

Touched By Evil



a horror game
by
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Touched by Evil

a game of Dread and Horror

Ashcan v0.5

This version counts 22 pages in A4 format with no pictures but spacious (and hopefully clear) formatting. More info and games can be found @ unplayablegamesrpg.itch.io

This game owes many thanks to Graham Walmsley's essay [Stealing Cthulhu](#) and its companion game *Cthulhu Dark*, for they showed me a different path to madness.



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Basic Elements

This game is meant for **2-5** participants and will last approximately **2-3** sessions.

To play you need:

- one printout of the **Path** map
- one printout of the **Play Sheet**, but it's better if each Player had their own copy
- one printout of the **Station Cards** and of the **Neuroses** sheet
- a total of six six-sided **dice** (6d6) of which one, the *Menace* die, must be easily recognizable
- one small **token** to represent the *Touched One*
- some paper and pencils

In this game you and your friends play the role of characters in a very specific kind of horror story: normal and rational people, in a normal and rational world, that slowly starts to feel increasingly **wrong** and **unsafe** and **disturbing**, in a crescendo that will lead to a horrific epilogue. This kind of horror focuses less on gore and violence, and more on **unease** and **dread**.

Depending on your reactions to the game's inputs and twists you will experience a story reminiscent of some madness inducing **H. P. Lovecraft** novels, or rather akin to some psychedelic body-horror **Clive Barker** short stories. Either way, you play as the unfortunate protagonist of one such narrative.

Not everything will be nice and tidy by the end of the game. Questions might still linger unanswered, details might still feel odd and out of place, but overall your journey will be at an end, offering a degree of closure, in the vein of movies such as *The Shining*, *Jacob's Ladder*, *The Wicker Man*, *The Others*, and more.

For this journey into the dark the game makes use of a map (the **Path**) split into five sections (the **Chapters**) that each offer one or more thematic options (the **Stations**). After an initial setup the Players will take turns (called **Moments**) describing what happens to the characters in the fiction. What you can describe and how you can do it is where the rules come into effect.

Rule Zero

The fundamental mechanic in *Touched by Evil* is that anything you describe regarding the game fiction **must** be OK for all the Players involved. Things can be vague, unexplained and strange, or maybe they can touch on difficult and distressing subjects; either way they always have to **feel right** for everybody.

If even one person is not into it **you can't** describe the thing you wanted in the way you wanted; briefly pause the game and chat about it to find common ground and adjust your contribution so that everyone is happy.

Pro Tip: don't try to argue defending your description!

It's usually a waste of time and you risk appearing stubborn and bossy. Instead, accept that your description is not ok for someone and **ask them** what's wrong and how you can make it right. More often than not the big problem will reveal itself to be a minor detail you don't really care about, something that can be easily fixed.

Game SetUp

In *Touched by Evil* all Players collectively follow the events surrounding a **single protagonist** and their closest relationships. In game terms the protagonist is called *Touched One* while everyone else is just a secondary *Non-Touched* character.

The story begins **today** and **in this city**.

For increased clarity and accessibility during play, it could be a good idea to give a copy of the play sheet **to each Player**, helping everyone to keep an eye on the important elements of the story and to update them as the game progresses.

Alternative Settings

Playing **close to home** offers the most atmospheric and impactful option, but Players can also agree on a setting that is less emotionally unsafe by exploring different locations, epochs or even realities.

Chat together to find something that excites everyone:

- 1) pick a general **epoch** : modern day, victorian past, cyberpunk future, etc
- 2) pick a **general** location : Italy, outer space, the lands Beyond the Vale, etc
- 3) pick a more **specific** location : name a city, a spaceship, an island, etc

Discuss and drill down these ideas until everyone is satisfied, but don't dwell on the details just yet. You will have to do it, in the proper way, during the next steps of the SetUp.

The Touched One

Players now define who the *Touched One* is. This character needs to feel adequate and interesting for everyone, so don't hesitate to chat to circulate ideas, inspiration and help. Focus mainly on the following elements, then record them on the play sheet:

- You are the *Touched One*. You are a normal, common, ordinary person.
What is your **Name**?
- You occupy your life with a routine activity that shapes your days, be it study, work or some passion. We call this your **Profession**. What is it?
- Name **three people** to be your **Loved Ones**.
They are **alive**, not long lost memories.
They are currently **part of your life**, living in or near your city/location.
You **genuinely care** about them; each Player should offer, or agree about, one or two elements that exemplify why... an endearing personality trait, something you admire about them, a cherished memory you share with them. Something to make you, the Player of the *Touched One*, care a little bit about the *Loved Ones*.

The Catalyst Event

Take as much time as you need to properly complete this step of the SetUp!

Our protagonist has been recently “touched” by an event, a seemingly ordinary occurrence that will instead be the catalyst of the story. All Players should help describe what the catalyst is, keeping in mind the following elements:

- it is something **mundane**
maybe tragic, maybe unusual or unexpected, but definitely “normal”.
- it is something **distant**
whatever happened, it did not happen to you, nor were you a direct witness to it.
- it is something **new**
you learned about its existence only recently.
- it is something **nebulous**
you currently ignore all but the most basic details of how or why it happened.
- it is something that **calls for your action**
someone or something tied to the catalyst event *requests* some sort of action from you; during active play the *Touched One* might accept, refuse or even ignore this call... but the call has been made and we need to know what it is.
What is the *Touched One* supposed to do? And why?

The **less** information you establish now, the **better**. There are only a few details that are important right now, so focus on those and hold your horses about the rest.

“*Edward Straw has died*” is perfect.

“*Edward Straw has died in a car accident*” is already more than what’s needed, but is still ok.

“*Edward Straw has died in a car accident because...*” is too much, too specific, too clear.

“*An explosion on Deck-C*” is perfect.

“*An explosion on Deck-C killed someone who was not supposed to be there*” is too much.

Once you have this basic event, tie it to the *Touched One*. The best way to ensure that the catalyst is nebulous (and *mundane*, and *distant*, and *new*) is to focus on the *Touched One* and their situation **in relation to** the event, not about the event itself. Find some reasonable way in which the *Touched One* could learn about the event (a letter, a newspaper, a casual conversation at the bar, online browsing, etc).

The call to action could come at the same time the *Touched One* finds out about the catalyst event, or separately, later on. The important thing is that it is a **call**, an explicit **request**, someone has a **need** and they **ask** the *Touched One* to do something about it.

Curiosity and self motivation are **not** enough.

Maybe the insurance company wants you to sign some papers; maybe the miners appoint you as their spokesperson; maybe your parents ask you to help organize uncle Dave’s funeral; maybe an

anonymous letter intimates you to stay away from Laura; maybe the Police assigns you to the case.

You can flesh out “the call” to be the first **Moment** in your *Touched One*’s story, or you can just describe the elements required by the rules to define the **catalyst** and move on from there. Chat with the other Players and find the best solution for your group. Remember that it’s ok for the *Touched One* to **not want** to do what the call asks of them, and it is even ok if later they **will not** do it at all, and even if they will **actively try to get away** from it.

You don’t need to chase the Shadows, as eventually they will chase you. The aim here is to set things up so that they can project the **right kind** of shadows later in the game.

Last Tasks

Place the **Path** map at the center of the table, where everyone can see it.

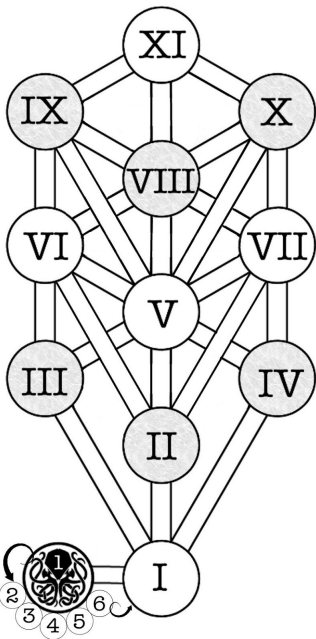
Place the token representing the *Touched One* on **Station 1** of the map.

Place the **Menace Die** on the special tentacular Station, with the upper face on 1.

Keep the **Station Cards** ready at hand.

All these elements will be explained in the following sections.

The Path



Once you start play the story unfolds following a **Path** over a map. This map counts **11 Stations**, each one a possible step of the *Touched One's* journey. Each is linked to a card of the same number, detailing the name of the station and a few details that will inform your play.

The Stations are arranged to form **5 Chapters** in total.

Chapter 1 : Illusion Station 1
Chapter 2 : Rumors Station 2, 3, 4
Chapter 3 : Descent Station 5, 6, 7
Chapter 4 : Horror Station 8, 9, 10
Chapter 5 : Epilogue Station 11

The game starts by revealing the **Station Card** named "*1 - Beginning*". Place it face up near the Path, where everyone can see it clearly.

Creeping Menace

The *Menace Die* starts on the Station that looks like a tentacular horror, top face set on "1".

At the **end** of **each Moment** you have to roll this die:

- if the roll is **equal to** or **less than** the current **Chapter**, set the Menace "1" and move it to the next Chapter
- otherwise rise its top face by one
- when the top face should go from "6" to "7", look at the roll you just made:
 - on an **even** number nothing happens
 - on an **odd** number set the Menace to "1" and move it to the next Chapter

When the Menace reaches the same **Chapter** as the *Touched One* it triggers a **Dark Moment** and the Menace die is **reset** to its initial tentacular Station with the top face on "1".

Dark Moments are explained in the **Moments** section.

Deeper and Deeper

There are two ways for the *Touched One* to make actual progress in the story advancing from one Chapter to the next:

- when the appropriate **key action** for the current Chapter is described **during** a Moment.
- when the **No Easy Way Out** mechanic is triggered (see the **Taking Action** section).

Either way, **immediately** roll a die to select a new Station from the **next** Chapter and move the *Touched One token* there. Reveal and place the appropriate Station card with the other active ones near the Path. You can now bring the current Moment to its natural end.

The correct timing is: Chapter advancement happens **during** a Moment, while the Menace roll happens at the **end** of a Moment.

The Chapter Keys

Every Chapter has a different **Key**.

Read the Keys in as much a literal or metaphorical way as you like. When the Players see the Key happen during someone's narration they should point it out. If everyone agrees that the current fiction matches the Key description, the Key has been "turned". If there is doubt about it, the Key has been "turned" all the same. Only if one or more Players feel **strongly** that no, the Key should not be turned here (pretty much invoking *Rule Zero*), does play continue in the current Chapter.

Chapter 1 Illusion	Ends when the Touched One believes that something weird is going on and acts on this belief.
Chapter 2 Rumors	Ends when the Touched One enters an underground place that might hold answers about what is going on.
Chapter 3 Descent	Ends when the Touched One believes there is one source (albeit unclear) behind recent weirdness and acts on this belief.
Chapter 4 Horror	Ends when the Touched One believes that all the recent weirdness were just shadows cast by a yet unseen Evil and acts on this belief.
Chapter 5 Epilogue	The Touched One flees, attacks or learns about the Evil. See the Epilogue section of this rulebook.

Remember that taking action could also mean fleeing, going away, taking on some work or activity to better ignore unpleasant things, etc. This is **not** an investigative **nor** an action game. If the *Touched One* goes in such a direction it is ok, but not needed.

Moments

The story begins by choosing a Player to be “active” and play the *Touched One* for the current Moment. All subsequent Moments will proceed in **clockwise** order around the table, with new Players becoming active one at a time. When your Moment comes, **frame** it and then **play** it as explained in the [Playing a Moment](#) section.

A Moment **begins** right after its framing and **ends** when either the **location**, **time** or character **spotlight** change considerably, or whenever Players agree that it should end.

If in doubt, just ask plainly “*Should we end this Moment now?*”

Framing a Moment

To frame a Moment the active Player must answer these questions:

- **Where** is the *Touched One* right now?
- What **time** of the day is it?
- Are **other characters** present, and what are they generally doing?

The active Player now focuses on the **location** to describe one or more of the following details:

- name one **smell** in this place that you notice
- name one **color** in this place that stands out
- name one **sound** you hear in the background
- name the **feeling on your skin** that started when you set foot in this place

The framing is done.

The active Player is now the *Touched One* and can **only** describe what they say, do, think and feel. **No one else** can do this. How to play is explained in the [Playing a Moment](#) section.

Before the Moment can end someone has to touch on a **Shadow**...

The Touch of Shadows

Shadows are fictional elements revealing the presence and influence of the Evil upon the world. Initially vague and disconnected, as the story unfolds they will solidify and become more coherent and meaningful. Don't worry too much about everything making perfect sense... **because it won't**.

On the one hand the game mechanics will make most elements of the story fall into the right place, shaping a cohesive and engaging story. But on the other hand this is not a nice and tidy kind of story: its disturbing and disquieting nature will leave unanswered questions and loose ends by design.

A Shadow is something **specific** that the *Touched One* experiences during a Moment. How this happens might vary: it could **be present** there and then, or a character might **talk** about it or the *Touched One* might be described as **thinking** about it. Shadows can be introduced right from the **start** of a Moment or at any other point before its **end**. The sooner you let the Shadows touch a Moment, the more they will influence it. A Moment **can not end** until at least one Shadow has been touched on.

Whatever the case, a Shadow has to be something from the following list:

1. a perception
2. an item
3. a place
4. a person
5. an information
6. an action or event

Only **one new** Shadow is allowed in each Moment.

The **first** Moment of a **new Chapter** must introduce a **new** Shadow using the new Station Card.

A Moment **can not end** without a Shadow touching it.

When a new Shadow is described **all** Players **must** note it down on their play sheet.

In the upcoming *Playing a Moment* section there are rules about what Players are allowed to describe during a Moment. Shadows **are** subject to these limits.

A Shadow by any other name...

Understanding what a Shadow is and how to create a good one is central to the success of the game. Shadows should always be “**things**” in the fiction: be they items or people or something else entirely they should be clear enough to be seen as **discrete elements** that could be later added in **any** Moment of play.

A **perception** should always be a **physical sensation**: the feeling of something oily on your skin, of a peculiar smell, of a lingering aftertaste, of nausea at the pit of your stomach, of vertigo, etc. This kind of Shadow is very good because it is very concrete yet subtle in its effect on the story and mood:

- *a tingling sensation at the back of your skull*
- *a low buzzing noise in your ear*
- *small and piglike eyes*
- etc

Mental feelings (*you feel watched*) might seem evocative, but in the long run don't work too well and might end up dictating the thoughts and emotions of the *Touched One*, which **no one is allowed** to do except for the Player currently playing as them.

Items, places and **people** are very effective Shadows. Holes in the ground, purple vines creeping on a surface, red shoes... The house at the end of the street, the parking lot, a patch of old and spoiled trees... A guy with mirror shades, an old granny, a blond child...

The trick here is that while the specific element might be perfectly normal, it is injected in the story with a charged intent. And by reincorporating it again and again it will acquire a **haunting** quality. It was just a random detail, but now the *Touched One* keeps bumping into it: Was it always there? Is it the very same or just something similar? Can this be a coincidence?

Information is meant as a special kind of “item” such as *an old tale* or *a piece of gossip* or *a newspaper article*. These things will tend to grow and change over time, revealing new details with

every retelling. Their nature will often take on a paranoid and conspiratorial vibe as the information will appear again and again, either physically or as the subject of conversations or even dreams.

Actions and **events** can be a bit tricky.

Actions offer better results when they are something very **small** and/or very **mundane**. A *behavioural tik* or a particular *mannerism* are perfect actions, just like an *odd but simple gesture*. It can also be a recognisable behaviour like “*the natives are nervous about digging holes in the ground*”.

Events work better as either **natural occurrences**, such as *rain* or *fog* or *wind* or even a *slight tremor*, or otherwise as references to past/historical/future events, the kind of event that is referred to with a proper name such as *The 1964 Fire* or *The Blue Harvest*.

Random accidents, even small ones, are instead poor shadows as they can inadvertently bypass the *Degrees of Separation*. Things like *a hanging picture falling down* or *a statuette being in the wrong place* are much better expressed as simple **items** (a hanging picture, a statuette) rather than a recurring accidents.

In general there is no need to clearly tag every Shadow as an “item” rather than an “action” or a “place”. The distinction serves only as a way to help Players formulate Shadows in a clearer and more functional way.

Stations & Shadows

When the **token** representing the *Touched One* is placed on a Station, a Player adds the corresponding card beside the Path. These cards offer specific inspiration for creating new Shadows. **All Shadows must** adhere to at least one of the revealed Station Cards.

All Shadows are signs and manifestations of **the same Evil**. At the beginning they will look unrelated, but in time they will (mostly) fit together and point to **a single root**. Try to **avoid** complicated explanations concerning multiple forces in play, as eventually they will all turn out to be false except for one. Many Shadows, one Evil.

In the *Illusion* chapter there is always a single Station, the initial starting point.

In the *Rumors*, *Descent* and *Horror* chapters the Path is manyfold but the *Touched One* will still only play a single Station, determined by a die roll.

The *Epilogue* is again represented by a single Station, the end of the story.

Chapter		Station	Allowed Shadows
Illusion	//	Malkuth	something is off , out of place or wrong in an undefinable way
Rumors	1-2	Hod	art, science, human craft
	3-4	Yesod	abuse, brutality, the use of force
	5-6	Netzah	organized action, social gatherings, the drive of ambition
Descent	1-2	Tiphereth	spirituality, religion , faith
	3-4	Geburah	harsh judgment , limitation or confinement, punishment
	5-6	Chesed	morbid affection , misplaced kindness, unhealthy healing
Horror	1-2	Binah	cold heart, ancient matter, mechanical
	3-4	Daat	being lost
	5-6	Chochmah	great distance, alien energy, shapeless
Epilogue	//	Kether	the primal Evil casting all the Shadows

Malkuth : The Foundation

The elements offered by each Station are there to inspire you, use them however feels best. Except for **Malkuth**, as it will make or break the overall mood of the story. Give thought and attention to these Shadows!

The easy way to produce perfect Malkuth shadows is to stick to the most **simple** and **mundane** shadows you can imagine. Be purposefully **banal** and **unimaginative**. The magic trick here is that the game already frames these utterly “normal” things as being “**slightly off**” ... and the fact that you as Players can’t exactly explain how or why that is, is a perfect mirror of what the *Touched One* is supposed to feel.

Long story short, don’t stress over having the perfect idea. Don’t push hard to instantly deliver disquieting material. Because you will fail. Just relax and slap the “shadow” label on mundane things that naturally occur in the narration of your Moment. The game mechanics will take care of turning them into sinister and ominous details.

Playing a Moment

After a Moment has been framed Players describe what happens, what the various characters say and do, which events and consequences take place. There are rules for this.

- The active Player can **only** describe what the *Touched One* says and does, and what they think and feel. Nothing else.
- All other Players can describe **the scenery**, the smells and sounds and events happening **around** the *Touched One*.
- They can also say what any **Non-Touched Character** (NTC) present in the Moment says and does, how they look and behave, how they exit the scene, how new ones arrive.
- **No one** can describe things outside of the **immediate perception** of the *Touched One*.
Not the thoughts and feelings of NTCs.
Not what lies behind a door nobody has yet opened.
Not what is really happening “*behind the scenes*”.
The Touched One is the **anchor** for all the game fiction, for all Players at the table.

In addition to these fundamental rules, what Players describe during a Moment must always be **mundane**, maybe **ordinary**, and in general adhere to the rules of rational common sense.

No unnatural phenomena or weird-crazy things are allowed to happen.

No disturbing or over the top elements can be described.

No **gore**, no **violence**, no **horror**.

Even **Shadows** have to follow this rule. Unless...

Degrees of Separation

...unless you put enough **narrative distance** between the *Touched One* and anything that can be seen as:

- **shock** material, gore, graphic violence, blatant insanity.
- whatever is obviously **weird**, exotic, extraneous/alien or offly rare.

There are four ways to create separation. Pick one or more and mix them up until the element you want to describe feels distant enough. How much distance you need depends on the current Chapter of the story. Chapter One (*Illusion*) requires a minimum of **two** degrees of separation. Chapter Two (*Rumors*) just **one**; finally from Chapter Three (*Descent*) no separation is required, but may still be appropriate.

- **Indirect Experience**

The element is experienced *second hand*, maybe through other people's reports, or through documents, or being just hinted at by traces, signs and clues.

- **Uncertain Experience**

The element is experienced through an *untrustworthy source*, maybe from folk tales rather than official history, from gossip instead of documents, or from unreliable witnesses (old, crazy, ignorant, drunk), or through confusing circumstances (darkness, heavy rain, hallucinations).

- **Physical Distance**

The element is not located nearby the *Touched One*, but at a (relatively) substantial travel distance.

- **Temporal Distance**

The element is not recent, but has happened in the (relatively) distant past.

The actions of a *Touched One* and their direct consequences **can't be filtered**.

A *Touched One* is free to use violence, say incoherent words, perform disturbing acts, etc. The degrees of separation are meant to **put distance** between the *Touched One* and **the world**, what they find in it, what the world presents to them; not to limit the *Touched One*'s freedom of action.

Example... during Chapter One a *Touched One* can't just happen to **find** a corpse. Maybe *someone tells them that according to confidential sources* there is a horribly mutilated corpse in the local morgue. If later the *Touched One* manages to get in the morgue and look at the corpse, the horrible spectacle **can** be described, even in Chapter One.

Answering Questions

Touched by Evil is a game about horror, **not** about solving mysteries. For this reason there are no mechanics to generate random answers. Whenever an answer is not obvious, the Players have to come up with the missing information. Be **obvious**. Be **simple**. Say the **first thing** that comes to your mind. Just remember to **always** follow the rules on how to *Play a Moment* and the *Degrees of Separation*. The best thing you can do is to **be the voice of reason**, describe the normal stuff, say

what makes sense. Most of the time all will go smoothly at the table. Otherwise, **Rule Zero** will help you find common ground.

Dealing with the Shadows

During the course of the game the fictional elements introduced as Shadows will cross the path of the *Touched One*. Whatever the *Touched One* does, they are bound by a few rules that are **universally true**. Even dice rolls (explained in the **Taking Action** segment) can't circumvent these rules.

No one believes you

- It doesn't matter who you talk to, how convincing you are, or what kind of proof you offer. If you talk to someone **about the Evil** or **about your worries** regarding the Shadows and their influence, **no one will believe you**.
- You can **ask and receive info** about the items, places, people and other things that are listed as Shadows as long as you make no mention of any weird, worrisome, strange, odd, unusual detail about them. NPCs will just not see your point. To them all is fine, or explainable.
- If you force or trick someone into facing "your truth" in a way that is impossible to deny or dismiss, their mind will **break** and they'll become useless or dangerous.

Violence is never a solution

- Whatever form the Evil and its Shadows may take, the use of **physical violence** against them is never a **permanent** solution, if not completely ineffective to begin with. It might buy you a small amount of time, or open up a tight opportunity for other actions, but **it never actually solves the problem**, it never truly stops the Evil.

Magic does not work

- This is the **real** world. There is no such thing as magic, no supernatural, no gods, no monsters, no heroes, no powers, no weird fringe science, no forgotten rituals. People might believe in those things, but it is all innuendo and folklore, **it just does not work**.
- Except, the Evil and its Shadows **do exist** and they don't care about the laws of reality. And what works for them, does not work for you, try as you may.
- **Even if** magic did exist because the game is set in a fantastic world, the Shadows will still ignore its laws and boundaries. Like violence, magic/science/powers **do not work** on the Evil.

The Shadows are alien

- You can't **understand** the Evil. Whatever it is, it is not people, not human, not rational in a way that can make sense to you. You can't **reason** with it, you can't **persuade** it, you can't **haggle** with it, you can't anticipate or second guess it. Nor its Shadows.
- Whatever you do, you can **never be sure** if your actions will sort the desired effect or prompt something completely different, unexpected and horrible.

Dark Moments

A *Dark Moment* happens when the **Menace** die reaches the *Touched One's* token on the Path.

A *Dark Moment* happens **in addition** to the normal round of Moments, **between** the one that just ended and the one that has to be framed next. It follows the normal rules governing any other Moment, with the following differences:

- **Recap**

Now that you played for a little bit, take a moment to review the Shadows created so far. If some feel superfluous and uninspiring, delete them. If some feel unwieldy and poorly worded, rephrase them.

- **Victim**

Randomly select an **unbroken** *Loved One*. Then randomly select a Player. The chosen Player will normally frame and play this Dark Moment in the role of the *Loved One* **instead** of playing as the *Touched One*.

- **Breaking Rules**

The Victim never rolls dice; they always succeed **unless** the Shadows are somehow involved, in which case they always fail.

The Dark Moment ends, probably on a cliffhanger, **right after** the Victim fails or the Shadows somehow **interact** with them. **You don't need** to show how the Shadows hurt the Victim. **You don't need** to justify how or why the Victim suffers from their contact with the Shadows. Just leave it blank, cut the Dark Moment **short**.

- **Aftermath**

Loved Ones **never die** during a Dark Moment, but are **always scarred** by such a brush with the Evil and its Shadows; mark it down appropriately on the Touched One sheet:

- Chapter 1 and 2 = they are **despondent**, in low spirits from loss of hope or courage
- Chapter 3 and 4 = they are **frantic**, upset by fear and anxiety
- Chapter 5 = they are **broken**, crippled in mind and/or in body but still not dead

If a *Loved One* should suffer a scar they already have, mark the next one instead. Thus, a **despondent** Victim that endures a second Dark Moment in Chapter 1 or 2 would become **frantic**.

- **Glimpses of Evil**

A **broken** *Loved One* can't be a Victim anymore. If no viable Victims are left, just have the chosen Player describe **one detail** of the Evil. Follow the procedures in the *Epilogue* section, then add the described detail to the current list of Shadows.

Taking Action

When the *Touched One* performs an **action** they **always succeed** except in two cases:

- another character opposes them in any way (not cooperating, bargaining, competing, etc)
- their actions look very difficult **and** failure would have important or interesting consequences

If there are doubts about whether to roll or not, **always roll**.

Consequences

First, the other Players clarify what will happen **if you fail** the roll.

“*Nothing happens*” is **never** a valid option, as failure must always carry some meaningful negative consequence, which might include **death**, or **imprisonment** or any sort of problem that makes sense in the specific situation.

Don't waste time to clarify or negotiate what happens “*if you win*” as it is of minor importance. Just stick to what makes sense as a direct result of your *Touched One*'s action, adhere to the rules about what can be described, and everything should be fine.

No Easy Way Out

If the circumstances would see the *Touched One* defeated in a permanent or long term way (death, imprisonment, madness) then the Moment **ends abruptly**, fading to black in a sudden cliffhanger. The ominous fate will somehow be averted. How it happens is not important and might not be ever portrayed or explained clearly; instead what's important is:

- you are forced into the **next Chapter** on the Path
- a **Dark Moment** is triggered

Dice Pool

The active Player rolls a pool of dice depending on the description of how the *Touched One* acts:

- if the attempted action is within **human** capabilities, add one die
- if the attempted action involves your **professional** expertise, add one die
- if the attempted action involves in any way your **Loved Ones**, add one die
- if the failure would trigger the **No Easy Way Out** condition, add one die
- if none apply, then you simply **fail**

Rolling Dice

The active Player rolls their pool, looking for the **highest** score.

One of the other Players will roll a number of dice equal to the Chapter number so from 1 to 5, looking for the highest score.

If the active Player's roll is **higher than** the Chapter roll, they **win**. Otherwise, they **fail**.

The active Player score can also inform the **quality** of the *Touched One*'s action, where a 1 is a worse result than a 6. Anyone can describe what this actually means in the fiction, but the active Player has precedence when it comes to the actions of the *Touched One*.

Unease

When you **fail** you can elect to instead **win** by increasing your **Unease** rating by one point. When your Unease rating rises to **three** points, its value resets to **zero** and a **Neurosis** is activated, as explained in the next section.

True Unease

The *Unease* rating will also increase by one when:

- the *Touched One* is described as **doubting their own sanity**
- the *Touched One* is described as **feeling overwhelmed** by some negative emotion

Maybe they actually say “*I must be going crazy*” or something else along those lines. Maybe they just think it (and you describe it). Either way, if they truly feel that way, her Unease rises by one.

Just like with the turning of a Chapter’s Key this is **not** a *gotcha!* kind of thing.

When someone sees the *Touched One* express such a feeling they should have everyone **take notice** of it and **ask the** active Player if the *Touched One* really feels that way, or if it was just a figure of speech, or an exaggeration.

Unease is not a punishment: its effects are **dramatic**, but in no way limiting. Calling out Unease is a way to represent mechanically what is obviously already happening in the fiction, and in turn it feeds the sense of tension and stress experienced by the *Touched One* in the story.

Neurosis

When the Unease rating reaches **three** points, it resets to **zero** and:

- **The first time** this happens, a Player will draw/roll a random *Neurosis* and **keep it**. This will be the active *Neurosis* for the rest of the game.
- Someone has to read aloud the **first** line and work with the other Players to answer any questions that it might pose.
- Every subsequent time that *Unease* reaches 3 and resets, read the **next line** from the active *Neurosis*.
- If there are no further lines to read, trigger the ***No Easy Way Out*** condition instead.

Players should keep playing the *Touched One* however they like. The *Neurosis* card doesn't define who the *Touched One* is or how they should behave. Instead, **once** per Moment **any one** Player can **force** the *Touched One* into performing the action described in the currently active line of their *Neurosis*. **They can't resist**, but the active Player can negotiate the specific way in which such an effect is described.

When picking details for your *Neurosis* don't be too specific. Something like "*counting steps*" is ok, while "*counting steps when I cross a threshold*" might be too narrow.

Obsession

- 1 : At times you think of only one thing, it fills your mind, you can't ignore it. What is it?
 - 2 : Briefly but completely space out, thinking about the thing.
 - 3 : Act out your thoughts of the thing, talk about them, do something related to them.
- Es... feet, gender, cleanliness, order, perfection, justice, comic books, food.*

Compulsion

- 1 : You have to perform some kind of specific "ritual" action. What is it?
 - 2 : You have to perform the ritual, maybe multiple times, NOW!
 - 3 : You have to perform the ritual, again and again and again, until it hurts you.
- Es... washing hands, walkin in a pattern, jerking your neck, biting your nails.*

Addiction

- 1 : You crave something; have it NOW or look stressed and nervous. What do you crave?
 - 2 : Have it NOW or look ill and anxious.
 - 3 : Have it NOW or be unable to do anything but suffer for its absence.
- Es... jerk off, theft, burn stuff, use violence (physical or otherwise), a drug.*

Anxiety

- 1 : Something horrible is about to happen, you KNOW it! You look nervous.
- 2 : It is also hard to breath and to keep your focus.
- 3 : You also cry, scream and either collapse in despair or run in a panic or react violently.

Phobia

1 : You look worried because of something, **even if it is not present**. What is it?

2 : Your fear obviously interferes with whatever you are doing.

3 : Your fear is here, you must act! Smash it, run away, scream for help, curl up in a ball.

Es... insects, being alone, fur, germs, darkness, enclosed spaces, magnetic fields.

Disorientation

1 : Small things slip your mind: track of time, your train of thought, details; you might zone out briefly.

2 : You can't remember what it is that you are forgetting unless you try really hard.

3 : When alone you black out and... where are you? Doing what? Why?

When in the company of others you look dazed and confused and try to wander off.

[Note: no one can have the *Touched One* just "wake up" doing something you don't agree with]

Epilogue

During this Chapter the Shadows finally allow a glimpse of, or maybe a confrontation with, the **Evil** at the root of the whole story.

Unspeakable Evil

When you describe it you are allowed to do it strictly in these way:

- you can say how it **smells, moves, sounds** or **feels** like (*it moves like a serpent*)
- you can describe a specific detail that **looks human** (*it has eyes like a child*)
- you can mention a specific detail that **defies description** (*its mouth was wrong*)

Be sure to make a note of each detail a Player describes about the Evil.

The Final Keys

Players can end the Epilogue by turning any one of **three** possible Keys:

- when in the presence of Evil the *Touched One* successfully **flees** away
- when in the presence of Evil the *Touched One* attempts a **direct action** against it
- when the *Touched One*'s efforts reveal some **important info** about the Evil

- when, as usual, the **No Easy Way Out** rule gets activated

Once the Epilogue ends a Player will roll a die on the **End of all Evil** table. Have everyone chat briefly about how the result fits within your story, then move on.

Have each Player roll or choose from the **End of all Innocence** table. You can all agree on the best ending for your common *Touched One*, or you can each have your own favourite story finale.

<i>End of all Evil</i> Roll just one die, adding +1 if the <i>Touched One</i> turned the Key of direct action .	
1-5	The Grim Ending All your effort and suffering were for nothing, the Evil got what it wanted and is now satisfied. Maybe it stays , ready to cast longer and darker shadows. Maybe it goes away , for its own mysterious reasons. What makes you realize that your struggle was irrelevant to the Evil's actions?
6+	The Empty Victory All your effort and suffering were for nothing, the Evil has been thwarted today, but it is still here, and it will return. All you achieved was to delay it for one more cycle: a year? a decade? a generation? How do you prevail? What makes you realize that in truth the Evil is not vanquished?

End of all Innocence

Choose freely which fate best suits your Touched One's final moments in the story.

1-2	The Easy Way Out Your life has come to an end. Maybe you actually died facing the Evil and its Shadows. Maybe you killed yourself to stop the fear and the grief. No more horror for you, only silence.
3	Fates Worse than Death You are not yourself anymore. Maybe your mind broke , fleeing reality, gone and never returning. Maybe you became a puppet or slave to the Evil, unable to rebel, trapped, doomed.
4	The Lure of Darkness You turned. Maybe you embraced the Evil and are now a willing follower, part of its Shadows. Maybe you discovered that it was part of you all along and surrendered to the undeniable state of things. Maybe you got infected , and are turning into something else, not you anymore.
5	A Tortured Life You saved your life and kept your sanity, but the things you saw are now with you forever. Maybe you live in fear of being found by the Evil and its Shadows. Maybe you turned into a street wako trying to warn people of something not even you fully believe. Maybe you just gave up on life, wasting yourself until the Shadows or the substance abuse come to claim you.
6	Deep Scars Alive and sane, you kept it together. Maybe you (try to) go on with your life. Maybe you prepare for the "next time", looking for clues, contacting others, trying not to end up in an asylum. But you carry deep scars that set you apart from normal, happy, oblivious people. You know better.