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WELCOME TO THE CONSPIRACY

WHAT IS CTHULHU DEEP GREEN?

In Cthulhu Deep Green, players take on the role of shadowy agents of **The Conspiracy** as they fight to maintain the veil of secrecy standing between the public and the horrors that reside just beyond human comprehension.

WHY PLAY?

CDG's mechanics are designed to focus on the story over individual successes and failures; Agents of The Conspiracy always fail forward.

CDG focuses character building and personal horror with At Home scenes and other mechanics that add an element of work/life balance to every Operation.

CDG is supremely adaptable to your favorite scenario.

WHAT DO WE NEED?

To play you'll need the following:

One Handler (The player who facilitates the game).

Two to five Agents (The other players).

Six sided dice of at least two different colors.

Pencils and index cards for everyone at the table.

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ROLLING THE DICE

THE BASICS

CDG's resolution mechanics are simple: Whenever an Agent does something that risks their life or their emotional stability, the Handler will call for a dice roll.

The Agent in question may roll a Human Die if the action is humanly possible. Usually this is a freebie.

They may roll one Occupation Die if the action falls under an their personal field of expertise.

Finally, an Agent may roll a **DARK DIE** if they would risk their physical or emotional well-being to succeed OR if the player would add an element of the horrific to an otherwise mundane task. This die should be visually distinct from the other two.

Perhaps a **Black** die to represent the night sky.

Or maybe a **Red** die to embody the blood in their veins.

If the **DARK DIE** rolls highest AND it is higher than the Agent's current Stress value, Stress is raised by one.

If the action would expose the Agent to Mythos Knowledge also compare their Insight value to the **DARK DIE**, potentially raising it by one as above.

DIE RESULTS

If the highest die is ...

- 1-3** The Agent barely succeeds, but maybe not in the way they intended. The Handler determines how.
- 4** The Agent succeeds competently. They describe how.
- 5** The Agent succeeds and may get an advantage. The Handler decides what it is.
- 6** The Agent succeeds brilliantly and gets something extra. Maybe more than they bargained for. The Handler may confront them with a difficult truth.



STRESS & INSIGHT CHECKS

Even if completing an action in and of itself would be trivial The Handler may call on an Agent to roll a single **DARK DIE** as a test of their Stress or Insight.

Most often these tests will be invoked when an Agent willingly exposes themselves to supernatural forces, disturbing imagery, or moral quandaries. Agents failing this roll internalize harmful information or become disturbed by the grizzly details.

Example:

Agent Cross has an **Insight of 1** and a **Stress of 4**. If they roll a 3 to make sense of a disturbing passage from *The Necronomicon* and the **DARK DIE** is highest, their Insight increases to 2 but their Stress remains at 4.

If they had rolled a 4 or higher, both Stress and Insight would have increased.

FAILING

By design none of the standard die results include objective failure. As a matter of intent, the dangers of a standard Operation fall not in a failed mission but in the drama of a narrow victory.

However, should any Player think the story would be made more interesting by the potential for failure they may describe a worse outcome for the action at hand and take up a **Failure Die** to oppose a roll. If this die comes up higher than the active Agent's highest die, that action fails.

Rolling a failure die is a meta-narrative action; it needn't be played out in the fiction to proceed. For this reason it shouldn't be used to thwart the gathering of plot sensitive information, though one Agent might add a complication to another's success.

As The Handler, use this mechanic sparingly.

TRYING AGAIN

If an Agent isn't happy with the result of their roll they may take up a single **DARK DIE**, along with any other dice already invoked, and try again. Agents may do this as many times as they desire, but they risk Insight and/or Stress each time.

COOPERATION & COMPETITION

To **Cooperate**: everyone acting in cooperation rolls their dice and takes the highest die as the result.

To **Compete**: everyone who is competing rolls their dice. The highest die wins.

On a tie: anyone may reroll so long as they include their **DARK DIE**. If a tie occurs again, the Agent with the highest Insight score wins. If the situation is still unresolved anyone may choose to call for a reroll risking Strain or Insight with each attempt.

Example:

Agent Cross is attempting to enter a secured facility disguised as a delivery person. The Handler calls for a roll and Agent Cross receives a 3 on their single Human die. The Handler warns them that, if they don't get a good success here, they're likely to be stopped and questioned by armed guards.

Cross doesn't like this, so they take up the **DARK DIE** and roll again. This time they get a five on both their Human Die and the **DARK DIE**, ensuring that they won't be questioned.

Because their Stress is 4 and their **Dark Die** was highest, their Stress track advances to 5.

CONFRONTATION

COMBAT

The life of an Agent is dangerous but unlike investigators in other games they can, on occasion, solve problems with violence.

If an Agent attempts an action that risks life or limb their Handler will treat them to a terrifying vision of their inevitable injury or demise. If the Agent rejects this version of events, they may choose to **Rewind** and take a more measured course of action. Their safety is never guaranteed, however: **On a 1 to 3 the Harm might come to pass anyway.**

If an Agent chooses to proceed with their reckless action they roll the dice, accept the consequences, and mark Harm as dictated by the Handler.



EFFORTLESS ENCOUNTERS

Now and then The Handler may decide that an Agent is at no risk of Harm from a confrontation based on superior firepower, training, or other factors.

Dispatching a captured cultist probably won't result in injury or even require a roll to accomplish, but the morality of killing a helpless person in cold blood may necessitate a Stress check.

Example:

Agent Cross is on the run from members of a rival faction. They've holed up in an old work shed but a forward scout is nearing their position. As they ready their gun, the handler describes a prolonged shootout ending in their demise.

Cross' player decides they'd rather escape than go down fighting. As time **Rewinds**, we see Cross holstering their gun.

CROSS: "I look for another way out!"

HANDLER: "Take up the dice. Let's see if you can escape without alerting the Opposition."

HARM & INJURY

If an Agent agrees to the terms of a roll that necessitates Harm they write a brief description of their injury, debility, or impending demise in the appropriate field.

If they would take Harm in an occupied space advance it to the next tier.

Tier 1 Harm: Simple or mundane weapons wielded or operated by an enemy agent or cultist. A superficial wound inflicted by a supernatural creature. **Results in an Injury.**

Tier 2 Harm: The claws and fangs of a deep one. Firearms operated by the opposition. A beatdown by a mob of unarmed cultists. **Results in an Debility.**

Tier 3 Harm: High powered weaponry wielded by skilled opposition. A fall from a cliff-face. Supernatural forces for which there are no defense. The vacuum of space. **Results in a Mortal Wound.** Without immediate resuscitation, you will die.

Violence exacts a high price in the world of CDG and Agents with violent tendencies may find their time with The Conspiracy cut short.

STRESS & INSIGHT

DISORDERS

When an Agent's Stress score reaches 6 they gain a stress-related **Disorder** based on the experience that pushed them over the edge. Agents may accumulate three disorders in total before Burning out at which point they are forced to retire from their work with The Conspiracy.

Use contextual cues to identify a Disorder's trigger or coping mechanism in play. After choosing a Disorder, the Stress track is reset to 0.

When an Agent would be confronted with their Disorder in fiction they are encouraged to roleplay to their new motivation, perception, or trait. Agents struggling with a disorder may choose one of four reactions:

Fight the object of their horror or disgust.

Flee from their darkest fears or deepest insecurities.

Submit to the Disorder that consumes them.

Suppress their disorder by rolling a **DARK DIE**.

Disorders can be mitigated through the use of **At Home** activities. If an Agent would **Go To Therapy** to treat a Disorder, they cross it out. It returns in force the next time their Stress track is filled (in addition to the new Disorder).

BURNING OUT

Upon gaining a third disorder Agents suffer a **Burn Out**: they must choose one of the four reactions as a response to The Conspiracy itself. Will they Fight against their fellow agents or will they Submit completely to its control?

Regardless of their choice, the Agent leaves play.

EMBRACING THE HORROR

When an Agent's Insight score reaches 6 their mind is opened to The Mythos. This is their moment and all eyes will turn to them. As The Handler work with that Agent's player to make their exit from reality a spectacular one.

Afterwards that player may retire their Agent or they may continue play as a convert of The Mythos until the end of the current session.

[RECORDING BEGINS]

INTERVIEWER: CAN YOU REPEAT WHAT YOU TOLD ME BEFORE?
ABOUT YOUR FRIEND FROM S-SQUAD.

REDACTED: AGENT SOIREE. YEAH. WHAT ABOUT HIM?

INTERVIEWER: WELL YOU MENTIONED THAT HE HAD BEEN
BEHAVING ODDLY.

REDACTED: LOOK. WE ALL DEVELOP STRANGE HABITS AFTER A
WHILE. IT'S LIKE A COPING MECHANISM.

INTERVIEWER: WORKING FOR THE CONSPIRACY MUST BE A
DANGEROUS LINE OF WORK. WHY JOIN THEM?

REDACTED: BECAUSE NO ONE ELSE DESERVES TO SEE WHAT
WE'VE SEEN. WE'RE THE ONLY THING STANDING BETWEEN .

COMMON DISORDERS

Addiction: You participate in a self destructive habit or behavior in order to function. Identify your addiction.

Amnesia: You suffer selective loss of memory if your trigger comes into play. Identify a trigger.

Anxiety: A trigger leaves you unable to process information resulting in nervousness, avoidance, or panic. Identify a trigger.

Compulsion: You have a strong urge that is difficult to ignore. Identify your compulsion.

Depression: You are prone to bouts of depression that leave you despondent. How do you cope?

Dissociation: A trigger causes you to mentally tune out of or retreat from the present. Identify a trigger.

Insomnia: Rest is difficult for you. You may be haunted by terrible nightmares or prone to sleeping fits. How do you cope?

Obsession: You are preoccupied with a singular idea or concept that distracts you from your obligations and responsibilities. Identify your obsession.

Paranoia: You develop a deep and all-consuming suspicion related to a trigger. It may be based in some version of the truth but its symptoms are completely irrational. Identify a trigger.

A NOTE ON MENTAL ILLNESS

Disorders as portrayed here are not to be conflated with the very real phenomena of chronic mental illness. In the parlance of this game, Disorders are severe emotional reactions to stressful experiences and an unhealthy working environment. Given space, time, and therapy they may pass.

Those coping with real life chronic illnesses spend a lifetime learning to live with their unique issues. Despite being villainized in popular media, the mentally ill are no more likely to resort to violence or participate in criminal activity than you or I.

No mechanical consequences are necessary to simulate the conditions of chronic illness.

as the author of this game I'd also urge you to refrain from using words like "crazy" or "insane" when referring to the actions of Agents suffering from disorders or, frankly, in general. Real mental illness is often invisible. You never know who you might be hurting by using these words thoughtlessly.



AFTER THE OPERATION

ACTIVATING AT HOME SCENES

Exposure to The Mythos is an insidious thing. It's not unusual for Agents to suffer from painful memories of a mission gone wrong. Traumas suffered on the battlefield may seep into an Agent's place of employment, sabotage their relationships, or result in financial ruin.

To mitigate this, and to promote campaign play, Agents have access to At Home scenes: short vignettes that allow players to gird themselves against future horrors.

Agents may receive At Home Scenes in one of two ways.

Once, after a mission.

Anytime they would mark an Anchor.

Example:

Agent Everest has had a bad day. After a hard night's work fighting parasites from another time, she returns home to her studio apartment and engages in some self care.

Everest's player sets the scene and rolls a d6, reducing their agent's strain by the result, Everest spends the night watching serials, eating popcorn, and forgetting all about the horrible things she's had to do to protect the public.

AT HOME SCENES

Care for Someone: You take time to appreciate someone or something you love that anchors you firmly to the mundane. Un-mark an Anchor you've crossed out or craft a new one.

Engage in Self Care: You engage in stress relieving activity by spending time with an Anchor, retreating to the wilderness, or otherwise re-centering yourself. Roll a d6 and reduce your Stress by that amount.

Go to Therapy: You receive help in overcoming a Disorder. Temporarily cross it out. It won't affect you until you receive another Disorder or a harrowing event brings it to the surface. If you choose to tell the truth about the illegal or supernatural events you've witnessed The Handler may advance the Exposure track if it's in play. Is your trust in them misplaced?

Receive Treatment: You are treated at a hospital or some other place of healing. Reduce all Harm to zero. What do you tell the doctor? Agents activating this scene in the field will need to justify their sudden recovery.

Stay on the Case: You investigate some aspect of your operation in order to illuminate unanswered questions or pursue your own ends. Ask a question and take up dice appropriate to the situation.

CONTINUING THE GAME

Cthulhu Deep Green is not a game we play to win. Agents of The Conspiracy should strive to pursue their motivations, perform their duty, and do their damndest to survive, but as players we know that these small victories won't save the world or banish The Mythos to obscurity.

Every mission will test an Agent to their limits. Choosing to retire an Agent whose resources are tapped out makes mechanical sense, but it denies everyone else at the table an exciting exit or horrifying revelation.

When it would be interesting, revel in the drama of your Agent's pain, cry for the loss of their loved ones, and don't hesitate to engage in acts of self destruction if it might make for a more dramatic ending to their story.

CREATING A CAMPAIGN

While most operations work well as one-shot scenarios, Cthulhu Deep Green truly shines as a short 'season' of three to six sessions.

These stories needn't be direct continuations of one another. Instead consider the format of an episodic television show in which each story is largely disconnected from the last.

To tie things together, play up the mystery of The Organization, introduce ongoing issues At Home, and build upon each mission's successes and failures with news commentary or a pre-session recaps.

In a finale the table should attempt to wrap up the A-plot or bring back a familiar enemy for a much deserved reckoning. As the Handler, this is the time to throw your players a bone as The Conspiracy's dirty laundry is aired out to dry.

EXAMPLE PROFESSIONS

Agents come from a variety of backgrounds. Before choosing your Occupation, consider how your area of expertise might prove useful to The Conspiracy. If you're unsure of what to choose, consider an option from the list, below.

CIVILIAN PROFESSIONS:

Anthropologist, Archaeologist, Author, Blogger, Biologist, Criminal, Computer Scientist, Engineer, Firefighter, Hacker, Historian, Journalist, Lawyer, Mercenary, Physician, Physicist, Pilot, Professor, Police Officer, Private Investigator, Reporter, Tour Guide, Security Guard.

GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONS: Auditor, Clerk, Criminal Investigator, Director, Lawyer, Pilot, Intelligence, Hostage Rescue, Project Manager, Officer, Technologist, Scientist, Soldier, Special Operative.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES: CDC, CIA, DoD, DEA, EPA, FBI, USAF, Army, DOS, USMC, USN, USMS, SOCOM.

RECRUITING AGENTS

STEP BY STEP

Recruiting new Agents is easy:

1st: Choose a Name, Alias, and Occupation.

Your occupation should be general rather than specific; Likely a government agent or a military officer. Your Handler should provide guidance on what professions might be appropriate to the operation though they may work with what they can muster.

Your Name and Alias can be whatever you want. Feel free to detail your age, distinguishing characteristics, and pronouns.

2nd: Choose an Anchor.

An Anchor is something that ties you to reality. Most likely this will be a family member or a close relationship but a support group or an object representing an intimate memory might qualify, too. This is something your Agent cares deeply about so tie them down securely. Anchors may be marked to flashback and activate an At Home scene at any time.

3rd: Complete your sheet.

Draw an Insight and Stress track (0/6), and reserve a space to document any Harm or Disorders incurred in play.

N: Rachel Grier **ALIAS:** AGENT HALLOW
O: C.I.A. AGENT

INSIGHT: /6

STRESS: /6

Notes:

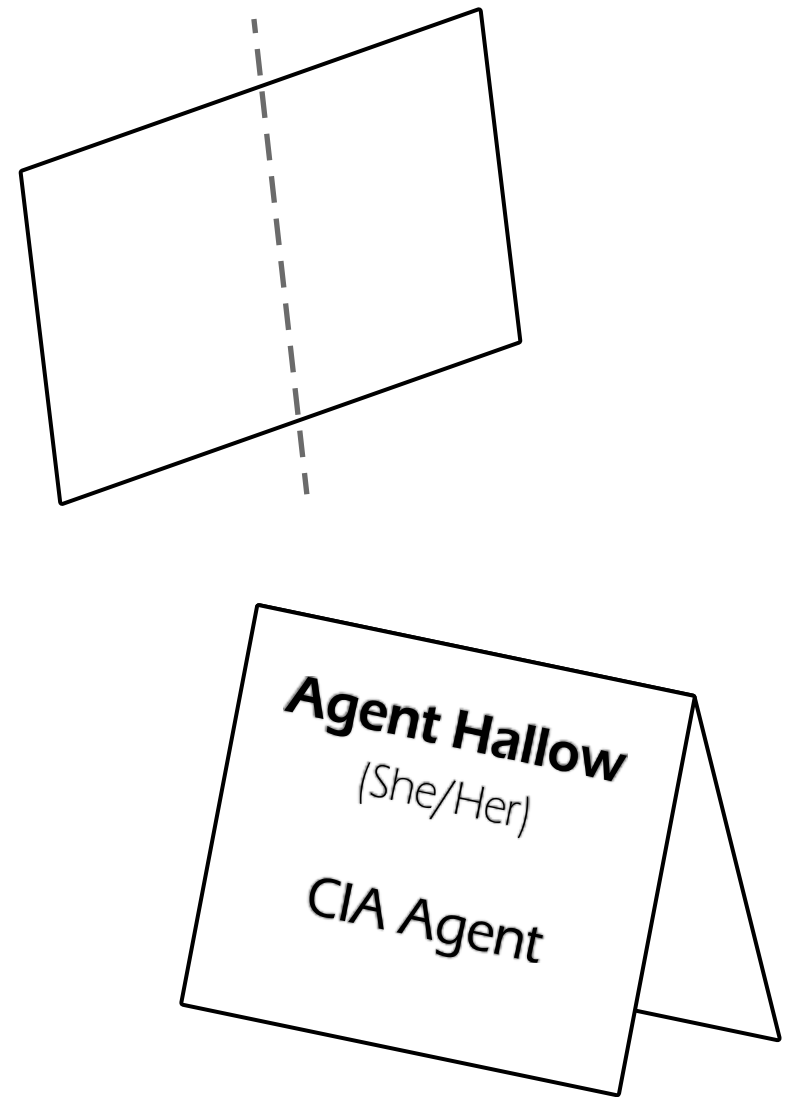
ANCHORS.	DISORDERS.	HARM.
1.	1.	3.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	1.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER SHEET

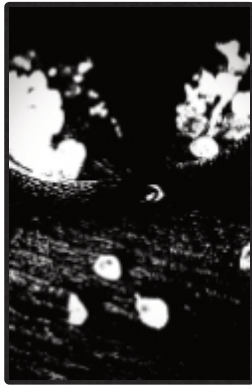
Everything you need to play this game can fit on a standard note card like this one. I also suggest using name tags or writing your character's Alias and pronouns on a second card folded in half, like a tent. This will be useful to other players when they refer to you in character.

STANDEES & NAMETAGS

Consider folding an index card in half to create a standee. This will help the other players to refer to you in-character. Also include your Agent's pronouns to avoid any confusion over your characters gender identity.



COMING SOON



Food of the Gods

Follow in the footsteps of agent Soiree, a missing operative hot on the heels of a cannibal chef in S-Cell's premier operation.



Revel in the Dark

Head to Australia on a dangerous cave diving expedition as a team of scientists runs headlong into the arms of an ancient evil.



The Linear Men

Take on the horrors that haunt a city as S-Cell falls deeper and deeper into the land of dreams. Can our agents follow the clues to their singular conclusion or will they be forever lost in nightmare?



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Justin (he/him) is a microscopist, writer, and tabletop game designer living in the Pacific Northwest.

To contact him for collaboration or to submit your photo for use in future operations, send an email to pageofmoths@gmail.com.

If you enjoy Cthulhu Deep Green, please leave a review of the game on my storefront. It means the world.

Be safe out there.

-JF