causes the apocalypse, we must explain how he comes to Earth.

Importantly, nothing described here will instantly and completely destroy the world. If it did, there would be no story to tell, no post-apocalyptic wasteland to wander. Thus, even mindlessly destructive entities, such as Azathoth, destroy the world slowly. In time, they will consume the world, but first, the Investigators must watch it being consumed.

In fact, the apocalypse itself will involve many creatures. There is a domino effect: if the Flying Polyps emerge, the Elder Things come to battle them. When Cthulhu rises, the Deep Ones bring their cities to the surface. When humans die, the Mi-Go build mines in their old cities. That is: when one Mythos entity strikes, all hell breaks loose.

Here, then, are the creatures of the apocalypse. Some are simply described. Others are given competing and contradictory explanations. Choose between these, as required, using them as adventure seeds and sparks for the imagination.

AZATHOTH

- When the first nuclear bomb detonates, it tears the fabric of space-time. That tear both brings forth Azathoth and is Azathoth: he is a fault in the universe, a physical division-by-zero. As the fault grows, the bubbling chaos pours forth.
- Azathoth is released by the Shan (see below), who lure humans to their grey, metallic temples. There, the oozing grey mass of Azathoth is summoned, released and created, and rises into the world.
- Azathoth is a sentient truth underlying

all mathematics. His creation/instantiation occurs when humans advance their understanding beyond a critical point. In 1936, an academic researching the fringes of her field, perhaps Godel's incompleteness theorems or Einstein's relativity, proves Azathoth into existence.

- The coming of Azathoth blasts a continent into wasteland, killing all creatures and poisoning the soil. Houses crumble, trees are uprooted and rivers boil. Thereafter, in that land, plants grow stunted and animals are born deformed.
- Those who survive Azathoth's coming are doomed by the noxious cloud he releases. It drifts and spreads over the Earth, killing, infecting or sterilising. Those remaining can only wait helplessly to die.
- On Earth, Azathoth is a formless, shapeless mass, a nothing incomprehensible to the human mind. The few who look may remember a bivalvular shell or gelatinous greyness. However, this is a trick of perception, the brain's attempt to make sense of nothing.
- The mindless, bubbling mass consumes everything around it. As it sinks lower, eating its way downwards, it breaks through the Earth's crust. The volcanic crater remains, even as Azathoth sinks into the Earth's core, consuming the world from its centre.
- As Azathoth was the beginning of the universe, the explosion that created every star and planet, so he is the end. When he arrives on Earth, the stars begin to fall. Astronomers, if they look, notice that the rest of the galaxy, which previously was



Mythos Entities

drifting away from the Earth, is now growing closer. As Azathoth is the end of the universe, so inevitably every star comes back to him. The universe collapses to a point and the Earth is crushed.

CHILDREN

The Children are an ancient alien race. Their embryos were, implanted, in 1927, in the wombs of women around the world. For one day, several rural towns around the world were uncontactable: all those within the towns, or entering the towns, fell unconscious. When the towns awoke, all women capable of bearing children were pregnant.

They grow with unnatural speed, resembling teenagers before they reach ten years of age. Although their form is human, they have an alien aspect, with golden hair and eyes with golden pupils. They are also identical, bearing no resemblance to their surrogate mothers.

As they learn, it becomes clear each gender possesses a hive mind. What one girl knows, all the others know. Additionally, they have other psychic abilities: they can possess humans and control machinery, aircraft and cars. They believe that such qualities make them evolutionarily superior to humans. Their succession as the dominant Earth race is inevitable, as is humanity's extinction.

They react with disproportionate force to any injury. If one child is injured, the hive mind alerts others of the same gender, who come to the child's defence. They then possess the offending human, causing death or extreme harm. If a doctor pricks a child with a needle, she finds herself stabbing her arm with the same needle. If a motorist clips a child with his car, he accelerates before hitting a brick wall. If the Children are attacked, the attacking mob will find themselves fighting each other.

Probably, it is humans that initiate conflict with the Children. Governments, realising the Children are a threat, attempt to restrain or kill them. Perhaps the military try to bomb, quarantine or poison them. Naturally, the children react, turning the weapons back on the humans. To prevent counter-attacks, they begin to systematically destroy humanity. They possess humans, then make them kill each other.

Eventually, the Children must propagate. How they do this is unknown: perhaps female Children can mate with males. More likely, however, they continue to need human wombs to breed. Hence, the future of a small minority of humans is assured, as a child-bearing slave species. These few humans will be left to run among the wasteland, like rats, until needed.

Game Statistics

Athletics 10
Health 10
Scuffling 15
Hit Threshold 4
Weapon: +0 (fist or improvised weapon).
Psychic abilities: Each Child may attempt to possess an Investigator once. The Investigator makes a Stability Test against a difficulty of 6. If the roll fails, the Investigator is possessed, and must attack other Investigators or harm himself.

COLOURS OUT OF SPACE

• First, there was a shower of meteors. There were hundreds, like fireworks, and people turned out of their houses to watch. Afterwards, plants grew wrongly and the soil turned to dust. As the horde of Colours sucked the life out of the earth, people and buildings crumbled. On November 2nd, 1936, they simultaneously departed, in a scintillating display of

light, leaving the ruined earth behind them, for Old Ones and alien races to fight over.

- A Colour is a living embodiment of radioactivity. After the bombs fall, the nuclear fallout produces such intense radioactivity that it forms Colours. They suck the post-apocalyptic wasteland into dust.
- Deep below the Earth, perhaps in the core itself, is an adult Colour. Through eons, it has drained the life from the deeper rocks, and now it begins draining the surface. Perhaps it spawns young Colours, too, who feast on the soil. The Colour remains until the Earth is lifeless and continents fall apart.
- The fertile soil, produced by the agricultural revolution, attracts the Colours to farmland. They feed on the mid-West of the United States, the farms of New Zealand and the Lake District of Britain. Within years, nothing remains but dust.
- For an unknown reason, the apocalypse attracts Colours to Earth. The few surviving humans see meteor after meteor, crashing from the sky into the wasteland. Perhaps these Colours feast on the dead bodies, breaking down their flesh; perhaps they come because humans can no longer interfere with them.
- Colours ooze radioactivity, contaminating soil and rocks. Mutated trees, animals and even human beings are a sure sign of a Colour beneath the ground. In areas inhabited by a Colour, Geiger counters crackle furiously. If the Colour itself approaches, the reading goes off the scale.



The Apocalypse Machine

CTHONIANS

These ancient subterranean creatures resemble huge worms. They bore through rock at astonishing speed, as worms tunnel through earth, leaving perfectly smooth bore-holes behind them. For millenia, they had built up their numbers. Now, they have enough soldiers, and are ready to take over the Earth.

They have many weapons. By burrowing through rock, they can make the ground unstable, creating anything from localised tremors or full-blown earthquakes. Their first move, in the apocalypse, is to produce simultaneous earthquakes beneath the world's capital cities: first Washington, then Moscow, then London. With government

decapitated, they systematically destroy other centres of population, until only a few scattered humans remain.

Other weapons are more insidious. Through telepathy, the Cthonians threaten and blackmail Investigators who study them. To punish determined Investigators, they encase their brains in vile, stinking filth. Veins and capillaries keep the mind barely alive, while it is milked for information. Sometimes, these disgusting black masses are sent, as warnings, to other Investigators.

The Cthonians are vulnerable to water, making jets or mists excellent weapons. They are also vulnerable to radiation. After a nuclear blast, they may perceive fallout as an attack.

Since there are few Cthonians, they are protective towards each other. If a Cthonian is trapped or endangered, others will rush to its aid. Cthonian eggs, pearlescent orbs four inches across, are indescribably precious: any Investigator possessing these eggs will find themselves a target.

The greatest Cthonian is Shudde-M'ell, a hideous blasphemy over a mile long, variously described as a regent or a god. From deep in the rock, he plots the dissemination of evil and plans the resurrection of other blasphemous creatures.





Mythos Entities

CTHULHU

- Before the apocalypse, Cthulhu sends dreams to sensitives throughout the world. Artists, writers and musicians produce nightmarish works: Cyclopean landscapes with incomprehensible geometries; carvings of dripping caverns beneath the sea; play scripts of ranting gibberish. As the dreams intensify, madmen in asylums grow euphoric, howling at the ground and gleefully tearing each other apart.
- Cthulhu personifies humanity's butchery and debauchery. He is summoned when humanity has sunk to its nadir, driven solely by violence and lust. Some cults whisper that the butchery of the Great War has made Cthulhu's coming inevitable. The stinking city of Ry'leh will rise and Cthulhu will stalk

the world, inspiring humans to further depravity, until they destroy themselves by cannibalising each other.

- When the stars are right, Cthulhu calls his human servitors to release him from his undersea prison. As he rises, the minds of most humans are blasted, leaving them as mindless, dribbling husks. Only a few keep their minds and must survive among the drooling masses.
- On November 2nd, 1937, the United States government releases Cthulhu. They plan to subdue it, using vast arrays of electrical generators, then keep it for military use. The plan fails. Cthulhu kills its would-be captors and heads east, stalking across the United States, exterminating the race that tried to capture it.

- When Cthulhu rises, so do the black spirits of the earth, seeping out of the blasted soil. By rising, Great Cthulhu has broken the grip of death, and long-dead things come back to haunt the world. In the last, dark days of Earth, these dark phantoms drift over the decaying land, feasting on whatever life they find, until nothing is left.
- Imprisoned within Ry'leh, Cthulhu senses the death of humanity. Wakeful, yet entombed, Cthulhu waits as the other ancient races overrun the Earth. Finally, the worship of the Deep Ones brings him to full wakefulness and releases him. He rises against those who would usurp his throne, slaughtering them: the Elder Things, in their undersea cities; the Mi-Go, in the mountains; the few paltry humans that remain.





The Apocalypse Machine

DAGON

- Dagon is not one, but many, a race of ancient sea-monsters. When the apocalypse comes, they rise to reclaim the sea. Standing on the sea bed, their bodies tower fifty feet above the water. They stride through the oceans, guarding them for Cthulhu's coming.
- Dagon is a fertility god of the sea, the progenitor, leader and god of the Deep Ones. In the end times, he lifts the cities of the sea bed to the surface. The seas drain away, leaving a hellish black mire, extending for hundreds of miles. Dagon rules this stinking, rotting land. Any human crossing this dark expanse will hear no sound of the sea: indeed, as they gradually realise, they will never hear that sound again.
- The creature called Dagon is, in fact, a vast, mutated Deep One. A twisted and blasphemous behemoth, he is the weapon of the Deep Ones. When he is forced on to the land, he thrashes madly at anything that moves, blindly lashing out, still growing and mutating. Before the humans kill him, Dagon reduces nations to rubble.
- Dagon is an aspect of Shub-Niggurath. As she represents the power of nature, through fecundity and fertility, so he represents the power of the sea, seething with life and darkness. When the end times come, he causes the seas to swell, bursting their dams, until every major city of the world is drowned. Thereafter, Dagon wades among the submerged ruins, crushing the last signs of human life.

DAOLOTH

- The world we see is an illusion. When the apocalypse comes, Daoloth sweeps away the veil, letting us see truly. The minds of most humans are shredded instantly. Only some, too ignorant or deluded to perceive reality, remain sane.

- On January 22nd, 1936, a convocation of Daolothic cultists in New York summons The Render Of The Veils. As reality tears slowly apart, bizarre deaths occur: a wife murders her husband, screaming about gelatinous terrors; a priest tears his eyes out, then jumps from the Brooklyn Bridge. As the madness spreads, people see each other as the spongy, oozing horrors they really are. Butchery and self-destruction ensues. By November, the tear in reality encompasses the world, with only a few immune.
- When the apocalypse happens, reality changes irrevocably, whether through Cthulhu's dreaming, Yithian time-travel or some other source. That change brings Daoloth into being: just as Azathoth is a fault in space-time, so Daoloth is a fault in the veil that prevents us from seeing true reality.
- On November 1st, 1936, many report strange visual symptoms to doctors and psychiatrists. All describe collections of hemispheres and rods, lurking in the corner of their eye, changing size when they look away. These are glimpses of Daoloth, as the veil weakens. The next day, Daoloth breaks through the veil and reality tears apart.
- Daoloth is merely a personification of psychological denial. Because our minds cannot conceive the world as it is, they invent an illusion which suffices. Resting one's hand on a table, for example, creates a tactile psychological illusion of flatness. If we could see the world as it really was, all such illusions would be dispelled instantly.
- Daoloth is knowledge of reality: in game terms, he is the Cthulhu Mythos ability. He enables knowledge of the reality underlying the universe. Moreover, he is that knowledge and is summoned by those who seek that knowledge.

- Throughout the early 20th century, the Cubist and Surrealist movements had flourished. Gradually, the artists penetrated the veil, dimly perceiving the reality beneath. By 1936, the veil was weak enough to effect Daoloth's entrance into the world.

DEEP ONES

- After the raids on Innsmouth and other coastal towns, many Deep Ones are kept in Alaskan concentration camps, where freezing temperatures limit their access to water. Their brothers in the deeps take slow and brutal revenge. Eight years later, a vast army of Deep Ones storms the camps, butchering the guards. This army swims south, rising in San Francisco Bay, then fanning across the United States. In panic, humans flee East, where a foolish few board ships to Europe. Within weeks, the human race is massacred.
- For millenia, the Deep Ones have spread their taint among humans. Some people show it visibly; some carry it unseen. As the years pass, some tainted humans are called to the sea, while others remain, spreading the taint to future generations. In the final days, all tainted humans are called. All at once, they leave their homes and workplaces, and walk into the sea. In the deserted cities, only a few untainted humans remain.
- After Innsmouth is raided, there is no-one to provide tribute to the Deep Ones. Whereas before, young men and women would be sacrificed, now the creatures are forced to abduct them. Confrontations ensue. Police lie in wait for the abductors, and are killed. As the war escalates, the Deep Ones invade, destroying first the coastal cities, then moving inland.



Mythos Entities

- The Deep One taint has spread around along the United States' East Coast and into British seaside towns. In many such towns, thousands of the creatures are stationed in abandoned houses, preparing to attack. Correctly realising this, the Germans strike against the Deep Ones, bombing the towns and killing the monsters. The resulting war sets nation against nation, tainted against untainted and Deep Ones against humans.

ELDER THINGS

- In the deepest parts of the ocean, the Elder Things have survived for millions of years, in great stone cities. They constantly watch humanity, the race they created as an experiment, keeping its numbers manageable by culls, such as manufactured natural disasters. In 1936, they realise humans cannot control the consequences of their technology: they can manufacture devastating weapons, but not repair the damage to reality they create. The only option is the total (and, in an ironic sense, humane) extermination of humanity.
- On January 22nd, 1936, a tanker runs aground in the Strait of Hormuz. On investigation, the obstacle is an immense stone block, carved in one piece, the highest point of an undersea city. Soon afterwards, similar cities are constructed on isolated Pacific islands, the blocks hoisted into place by oozing monstrosities the size of ships. Next, coastal villages are built over, their buildings crushed as the monolithic blocks are placed. Next to be crushed are the port cities: Rio de Janeiro, London, Houston. The apocalypse proper begins as humans flee inland, murdering each other for land and food.
- The Elder Things are a race of scientists, periodically abducting specimens of major Earth races. Sometimes, humans are found half-alive on beaches, with strange

incisions and missing limbs. However, as their abductions grow in scale, the Elder Things overreach themselves. When they attempt to abduct an entire community, the coastal town of San Gregorio, an Elder Thing is captured. In the ensuing war, which spreads worldwide, the humans are massacred.

- After the apocalypse, the Elder Things move to occupy land previously held by the human race. The crumbling remains of human cities are devastated in a brutal war with the Mi-Go, from the north, and the servitors of Cthulhu, from the Pacific.
- Once, the Elder Things had lived in machines. When the apocalypse comes, they build these machines again, not for living, but for fighting. Using technological principles unknown to man, their intricate weapons channel energy into devastating beams. When they turn these beams on human cities, buildings crumble and people burn.
- As the temperature rises, the Elder Things find their great Antarctic city habitable. They had never abandoned the city, only withdrawn, and their years beneath the sea had taught them to control or cull the Shoggoths. Some Elder Things remained in the city, entombed in ice, slowly coming to wakefulness as they thawed. In that city, the Elder Things prepare for war, to regain the land that was once theirs.

FLYING POLYP

- For millions of years, the flying polyps dwelt in lightless caverns beneath the sea. When humans breached the caves, drilling for oil, the polyps rose from the depths: the bodies of the prospectors were found on a ship, torn into meaty shreds. Perhaps determining they would be disturbed again, the polyps swept around the world, systematically killing every

human they could find. They formed a deathly wave, appearing as a monstrous, squirming mass, shortly before they tore cities into dust. Many humans heard radio reports of the destruction, shortly before they were themselves destroyed.

- The polyps were contained in their underground tunnels by great seals, placed there by the Great Race. In 1936, these seals were breached: perhaps by earthquakes, perhaps by cultists searching for Ry'leh, perhaps because the polyps themselves had determined a way to break them. The creatures rose invisibly and, as they had done millions of years before, exterminated the race that had overrun the planet. With the humans gone, they retreated underground, while other ancient races fought over the land and sea.
- The Flying Polyps are a form of sentient wind. In the early twentieth century, they slowly began to awake. Scientists noticed the winds rising, especially along the Pacific coast. These unnatural winds wrecked bridges, destroyed buildings and flooded cities with great waves. As the winds grew, hurricanes drowned coastal cities and tornadoes tore towns into rubble. In the last days of the human race, people scurried for shelter in a devastated land, blasted by impossible and alien winds.
- The half-polypous race had watched the humans for eons: whatever their senses were, they were not blocked by rock, water or distance. They waited until people grew soft, incapable of fighting, reliant on technology. When they attacked, they did not need to kill humans: they simply destroyed their power stations, their roads and their communication. As the humans floundered, wild animals and other races moved to occupy their land.



The Apocalypse Machine

GREAT RACE OF YITH

- The Yithians observe the death of the human race, but do not participate in it. When the apocalypse happens, the Yithians occupy some bodies of surviving humans, to gather knowledge of the last days of the human race. Later, this knowledge will help them survive their own apocalypse.
- The Great Race could undo the apocalypse, by taking a human mind, after the apocalypse, then placing it in the same body, before the apocalypse. That human, sent back in time, could prevent the apocalypse from happening. However, the Race will not do this: they have too much to learn from seeing the apocalypse progress.
- When, in the past, the Great Race are attacked by the flying polyps, they project their minds into a race of South American beetles in the present day. They attack the human race using precisely the same tactics as the flying polyps used. The human race is exterminated exactly as the bodies of the Great Race were exterminated.
- Millions of years ago, a clutch of Yithian spores fell on Antarctic ice. When found, they were sent to Miskatonic University for study. However, the ice thawed and the water activated the spores. The Yithians that grew killed everyone on the ship. Sensing the presence of an old enemy, The Elder Things sent soldiers to kill the Yithians. As the war between races grew, more ancient enemies reemerged, and humanity died in the crossfire.
- On 22nd January 1936, people begin reporting visions of dark cylindrical towers and prehistoric twilight glades. Throughout that year, their minds are taken into the past, leaving their bodies unoccupied and inert. By November, only a few humans are left conscious, in a world of comatose bodies.

LLOIGOR

- Ever vengeful against their former slaves, the Lloigor destroy human cities. Bombay and Peking are first, followed by New York, then London. In each, a huge explosion, from beneath the ground, blasts the city into a crater. As more cities follow, humanity flees, and tears itself apart fighting for land and food.
- Influenced by the Lloigor, humans begin committing unspeakable crimes: bizarre mutilations, sexual violations, gross murders. Families torture, kill, burn, and eat each other. A tearing madness descends on humanity: “tearing”, as you might tear chicken with your teeth. The few surviving humans become the Lloigor’s slaves. When they transgress or try to escape, they are punished by amputations or tentacles growing from their bodies.
- The Lloigor, uniquely among the Mythos races, feed on human energy. Hence, when the apocalypse comes, their strange role is to defend humans. They destroy those who kill humanity: with huge explosions, they eradicate Mi-Go habitations and the cities of the Elder Things. When humans are needlessly slaughtered, they punish the killers as they once punished their human slaves, with amputations and tentacular growths.
- Using their limited control of space-time, the Lloigor incite the humans into war. In June 1936, President Roosevelt meets Joachim von Ribbentrop, the Nazi Foreign Minister. The meeting occurs on Roosevelt’s presidential yacht, *Potomac*, in the middle of the Atlantic. Neither returns. As both Americans and Germans prepare for war, the Lloigor inflame a bloody, tearing rage. Within months, the human race tears itself apart.

KRAKEN

In the ocean abysses, deeper than any human has probed, lives an intelligent race. Perhaps they have lived there for millions of years: perhaps, indeed, they are the sea monsters of legend. Or perhaps they are new arrivals. Some hypothesise that red orbs of fuzzy light, reported worldwide in 1935, were spacecraft, bringing the race to Earth.

The trouble began when mankind studied the abysses, using bathyspheres and scientific instruments. First the bathyspheres disappeared, their connecting cables severed; later, the research ships were electrified, killing everyone on board.

Cautious voices, who suggested the creatures were defending their territory, advised withdrawal. But warlike sentiments prevailed and bombs were dropped into the abysses. Inexplicably, some never detonated, and equally inexplicably, some detonated thousands of miles from their original location. Some suggested they had been neutralised, moved through vast undersea tunnels, then detonated in harmless locations. Clearly, this was nonsense, but no other explanations fitted the facts.

Soon afterwards, the attacks started. First, ships disappeared, their entire crew lost. Then great tank-like things emerged from the sea, thirty feet long, armoured and grey. They devastated coastal villages: more disturbingly, they seemed to learn from their attacks, learning to destroy buildings by crushing structural walls. Disturbingly, many believed these tanks were not the race themselves, but organic drones, manufactured in the deeps.

Even worse than the sea-tanks were the weapons they carried. Once ashore, the sea-tanks emitted huge amoebic spheres. These rose into the air, then burst into white threads, which stuck



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to humans. As the sea-tanks retreated, the trapped humans were pulled into the waves, and drowned.

Gradually, governments learned to defend against these attacks: they rigged floodlights near coastal towns and mined beaches. Some sea-tanks were destroyed, by throwing grenades under their shells. For a while, humanity seemed to be winning.

Then the waters started rising. Scientists reported the icecaps were melting: somehow, the creatures had caused them to thaw. Amsterdam flooded. New York was drowned. When London went under, the capital of England was moved to Harrogate. Finally, humanity's baser instincts took over, and people murdered for land and food. The remaining few inherited a watery world, ruled by an alien race.

MARTIANS

They arrive in great cylinders, thirty yards across, which fell from the sky like meteors. From those cylinders emerge metal fighting machines: walking tripods of glittering metal, each containing a single Martian.

In these machines, these creatures overrun the Earth, smashing cities to rubble. Their weaponry surpasses that of any terrestrial army. First, they release an invisible heat-ray, which makes ammunition explode and humans burst into white fire. Then comes a toxic black smoke, heavier than air, from which the only escape is flight or ascent to high ground. This smoke, after it disperses, leaves cities and countryside coated in fine, black powder. Finally, whether by accident or design, the Martians bring the Red Weed to Earth (see below).

Inside the machines, the Martians are alien horrors. Their circular bodies, four feet in diameter, have dark eyes and a fleshy beak, surrounded by sixteen tentacles. These bodies are almost

entirely brain: they construct and wear bodies, such as the fighting-machines, to serve their immediate needs. They make howling, ululating noises prior to feeding, but communicate via telepathy.

To feed, they take blood from living creatures, injecting it into themselves. The fighting machines have glittering tentacles, to capture humans for feeding, and cages, which hold them alive until their blood is needed. The victims are drained alive, then the bloodless bodies discarded.

In time, the Martians become rulers of Earth, standing sentinel over the Earth and striding through the sea. Any remaining humans are enslaved. In the following years, their children are controlled through "capping": when each comes of age, a mesh of silvery metal is implanted into their skulls. The Capped are docile, unimaginative and obedient to the Martians.

Yet, for a few humans, the Capping is unsuccessful. These become Vagrants, half-mad and depending on charity, but uncontrolled by the Martians.

The new masters of Earth construct great domed cities, which they fill with gas, so that they can live without the fighting-machines. A few humans, chosen for physical fitness, are taken to serve the Martians in these cities. Although they do not survive for long, in the toxic atmosphere, they die knowing they have served.

Mi-Go

• The Mi-Go had avoided humans for centuries, judging them not to be a threat. However, in the 20th Century, human technology leapt forward, producing increasingly deadly weapons. Judging that it could not control them, the Mi-Go moved to protect their mining operations on Earth. They swarmed down from the stars, overwhelming humanity with

vastly greater numbers, tearing them apart with their claws. For days, the skies were black and red with flocks of Mi-Go. Having killed all the humans they could find, the Mi-Go returned to their mines, in the hills of Earth and on distant planets.

- After bloated crustacean bodies are found in flooded rivers, an ad hoc squad of United States Army Reserves wipes out the Mi-Go in the Massachusetts hills. For months, nothing happens; then, in November 1936, the populations of local villages start to disappear. First the police, then the army, investigate the deserted towns. When they reach their hilltop mines, the Mi-Go defend themselves, lifting the humans to unimaginable heights, then dropping them to their deaths. War ensues, Mi-Go reinforcements arrive from the stars, and the humans are routed.
- In 1936, the Outer Ones take human brains in greater quantities than ever before. Entire hillside towns are found murdered, their bodies crudely dissected and their skulls empty. The brains are placed in metal cylinders, then stored in vast warehouses, with speakers and sensors allowing them to communicate. Some are shipped to distant planets; others remain on Earth, conscious, trapped and powerless.
- The Fungi from Yuggoth attack the residents of Greenfield, Massachusetts. They take parts of their brains, leaving them with dulled senses, animal instincts, buzzing speech and an intense hunger. Reduced to drooling, stumbling wrecks, they devour any sources of food they can find. The Mi-Go surgery continues, although its purpose is unclear: perhaps it is a military strategy; perhaps a large-scale experiment. Those few that avoid the Mi-Go are torn apart by the mindless, drooling hordes.



The Apocalypse Machine

RED WEED

The red weed is alien, a plant that overwhelms all terrestrial life. It spreads rampantly and rapidly, smothering fields and towns, creeping through tiny holes to spread inside houses. Where it finds water, it grows luxuriantly, choking rivers and harbours, spreading outwards into the sea. Sometimes, it grows scrubbily, clinging to rocks and rubble; sometimes, it thrives, growing neck high, making valleys impassable. It swarms up trees, spreading over their branches, and strangles them.

To humans, the red weed appears tropical, resembling a hybrid of cacti

and creepers. It tastes watery, sweet and metallic and is inedible, although not poisonous. In darkness, it is faintly phosphorescent, glowing with gentle violet-purple light. If it dies, it turns white and spongy, decomposing into a mass of pale vegetation.

Its origin is unknown. Perhaps it is a weapon, which kills people through starvation and thirst, smothering their plants and blocking their waterways. Perhaps it is an accident, its seeds brought to Earth by aliens, and its slow killing of humanity is a quirk of fate.



Tips for Players

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

Each investigation will have a central question, which the Keeper will tell you. It might be:

- How did the apocalypse happen?
- Where is the weapon that will let us fight the monsters?
- How can we stop the next attack?

As you play, make sure you investigate that question. If you have not answered it, keep investigating.

INVESTIGATE THE HORROR

Post-apocalyptic stories are about witnessing horror. In your travels across the wasteland, you will see vast scenes of destruction: armies of Deep Ones, Martians striding through the sea, Cthulhu laying waste to the land. You will walk on Antarctic ice and newly risen continents.

However, none of this will happen if you hide. As a post-apocalyptic Investigator,

you must put common sense aside. Where any sane person would run from the monsters, you must investigate them.

Your Drive will push you forward to investigate. If, during your games, you wonder why your Investigator doesn't flee, your Drive is the answer: your curiosity, your duty or the preservation of knowledge is too important.

In *Trail of Cthulhu*, your Drive made you investigate, even when things seemed dangerous. In *The Apocalypse Machine*, your Drive is even more vital: it pushes you to investigate, despite definite





The Apocalypse Machine

and immediate danger. Compared to your Drive, your sanity and health are unimportant.

Hence, as you investigate:

- Make your Drive central to your Investigator. You are not just curious: you are burning with curiosity. You are not just dutiful: you would die for your duty. Your Drive defines who you are.
- Go towards the monsters. If you ever wonder where to go next, head towards the monsters. When common sense tells you to run from danger, run towards it. When others flee, you must investigate.
- Don't run away. When monsters invade your country, rational people would escape to another one, on a boat or plane. However, this ruins investigations. Once you begin investigating an area, stay there until the job is done.
- Remember the central question. If you have not answered it, keep investigating.

Finally, here is a rule of thumb about fleeing. Continue investigating as long as you can. Keep investigating when there is danger, keep investigating when monsters appear. Investigate until the ground shakes under your feet. When buildings start falling, that is your cue to run.

STAY ON TRACK

After the apocalypse, there is much to do. Indeed, in a devastated world, you can go anywhere. You might want to:

- Find your Sources of Stability.
- Find any remaining government.
- Find food and water.
- Find guns and ammunition.
- Find and fortify a stronghold.

In your investigations, take time to do these things. However, they are secondary to investigating the monsters. Rearm, resupply, find loved ones: then get back to investigating.

Here is another rule of thumb: when you break the investigation to do other things, take one scene per Investigator, then resume the investigation.

Example: James Wilthrop, Bessie Bartholemew and Reginald Allbright witness a Martian invasion. The central question of their investigation is: how can they fight the Martians? After fleeing, they find themselves in deserted New York. Each Investigator takes a scene to do other things: James tries to find his sister; Bessie looks for explosives; Reginald attempts to find government in City Hall. After each Investigator has taken their scene, they resume the investigation.

Sometimes, in your games, the investigation will go off track. For example, when the scenario is about finding a weapon to fight the monsters, you may get distracted, investigating who killed your Source of Stability. To avoid this, remember the central question. Take a scene to investigate who killed your Source of Stability, then get back to that question.

REACT

Cthulhu investigations are not just about uncovering mysteries. They are about reacting to the horror. Hence, don't just sit there when bad things are revealed. React to them. Scream, cry, blame someone, point your gun.

In these situations, you have two great roleplaying tools. The first is Stability. When you fail a Stability roll, roleplay your shock (see Roleplaying Instability in the main rulebook). Tremble, twitch, breathe faster, clench your fists. Best of all, try really hard to be calm. No, you're fine.

Secondly, remember your Pillars of Sanity. When the horror touches any Pillar of Sanity, roleplay it. Pray to a deity; grasp for a scientific explanation; touch a souvenir of your home town. Together with your Drive, your Pillars of Sanity define what your Investigator cares about. When they are threatened, react.

Often, the Investigators' reactions are more fun than the mystery itself. When one Investigator tries to shoot herself, and another tries to stop her, you know you're doing it right.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

An important part of *Trail of Cthulhu* games is seeing how relationships develop between Investigators. For example: if we are friends, do I protect you from monsters or abandon you to your fate? If we are enemies, do I learn to respect you or try to kill you?

So build relationships with other Investigators. Decide how you feel about them: do you envy them, hate them, like them or desire them? Sometimes, these relationships emerge when you create characters. If I'm a rationalist scientist and you're a bohemian artist, we probably dislike each other. If I'm a farmer and you're a botanist, we may respect each other or disagree vehemently.

Your main tool, for building relationships, is Occupation. Members of some professions have natural friends and enemies. For example, cops and criminals distrust each other, but cops and nurses speak the same language. Where you cannot think of natural enmities, invent some. Perhaps, for example, socialites hate journalists, because they invent stories in the gossip columns.

For instant relationships between your Investigators, try this trick. Pick one Investigator you like, one whom you respect and one who makes you suspicious. Even better, do this as a group. Perhaps I like you, but you find me suspicious.

Get the relationships right and they will drive your game forward. When the Keeper leaves the room and the players continue talking in character, the relationships are working well.



Building Mysteries

Post-apocalyptic mysteries have their own quirks and pleasures. Here, then, is how to build scenarios after the apocalypse.

HIDE THE MYTHOS

In the post-apocalyptic world, Mythos entities control the Earth. But this does not mean the Investigators are accustomed to them. They are not used to the sight of Mi-Go mines, Elder Thing cities or Cthulhu strolling past on his way to breakfast. At the beginning of the campaign, all these things are unknown. Whatever the Investigators have seen, there are many more horrors to come.

Hence, at the beginning of each scenario, the horror is unseen. Perhaps it is far away and the Investigators must travel to it. Perhaps it is hidden: many monsters, at the beginning of the scenario, are underground. Either way, when the Investigators see it, it will be for the first time.

Sometimes, creatures will appear in consecutive scenarios. For example, in the first scenario, the Martians invade Earth; in later scenarios, their fighting-machines stride over the post-apocalyptic wasteland. When such creatures become part of the landscape, the Investigators do, to an extent, become accustomed to them.

However, the Mythos remains mysterious and unknown. Although the Investigators have seen Martian fighting-machines, they have not seen the Martians themselves, nor the tortures they inflict on humans. Additionally, there are other Mythos entities: although the Investigators have seen Martians, they have not seen a Shoggoth. There is always more horror to see.

STRONG VISUAL IMAGES

Use strong visual images as often as you can. At a minimum, each scenario must begin and end with such an image. Think big and dramatic. For example:

- An army of Deep Ones surges through San Francisco.
- Everyone in the town is dead.
- Cthulhu rises from the sea.
- In Paris, the Champs-Élysées is covered with grass and flowers.
- A red weed covers the land.
- A Cyclopean city stands on an icy plateau.
- The Shoggoth towers above you, alien eyes and mouths covering its body.
- London burns.

Remember that *The Apocalypse Machine* differs from *Trail of Cthulhu*. In *Trail of Cthulhu*, you rarely describe events that change the world irrevocably: for example, New York falling, Ry'leh rising or Antarctica melting. You might threaten Manhattan with destruction, but not destroy it.

By contrast, *The Apocalypse Machine* demands that you must destroy the world. So let your imagination run wild. Destroy cities. Raise continents. Describe Shub-Niggurath tearing apart the world from inside. In destroying the world, you cannot go too far (and I encourage you to prove me wrong).

MONSTER OF THE WEEK

Most scenarios are about monsters. Sometimes, it is a single monster, such as Daoloth; sometimes, it is a race, such as the Shan. When writing a scenario, choosing a monster is a good place to begin.

By choosing a monster, you get a ready-made supply of themes for your scenario. For example, if you choose the Mi-Go, your scenario may include:

- Mines.
- Metal cylinders containing brains.
- Floating Mi-Go bodies.
- Possessed humans.
- Buzzing voices.

Whereas, if you choose Cthulhu, you might include:

- The sea.
- Dreams of Ry'leh.
- Cultists.
- Idols carved from a green, unknown rock.

For a simple scenario, just use one of these elements per scene. For example:

- On their travels, the Investigators find an abandoned town. Although it is empty, they overhear strange, buzzing voices at night.
- In a river, they find a bloated, crustacean body.
- On investigating, they find a surviving human. However, they discover he is possessed, by something strange and alien.



The Apocalypse Machine

- Strange footprints lead them to an abandoned mine.
- It is filled with metal cylinders, containing the brains of all the former town residents.

Even better, vary these elements slightly. Perhaps Cthulhu sends, not just dreams, but waking visions of Ry'leh. Perhaps the Mi-Go tunnel under New York City. Perhaps the brains, in the metal cylinders, have been trapped and conscious for centuries. These changes keep the Mythos mysterious.

Additionally, make your images big. Rather than one metal cylinder, have a mine filled with them, containing thousands of human brains. Rather than an idol, have a gargantuan statue, carved from the strange green rock.

Naturally, by putting these elements in, you indicate what the monster is. Most players enjoy this: they enjoy subtle hints of what is coming. However, if you prefer to keep the monster secret, do the opposite: avoid the elements above. For example, to disguise the Mi-Go's involvement, avoid mentioning mines, cylinders and buzzing voices.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

In the post-apocalyptic wasteland, there is much to explore and many distractions. To keep things on track, decide a central question, which the investigation will answer.

Good questions are:

- What caused the apocalypse?
- What are these monsters?
- How can we fight these monsters?
- What happened to my Source of Stability?
- How can we prevent [a terrible event]?
- Where is [a certain object]?
- Where is [a safe haven]?

Often, the natural question is "What the hell is going on?". Try something more specific than this: perhaps "What caused the apocalypse?" or "How can we fight these monsters?".

THE HOOK

Once you know your central question, design a hook to bring it to the Investigators' attention. Give this hook a strong visual image.

For example:

The Hook: A mysterious letter tells the Investigators they must prevent an invasion in the seaside town of Blackpool. There, they find survivors in the Metropole Hotel.

The Metropole Hotel: A dusty, old-fashioned hotel.
Core Clue: Something is hidden in the old quarry.

The Old Quarry: A disused quarry, full of Deep One corpses.
Core Clue: Albert Wade used to talk about these creatures.

Albert Wade's House: Dark, crumbling, stinking of fish.
Core Clue: The Deep Ones are about to invade. The invasion can only be prevented from the centre of the Deep One's city, Sh'gmarr.

Sh'gmarr: A cyclopean city emerging from a black mire.

- Thousands of dead Mi-Go, washed up on the coastline. (Central question: what are these monsters?)
- A vision of Ry'leh rising from the sea. (Central question: how can we prevent Ry'leh rising?)
- A crackling radio broadcast from a group of survivors (Central question: where are the survivors?)

With the hook establishes, the investigation begins.

THE SPINE

As in *Trail of Cthulhu*, investigations in *The Apocalypse Machine* consist of scenes, linked by core clues. Because post-apocalyptic stories involve exploration, it is useful to think of scenes as locations. Each location holds many clues. The core clue leads to the next location.

Hence, when you design the spine of an investigation, invent a string of locations. Give each location a short description and a core clue, leading to the next location.

Your core clues might point, unambiguously, to the next location, as in the example above. Alternatively, they might require the Investigators to work out the next location. Choose whichever suits your game.

And, of course, your scenarios need not be linear. They can split into separate threads of investigation.

CLUES

In each location, the Investigators will discover clues. For example, in the example above, the Investigators might question survivors in the Metropole hotel. By doing so, they might discover local legends of a great undersea city.

So put some clues in each location.



Building Mysteries

The Metropole Hotel: a dusty, old-fashioned hotel.

*There are local legends of a great undersea city.

Core Clue: There is something hidden in the Old Quarry.

You can specify these clues in various ways:

- Just specify the piece of information: “There are local legends of a great undersea city”. The Investigators might discover this clue from different sources, using various abilities. For example, using Oral History, they might get someone to tell them the information. Alternatively, using Library Use, they might find the clue in a book.
- Specify the piece of information and either where it is or who knows it: “Donna Wade knows legends of a great undersea city”. Again, Investigators can use various abilities to uncover the information. For example, they might use Oral History to get Donna to tell them the legends. Alternatively, they might use Intimidation, to threaten her into telling what she knows.
- Specify the piece of information, where it is or who knows it and the skill needed to reveal it: “If Reassurance is used, Donna Wade tells the Investigators about legends concerning a great undersea city.”

If you use the second or third methods, be prepared to change your plans on the fly. For example, although you specified that Donna Wade must be Reassured to gain the clue, you might allow the Investigators to Intimidate her, instead.

PEOPLE

Since few survive the apocalypse, people are immensely important in *The Apocalypse Machine*. As Keeper, you flesh out the communities and individuals of the post-apocalyptic world.

At each location, describe who is there. For individuals, give three words to describe the person. For communities, give three words to describe the group. For a particular member of a community, take the three words from the community and change one.

For example:

Metropole survivors: Working-class, friendly, hard-working

Jack Wade, their leader: Working-class, suspicious, hard-working

When describing communities, think about the following questions.

- Where do they sleep?
- How do they eat?
- What is their moral outlook?

When describing individuals, consider how they survived the apocalypse. The Investigators will almost certainly ask. Moreover, they will expect a different story for each person they meet. Be ready with answers.

EVENTS

Investigations in *The Apocalypse Machine* are punctuated by earth-shattering events. These always have a strong visual image attached.

Often, such events happen at the start of the investigation, as the Hook. Sometimes, they happen at the end, as a climax. Alternatively, they may also occur at a particular point in an investigation. For example, in this investigation, the Deep One city of Sh’gmarr rises before the final scene:

The Hook: A mysterious letter tells the Investigators they must prevent an invasion in the seaside town of Blackpool. There, they find survivors in the Metropole Hotel.

The Metropole Hotel: A dusty, old-fashioned hotel.

Core Clue: Something is hidden in the old quarry.

The Old Quarry: A disused quarry, full of Deep One corpses.

Core Clue: Albert Wade used to talk about these creatures.

Albert Wade’s House: Dark, crumbling, stinking of fish.

Core Clue: The Deep Ones are about to invade. The invasion can only be prevented from the centre of the Deep One’s city, Sh’gmarr.

Sh’gmarr rises from the waves. Monoliths break through streets. The hotel collapses. Black stinking silt oozes up.

Sh’gmarr: A cyclopean city emerging from a black mire. At the centre of Sh’gmarr, the Investigators play a mystical game. It allows them to prevent the Deep Ones’ invasion but only if the white flowers invade instead.



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For each event, choose three particular things that will happen. For example, when Cthulhu rises from the waves: he towers forty feet in the air; the seas boil; and sky grows dark overhead.

Events are your opportunity, as Keeper, to take centre stage. Do it, quickly, then step back and let the Investigators react to the events.

BUILD THE HORROR

In your scenarios, let the horror increase as the investigation progresses. As a rule of thumb, simply increase the size of the Stability checks. For example:

- Start with a strange letter from a Source of Stability (Stability 2)
- Then find the Source of Stability missing (Stability 3)
- Then find a whole series of letters, addressed to you in the future (Stability 3)
- Finally, discover the Source of Stability was taken into the past, by the Great Race of Yith, and will never return. (Stability 6)

As a variation, try beginning the game with major horror. For example, start with a deceased Source of Stability, a Mi-Go graveyard or, best of all, the apocalypse itself. After that, bring the horror back to zero, and build it up.

PROVOKE A REACTION

When inventing horrors for the Investigators to discover, choose something that provokes a reaction. For example:

- A deserted village, which shows signs of recent occupation.
- Human brains, kept artificially alive.
- A cellar of human slaves.

Choose events that cannot be ignored. Choose ones that will provoke different reactions from Investigators. They cannot just watch; they cannot just run; they must do something.

Best of all, present the Investigators with ethical dilemmas. For example, if they discover a concentration camp of Deep Ones, what do they do? Release them, kill them, leave them imprisoned? Similarly, if the Investigators discover one of their number is possessed by the Shan, what do they do?





The Decaying Earth

Finally, we return to the apocalypse and its aftermath. What happens to the Earth? How does nature take back the cities? In what sort of world will the Investigators live or die?

The answers to these questions, of course, depend on where the Investigators are and how the world was destroyed. But there are many constants: however humanity dies, telephone exchanges go dead and power stations fail.

In this section, then, we move forward through time, considering how the world decays after the apocalypse.

THE FIRST YEAR

After the apocalypse, the power goes off within hours. With no-one to operate the power stations and renew their supply of fuel, there is no electricity. The night after the apocalypse, then, is darker than most Investigators have ever known.

When the power goes off, so does everything that runs on electricity. As electric water pumps fail, subways flood, as do the foundations of buildings. All modes of communication, including telephones and telegrams, instantly stop working: when the Investigators lift a telephone receiver for the first time, nobody at the telephone exchange will answer.

Running water lasts for a few hours, then stops when the water towers empty. Without working pumps, those towers will never be full again. If there were floods, sewage will have contaminated the water supply; otherwise, the water is probably drinkable. The gas supply, too, fails within hours.

However, on that first night, food is plentiful. The Investigators can eat whatever they find: fresh meat, fish and vegetables are all available. Cooking is more difficult, although not impossible. Once the gas runs out, camping stoves and wood fires are the best option.

Transport, too, is easy. Most cars are unlocked and few require ignition keys. Once the tank runs dry, the Investigators can simply find another car. Similarly, larger vehicles, such as trucks. Steam trains will run, although Investigators must periodically disembark to move the points. Electric trains, of course, are useless.

In the following days, life becomes harder. Without heating, buildings quickly reach the outside temperature. If it gets cold, at night, Investigators must find things to burn. Within days, fresh food decays. Investigators now subsist on tinned food and bottled drinks (mostly beer and orange juice), of which there is a large supply.

Save vs Cholera

Let this section inspire your games, rather than constraining them. For example, you might describe the Investigators burning the furniture of an abandoned country house, to heat the freezing ballroom. But don't insist on Scavenging rolls for wood, then more rolls to find food and drink.

Describing the Investigators' struggle to survive is fun, but it is not the point of the game. *The Apocalypse Machine* is about investigating the Mythos, not managing resources or treating diseases. Get back to the investigation quickly.

Water Power

After the apocalypse, the one power source that survives may be hydroelectricity. After all, where other power sources need resupplying with fuel, hydroelectric power just keeps running, until the dam falls or the world ends. If so, electricity may still supply the surrounding towns.

In time, something will fail: perhaps machinery will wear out or weeds block the turbines. Any leak, in the dam, will grow quickly, until the water crashes through, taking the dam down. Until then, however, power keeps on going.

Perhaps this is unrealistic, but it is conceivable and, as an idea, irresistible. In 1936, the Boulder Dam (now the Hoover Dam) was newly completed, and seemed as though it would last forever. Perhaps it does. Perhaps, in a post-apocalyptic world, Las Vegas burns like an electric lamp in the Nevada desert.



The Apocalypse Machine

Any corpses will stink, but are not particularly dangerous (assuming, of course, the Keeper has not worked zombies into the scenario). They do not cause airborne disease, although if they are near a source of running water, they may contaminate it.

Indeed, finding drinkable water becomes difficult. Sooner or later most sources get contaminated by decaying bodies or human waste. Boiling it removes most contamination, but that requires the Investigators to find a source of heat.

As the winter draws in, survival becomes harder. If pipes freeze, there will be no water; later, when they thaw, houses will flood. Tinned food becomes scarce and essential. The main sources of fuel will be furniture, turf, manure and paper.

ONE YEAR ON

Within a year, nature begins to take back towns and cities. Plants grow wherever the sunlight hits. By the end of the year, creepers and ivy cover buildings; lawns grown untended; moss covers stonework.

As cracks grow in roads, seeds grow within them, pushing them apart more. In colder climates, freezing water pushes the cracks apart still further. Within a year, roads and sidewalks are cracked, pushed apart by weeds. The pavement is not impassable yet, but it soon will be.

On all man-made surfaces, a layer of soil begins to form, from decaying moss, lichen and other vegetation. More plants grow in this soil. Patches of grass appear on roads. Then the plants spread, gradually burying the road.

Meanwhile, animals have returned to the cities. First, birds arrive, scattering their droppings over the buildings. Then the abandoned cities are invaded, by animals that people had chased out of gardens: perhaps foxes, bears or deer, depending on the city. At the end of that first year, then, nature is everywhere. If you listen in an abandoned city, you do not hear silence: you hear birdsong.

What about the animals that previously lived in the cities? Dogs die quickly, having been bred for looks, rather than survival. Some live on scraps for a while, but are quickly killed when larger predators arrive. Cats are wiler and hardier, forming feral packs and surviving on birds. Rats and cockroaches, having survived on human waste, die quickly.





The Decaying Earth

Now, an important question is: is there a zoo nearby? If so, and the animals escape, many will survive. Eventually, they may migrate south, but for now, they survive within the abandoned city. In their investigations, then, Investigators may encounter lions, snakes and tigers.

Meanwhile, in the abandoned cities, buildings are decaying. As nails rust, wooden boards spring apart. Simultaneously, moss, lichen, creepers and ivy push apart cracks in the brickwork. At the end of that first year, most buildings leak. Basements fill with water. Once this happens, plants

grow within the buildings, and their destruction accelerates.

Apart from the decay, however, the buildings are frozen in time. Bodies remain where they died; books remain open; drinks sit unfinished on tables. Entering such buildings is like entering an old photograph: every object tells a story.

As well as buildings, cars are under attack by plants. Seedlings grow, under the hood of the car and even in the interior. At the end of the first year, most cars are homes to mosses, lichen and small plants. They still run, but not for long.

When the Investigators visit the city, then, they will find nature taking it back. Nevertheless, there is little to halt their investigations: shelter, transport

Did the Earth Move?

Was there an earthquake? If so, whether the cause was natural or monstrous, it cuts off everything instantly. Power cables, water pipes and lines of communication break. Gas lines break, too, and ignite as they do so. Railways bend, making them unusable.

These things, of course, will fail in any apocalypse. However, whereas they would normally last hours, days or weeks, an earthquake stops them instantly.

Most importantly, the earthquake damages the roads. Most apocalypses are kind to the roads: they only decay years later, when weeds destroy them from beneath. An earthquake, however, makes roads impassable within minutes.





The Apocalypse Machine

and food can all be found. The biggest danger is a chance encounter with a wild animal: a wolf, bear or an escaped zoo animal. Although human skeletons lie on the ground, life goes on.

THREE YEARS ON

Three years after the apocalypse, buildings are falling apart. Roofs are broken: many have trees growing through them. Windows break too, and once one breaks, the wind ensures that others follow suit. Now, the Investigators can find shelter, but it will take longer.

Cars, too, have been taken over by plants. Many have trees growing from their hoods. Again, the Investigators can find transport, but it will take time. To make things worse, the roads are becoming impassable. They are covered with cracks and patches of grass and weeds. Occasionally, trees grow in the middle of the road. Equipment also

begins to decay: most importantly, batteries begin to corrode.

When the Investigators come to the cities, they will find larger predators there. At first, there was little for these animals; now, however, there are smaller animals to eat. And, of course, Investigators.

TEN YEARS ON

Nature has had a decade to reclaim the land. Everything humanity constructed is crumbling, piece by piece. When the Investigators arrive in a city, they find a natural paradise: vines and creepers swarm over buildings, lawns have become forests.

As nature flourishes, it pulls buildings apart. The mortar between bricks dissolves. Seeds enter the cracks to complete the destruction. On these buildings, the paint is dulled and flaking, while balconies and masonry have fallen. Inside them, locks and bolts have rusted solid.

The higher buildings begin to fall. First, as their foundations become waterlogged, they lean to the side. When high winds come, they collapse entirely.

There are now two great dangers. The first is water. Low-lying cities, such as Boston and New York, flood regularly. Amsterdam and parts of London are now underwater.

The second danger is fire. Piles of dry leaves and timber have gathered, ready for a single spark to ignite them. Since lightning conductors have rusted, a lightning bolt will do this. Alternatively, cars may provide the spark. As they corrode, cars become time-bombs, suddenly exploding with little warning.

Once started, the fire spreads rapidly, leaping from building to building. Sparks, drifting on the wind, spread the fire over rivers and other natural breaks. With no-one to fight it, the flames burn until there is no fuel left. They leave

behind melted roads and twisted metal. Investigators caught in a city fire are in great danger: if they stay in a building, they burn; if they step outside, the boiling road surface kills them.

Ten years after the apocalypse, transportation becomes difficult. The Investigators will search for a long time before finding a usable car. Even if they do, the roads are nearly impassable, covered with grass, scrub and trees.

While this is bad news for humans, it is good for animals. Previously, roads had blocked their migration routes. Now grown over, the roads aid their migration, giving them pathways to the south. These pathways lead through the largest cities. Packs of wolves, for example, arrive in Manhattan and Chicago.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS ON

A century after the apocalypse, most signs of humanity are gone. Buildings have collapsed. Most larger structures, such as bridges, have collapsed too.

So what survives? Firstly, anything built from stone will stand. Just as Greek and Roman temples stand today, so Notre Dame de Paris and the Tower of London survive, a century after the apocalypse. The faces on Mount Rushmore last forever; so does the Statue of Liberty, although it may have fallen into the water. Long after Tower Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge fall, stone bridges remain.

Secondly, any underground chamber that escapes flooding will last forever. The catacombs of Paris, underground bases and research facilities all survive, long after the apocalypse. Finally, and crucially, bank vaults and their contents survive forever. The most valuable books and documents will be hard to reach, but they will be there.

Nature

From the apocalypse onwards, nature begins to undo humanity's work. To know what any city will look like, after an apocalypse, look at countryside that surrounds it: that is what the city will gradually become. Both plants and animals invade.

In particular, if woodland was cleared to build a city, it will grow back. Humanity has spent centuries fighting back the forests. When humanity dies, the forests return.

This assumes, of course, that the apocalypse left nature untouched. If the soil is infertile, plants will not grow. Nevertheless, do not underestimate the power of nature to fight back. Even if grasses are dead, mosses and hardier plants invade human cities.

Difficulty Ratings for Finding Equipment

| Item | Number of years after apocalypse | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|-----------|
| | 1 year or less | 3 years | 10 years | 30 years | 100 years |
| Book, dime novel | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Book, specialised | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Book, religious | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Zippo lighter [Naptha] | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 |
| Light pistol [Ammunition] | 3 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 10 |
| Heavy firearm [Ammunition] | 5 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Very heavy firearm [Ammunition] | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Bow [Arrows] | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Art supplies [Paints and canvas] | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Musical instrument | 4 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 9 |
| Perfume | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Cigarettes | 4 | 7 | 9 | 10 | 10 |
| Diamonds | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Wine | 5 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 10 |
| Bandages and antiseptic | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Surgical equipment | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Pharmaceuticals | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 |
| Household cleaning materials | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Water, in sealed container | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 14 |
| Motorcycle [Gasoline] | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 8 |
| Car [Gasoline] | 1 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 9 |
| Luxurious car [Gasoline] | 3 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Truck [Gasoline] | 3 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Aeroplane [Gasoline] | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 |
| Compass | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Clothing, luxury | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Clothing, practical and warm | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Clothing, defensive | 3 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Laboratory equipment | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 7 |
| Telescope | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Geiger counter | 6 | 8 | 10 | 13 | 15 |
| Camera, Brownie [Film] | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Camera, Specialised [Film] | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Agricultural equipment | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 14 |
| Seeds [Seeds] | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 |
| Pencil and notebook | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Gramophone | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Wireless | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Radio, which transmits and receives | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Phonograph | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Carpenter's tools | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Watch | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Rope | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Gas mask | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Flashlight [Batteries] | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Lantern [Kerosense] | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 |
| Generator [Gasoline, Diesel] | 6 | 8 | 10 | 12 | 14 |

