



# OUR TERRIBLE FATE

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

This is a draft version of a single chapter of a work-in-progress tabletop game, currently known as Our Terrible Fate.

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### Fate

While not finalized, some aspects of this system may incorporate rules from Fate.

Licensing information for Fate is as follows:

This work is based on Fate Core System and Fate Accelerated Edition (found at <http://www.faterpg.com/>), products of Evil Hat Productions, LLC, developed, authored, and edited by Leonard Balsera, Brian Engard, Jeremy Keller, Ryan Macklin, Mike Olson, Clark Valentine, Amanda Valentine, Fred Hicks, and Rob Donoghue, and licensed for our use under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).

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The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.

H.P. Lovecraft  
"The Call of Cthulhu"

CHAPTER

1

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



# WELCOME TO THE MYTHOS

Our Terrible Fate is a roleplaying game set in a reality that appears very similar to our own, but which is in fact very different (we hope). The setting incorporates the Cthulhu Mythos, based on the fiction of Howard Phillips Lovecraft and other authors, into our world.

This is a game of secrets, mysteries, and horrors too terrible to contemplate. Playing the role of characters investigating strange and unusual events, you will explore the dark places and ancient stories that exist all around us and confront truths that can only lead to madness.

At times, the game can appear to be about stopping a group of cultists, tracking down a killer, or even preventing an impending disaster. But that's only the short term. Actually, the game is about how humanity will end, if you can delay that end long enough for those you love to live out their lives, and if you can maintain enough semblance of sanity to live out your life alongside them.

## THEMES AND INFLUENCES

Our Terrible Fate is an investigative game of cosmic horror, based on the Mythos created by H.P. Lovecraft. Cosmic horror is about investigating mysteries only to slowly realize that humanity's perception of the universe is woefully inaccurate. Not only do we understand very little about our truly insignificant place in the cosmos, but even a glimpse of the truth is likely to lead to madness or death... or both. There are a number of tabletop roleplaying games that incorporate the Lovecraft Mythos into their settings - the most well-known of which is likely Call of Cthulhu - and these settings occur in a variety of time periods. Our Terrible Fate is designed to allow players to incorporate resources and scenarios from other Mythos games, so it can be used to play in any time period. However, a great many amazing stories in this genre are set in the 1920s, so Our Terrible Fate is set in that period by default.

Our Terrible Fate was designed so that it could be enjoyed by experienced gamers as well as those new to the idea of roleplaying games, but it is best learned from other players. One of the best approaches to learning the game is to read the first couple chapters of this book, and then try it out with your friends. Don't try to learn everything all at once, take it a little bit at a time. New player should understand that while the back story of an investigation is usually determined prior to the start of play, players in Our Terrible Fate have a great deal of freedom, and the plot can shift and change in dramatic or unexpected ways at a moment's notice. Experienced tabletop gamers should be aware that some elements of Our Terrible Fate are different from many traditional games, so if you find something confusing or odd, be sure that you're not making a lot of assumptions based on other games you have played.

The creation of Our Terrible Fate has benefitted from the many Lovecraftian settings and games that have existed over the years. Building on the framework of the Fate Core system, Our Terrible Fate also draws ideas and inspiration from Call of Cthulhu, Trail of Cthulhu, Delta Green, and Acthung! Cthulhu. Some concepts were also adapted from the Burning Wheel, created by Luke Crane. Anyone that enjoys roleplaying games would benefit from giving Luke's games a look.

There are numerous authors that have contributed what has become known as the Cthulhu Mythos over the years. H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, and August Derleth among the most prominent. A quick search online will reveal dozens of writers and hundreds of stories you can turn to for inspiration in running your game.



## ROLEPLAYING GAME...

At its core, *Our Terrible Fate* is a roleplaying game. A roleplaying game is a kind of interactive story – part theater, part storytelling, and part game. Players create fictional characters using the rules in this book, and then guide those characters through a variety of stories and adventures. In a roleplaying game each player controls their character's every action and reaction as they make their way through the game world. If a player wants his character to run down the stairs instead of up, that is what the character does. If a player wants his character to try and convince the local law enforcement officer that there is a perfectly good explanation for the dynamite in his possession, he can start some fast talking.

*Our Terrible Fate* also includes gameplay elements borrowed from board and card games. Keeping track of information is important – particularly so in investigative games – and as more locations, characters, and clues are introduced during the game, cards are put into play to represent them. Some situations can also benefit from a clear picture of where the characters are within a given location. Players can use miniatures or paper standees to represent characters and modular maps to show their position – this can also be used to build suspense as new areas of a location are gradually revealed as the characters explore their surroundings.

## PLAYER ROLES

A game of *Our Terrible Fate* requires at least two people to play. One of them assumes the role of the **Keeper of Our Fate**. Everyone else assumes the role of the **players**.

### PLAYERS

Each player assumes control of an **investigator**, a fictional character that exists within the game world, sometimes referred to as a player character. The Investigators are the protagonists of the game; they

investigate the strange and unexplained, solve mysteries, and often end up try to shield the world from threats to terrible to contemplate – even if it means sacrificing themselves in the process. As a player, you guide your Investigator through the game world, deciding where they go, what they say, and what they do when they get there.

### KEEPER OF OUR FATE

The Keeper of Our Fate, more commonly referred to as the **Keeper** for short, acts as guide, host, referee, and narrator. The Keeper is tasked with controlling the actions of other personalities in the game, presenting the environment and setting, and helping to determine the outcomes of the player investigators' actions. The Keeper portrays the game world and acts as the eyes and ears of the characters, describing the locations the investigators visit and the characters they encounter there, arbitrating the rules, and detailing the clues the investigators uncover throughout the game. In addition, he or she uses the rules of the game to determine the success or failure of the characters' actions, as well as the consequences of those actions. All in all, as Keeper, you use the rules and guidance in this book and the scenario to keep the game running smoothly and amke sure everyone has a good time playing.

### STRUCTURE OF THE GAME

Roleplaying games are somewhat unusual in that there are no winners or losers; the players and the Keeper are actually working together to craft an interesting and memorable story. The players' and Keeper's actions may typically compete against or oppose one another, but it is this conflict that creates an entertaining and memorable adventure and makes the game worth playing. The plot of a roleplaying game is very flexible and changes depending on the actions of the characters. However, there are some basic elements that help provide structure and keep play moving.

As an investigation-themed game, the characters in *Our Terrible Fate* often find themselves reacting to events around them, but they still possess a great deal of freedom in how they choose to act in response to those events.

The title of Keeper originates from the *Call of Cthulu* roleplaying game, where it is known as Keeper of Secrets. The person running a roleplaying game is also commonly known as the gamemaster, or GM, in many other games.

## GETTING STARTED

There's no need to choose a short scenario just because you're limited on time. The Keeper has a variety of tools available to help speed up (or slow down) the game. You can also play longer scenarios over multiple **sessions** by pausing partway through and then resuming play another day.

The game begins with the players and Keeper choosing a scenario to play. Some scenarios are fairly short and can be played in an hour or two, while others are much longer. Each scenario includes a **hook**, a brief description that gives players an idea of what the scenario is about. The Keeper presents the hooks for available the scenarios and, together with the players, decides which scenario to play next. New hooks are often revealed during play, unlocking new scenarios for future games. Epic stories consisting of multiple interlinked scenarios can also be played and are referred to as a campaign.

Once a scenario is chosen, players will choose or create their investigators. Using information contained in the scenario, the Keeper helps players ensure their investigators fit in the story. Players may choose from among a variety of pre-generated investigators (which they may then customize), use an existing investigator from previous play, or create a new investigator from scratch. The options for investigators begin with a small number of archetypes common in Lovecraftian fiction, but additional options are unlocked during the course of the game, making new kinds of investigators available to the players.

Early in every scenario, the players are presented with an **issue** that describes what they are investigating. This could be an unexplained disappearance, a letter from a friend asking for help, a newspaper headline concerning an expedition in foreign lands, or a chance encounter with a mysterious stranger. Gameplay revolves around

investigators uncovering **clues** to reveal more about the underlying mystery, eventually pointing towards a means to resolve the issues of the scenario. As the player begin to piece together the truth, issues may change, and new issues may emerge. What begins as a simple favor for an old friend may turn into a desperate attempt to thwart a potentially world-ending conspiracy while evading crazed cultists and whispers of ancient gods. Once the investigators have satisfactorily resolved all outstanding issues, the scenario concludes. Any investigators which survive – and are still sane at the end of the scenario – may be used by players in later games.

## SCENES & MONTAGES

Once the game gets started, play is roughly organized into **scenes** – not unlike a television show or movie. Typically, a scene begins with the Keeper describing where it takes place and what is going on; then the players describe what the investigators do. The Keeper then details the actions of non-player characters, which often leads to more actions by the investigators, and so on. Once the action of the scene is resolved, the players usually decide where the investigators head to next, and the process starts all over again. Events and actions can also be played through in different ways, including a montage-like series of related events or a brief side scene. A key responsibility of the Keeper is deciding how to play out each of these scenes in order to keep the game flowing smoothly and ensure a fun, engaging, and interesting game for everyone.

# FIRST AND FOREMOST

Two basic rules lie at the heart of Our Terrible Fate, and it is important to keep them in mind moving forward. They are simple in concept but carry a lot of implications, and they are discussed in greater detail later in this book

## THE GOLDEN RULE

**Decide what you're trying to accomplish first, then consult the rules to help you do it.**

Players should not feel the actions of the investigators are restricted by the game. Rest assured that if you want a character to do something in the game, there is a way to handle it using the rules. The important thing to remember is to base your decisions on what the characters would do (rationally or irrationally) in whatever situation they find themselves - not based on what you think will work out better under the rules.

The Keeper has a lot of flexibility when deciding what game mechanics to use in different situations, and in keeping with the Golden Rule, should always first consider what is trying to be accomplished in the story - and the game as a whole - before deciding on which mechanic to use.

Read more about the Golden and Silver Rules in the Playing the Game chapter.

## THE SILVER RULE

**Never let the rules get in the way of what makes narrative sense. If the Keeper or the players narrate something in the game and it makes sense to apply a certain rule outside of the normal circumstances where you would do so, go ahead and do it.**

The rules are always secondary to what makes sense in the game world, and they should not prevent the players and Keeper from telling a compelling story. If everyone agrees that one outcome to a given action makes for the best story, there's no reason to even consult the rules - just go with it.

# CORE GAME CONCEPTS

There are a few basic game elements that everyone needs to be familiar with. The following brief introduction is enough to get new players started, but the Keeper will need to understand them more deeply. You can read more about them in later chapters.

## FATE POINTS

Fate points are a kind of game currency that can be spent by the players and the Keeper to gain bonuses and exert additional influence on gameplay.

## ASPECTS

Aspects are short phrases that describe the game world and everything in it. You can use an aspect in play to gain more control over the story or provide a bonus to a roll, but aspects can also make characters' lives more difficult. Using an aspect to your advantage (referred to as invoking an aspect) costs you a fate point, while allowing an aspect to complicate your character's life (called accepting a compel or compelling an aspect) awards you a fate point.

## CLUES

Clues are special aspects that are initially known to the Keeper and hidden from the players. Uncovering these clues is usually the primary goal for the players during much of the game. Eventually enough clues will be revealed that the players can figure out what needs to be done to resolve the issues in the scenario. Gathering additional clues may provide greater understanding of what's going on or offer insight into exactly how the investigators might resolve the issues in order to successfully conclude the scenario.

Aspects and their central role in the game are described in Chapter 6.

## STRESS & CONSEQUENCES

Bad things happen to characters in this game. If they're lucky, they may come through an encounter with the mythos with just some bumps and bruises, some nightmares, and a scar or two. Unfortunately, it's just as likely they will wake up to find themselves in a half-dug grave in the middle of the woods, covered in blood and dirt, with no idea how they got there. In game terms, this kind of extreme result is referred

to as being **taken out**. Being taken out could mean the character is merely rendered helpless or irrelevant for the remainder of the scene, or it could be much more significant and lasting – even including permanent insanity or death. Characters can absorb **stress** and take **consequences** to avoid being taken out, allowing them to stay in the action longer, but doing so often means those consequences will make things more challenging later on. Consequences can take many forms: injuries like bruises, broken limbs, or bullet wounds, mental trauma like crippling fear, phobias, and amnesia, and even damage to a reputation, a ruined relationship, or deep-seated shame.

## SANITY

Being exposed to the Mythos is ultimately detrimental to a person's sanity, and it is important to understand how a character's mental stability and well-being may begin to unravel over time. The sanity of investigators and other characters is represented by a combination of aspects, stress, and consequences. As a character's sanity begins to erode, he or she can develop mental disorders, suffer from hallucinations, and even succumb to madness from which there is no return.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Not much is required to play the game beyond this book, a vivid imagination, and a willingness to have fun. Compared to board games, Our Terrible Fate does not have a lot of must-have components that you need to go out and buy. On the other hand, compared to other tabletop roleplaying games, Our Terrible Fate does benefit from some additional components, such as cards and tokens. Fortunately, you can easily make these at home. Here is a list of recommended components for your game:

**People:** Not really a component per se, but you need two to five people to play the game. As already explained, one of you will be the Keeper, and everyone else is a player.

**Fate Dice:** Arguably the only other component you need to buy. Fate dice are a special kind of six-sided dice that are marked on two sides with a plus symbol (+), two with a minus symbol (-), and two sides are blank (■). You can often find these dice from many hobby and game stores under their original name, Fudge dice. Fate dice can be purchased at your friendly local game shop or online. You will need a minimum of four dice, but preferably a set of four dice per person.

**Character Sheets:** Each player gets a sheet to record key information about his or her investigator – stuff like the investigator's name, background, skills, aspects, and so on. You can use the character sheet provided with this book, make up your own, or just use a blank sheet of paper. The Keeper should also have a means to note key information about the various non-player characters in the game, but these rarely require the same level of detail as the investigators.

**Tokens to represent Fate Points:** Poker chips, glass beads, or anything similar will work. You'll want to have at least thirty or more of these on hand, just to make sure you have enough for any given game. You can use pencil marks on your character sheet in lieu of tokens, but physical tokens add a little more fun.

**Cards:** At a minimum, we recommend making a card for each clue the investigators might uncover, as well as any important items they might acquire during the story. Cards should also be used to note any aspects currently in play, and using additional cards to help keep track of non-player characters is very helpful to the players. It can also be beneficial to have cards for many of the investigator options available to the players, as this makes creating or customizing characters go much more smoothly and aids during gameplay. Basically, there are a lot of uses for cards in this game, and the more of these the Keeper can create prior to play, the less time you will spend writing things down once the game begins. Naturally, as the story can take interesting and unexpected turns, it is also important for

Our Terrible Fate uses a custom implementation of the Fate Core roleplaying ruleset, but you need not be familiar with or own a separate copy of Fate Core. This book includes all the rules you will need. For players that are already familiar with Fate Core, notes will be included throughout this book to highlight many of the differences between Our Terrible Fate and the basic version of Fate Core.



the Keeper to have a supply of blank cards on hand to record new aspects or other information as they come up.

**Scratch Paper:** While the use of cards is very effective at helping players keep track of what's going on in the game, some players may want to keep notes during the investigation, so having some blank sheets of paper is often a good idea. While scratch paper may be optional for players, it is a virtual certainty that the Keeper will need it to write something down to help remember it for later. Depending on how your group prefers to keep track of the relative position of characters in certain scenes, paper can also be useful for making a quick sketch of a location.

**White board:** Definitely into optional territory now; a white board can be useful for noting temporary information or sketches of locations and can cut down on the amount of paper you need.

**Investigator Boards and Stress Tokens:**

Players can pair these optional boards and tokens with the character sheet for their investigator to make record-keeping easier during the game. Throw in cards that represent consequences, and players will almost never have to write anything down during play.

**Props:** Props are in no way necessary to play Our Terrible Fate, but there is a strong tradition of using props in Mythos roleplaying games. Listening to a description of an ancient cursed amulet or seeing a picture of it is one thing, but actually holding an amulet in your hands can dramatically improve the gameplay experience. Being told about a letter from a recently deceased uncle is not the same as opening and reading the letter for yourself. Naturally, any props you want to use will need to be created by the Keeper before play. Fortunately, there are many resources available for those that want to incorporate props into their games.

**Drinks and snack** are also not required, but are recommended – especially for longer games.

## STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

This book is broken into X main sections, with each section broken down into chapters. The first section consists of chapters one through three, and provides players with an understanding of the fundamentals of the game. The next section includes chapters four through six and centers around the understanding and creation of characters. The fourth section includes the chapters Actions and Outcomes, Playing the Game, and Sanity and Otherwise. This section provides information on other rules often used while playing Our Terrible Fate. The final section focuses on providing guidance and tools for Keepers, including how scenarios are structured and presented, how to create new scenarios or adapting existing stories from other games, and above all, how to continually adapt play to tailor the game to the interests of both yourself and the players.

“Structure of this Book” will need to be re-written once the rest of the book is wrapped up.

### OPTIONAL RULES AND NOTES ON FATE

Throughout this book there are boxes like this one that contain optional rules, bits of information about Our Terrible Fate, and notes for veteran players of Fate.

When rules are presented in this way they are optional and are appropriately marked as such. These rules are not necessary to play Our Terrible Fate, but they do provide additional options should players wish to make use of them. All players as well as the Keeper should agree on which optional rules, if any, they would like to include in their game prior to the start of the game session.

Notes for Fate veterans point out key differences between Our Terrible Fate and Fate Core, making it easier to locate these rules changes. A brief explanation for the change is also sometimes included so that players can understand how these rules fit into the game and how best to apply them during play.

Mythos games possess a proud tradition of using props - actual letters, ancient documents, photographs, drawings. While not required, Our Terrible Fate certainly benefits and embraces the use of props to enhance the story and gameplay.

## EXAMPLES

*There are numerous examples throughout this book. These examples provide a demonstration of the rules in use during actual play. Examples of play are presented differently from the rest of the text. This paragraph is itself an example of a how examples of play are presented in this book.*

Hello, I'm a sidebar...

## SIDEBARS

The sidebars along the side of each page provide additional information to the reader. This may take the form of comments about the material presented on the page, references and page numbers for related topics located elsewhere in the book, information on the game world, quotes from stories about the Mythos, and anything and everything in between.

# THE CHARACTER SHEET

While not as detailed investigators, the characters controlled by the Keeper have many of the same elements.

The Keeper makes use of a much simpler version of the character sheet to keep track of these characters.

Players, your character sheet contains everything you need to know about your investigator — abilities, personality, significant background elements, and any other personal resources the character might have to use during in the game. Below is an example of a completed investigator character sheet to illustrate all the components.

Looking for an investigator character sheet? There's a blank sheet in the back of this book. You can also download electronic copies from the base113 Games website. There are even versions of the sheet designed to look like a passport from the 20s and 30s – perfect for those games that see investigators trotting around the globe as they track down mysterious figures or search for strange artifacts.

	Average	Fair	Good	Great	Superb		Average	Fair	Good	Great	Superb		Average	Fair	Good	Great	Superb
	-1	+2	+3	+4	+5		-1	+2	+3	+4	+5		-1	+2	+3	+4	+5
ANIMAL HANDLING						INSIGHT						RESOLVE					
ARTS						LORE						RESOURCES					
ATHLETICS						MANIPULATE						SCHOLARSHIP					
BUREAUCRACY						MEDICINE						SCIENCE					
CONCEAL						MYTHOS						SEARCH					
CONTACTS						NOTICE						STEALTH					
CRABT						OPERATE						SUBTILTY					
DECEIVE						PHYSIQUE						TECH					
DRIVE						PILOT						THROWN WEAPONS					
ENGINEERING						PSYCHOTHERAPY						TRADECRAFT					
FIGHT						RANGED WEAPONS						UNDERCOVER					
FIREARMS						RAFFPORT											
HEAVY WEAPONS						RESEARCH											

KEY RELATIONSHIPS			
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	Stable	Warped	Twisted

**SKILLS & STUNTS**

SPECIALIZATION	SKILL

**FATE POINTS**

REFRESH \_\_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL DATA**

CHARACTER NAME \_\_\_\_\_

OCCUPATION \_\_\_\_\_

BACKGROUNDS \_\_\_\_\_

HIGH CONCEPT \_\_\_\_\_

TROUBLE \_\_\_\_\_

MOTIVATION \_\_\_\_\_

ASPECT \_\_\_\_\_

ASPECT \_\_\_\_\_

SANITY

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Stable	Warped	Twisted	Lost

**STRESS**

1  2  3  4

PHYSICAL STRESS (PHYSIQUE)

1  2  3  4

MENTAL STRESS (RESOLVE)

**CONSEQUENCES**

2 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

6 \_\_\_\_\_



OUR TERRIBLE FATE

INVESTIGATOR CHARACTER SHEET

## CHARACTER ASPECTS

Character aspects are phrases that describe some significant detail about a character. They are the reasons why your character matters, why someone is interested in seeing your character in the game. Aspects can cover a wide range of elements, such as personality or descriptive traits, beliefs, relationships, issues and problems, or anything else that helps us invest in the character as a person, rather than just a collection of numbers.

As with all aspects, character aspects also have a mechanical impact on play. When an aspect suggests your character would be particularly well-suited to the task at hand, you can spend a fate point to invoke that aspect for a bonus. When the Keeper compels one of your aspects to complicate the situation, you earn a fate point. Character aspects are also useful in determining what sort of resources would logically be available to the character, be they some sort of equipment, access to a location, or people to call upon for help when needed. Character aspects can describe things about a character that are beneficial or detrimental—in fact, the best aspects are often both.

*Alex's character, Samantha, has the aspect **Tempted by the Promise of Knowledge** on her sheet, which describes her tendency to let curiosity get the better of her and make bad decisions whenever she sees an opportunity to learn something she doesn't know. This adds an interesting, fun element to the character that gets her into a great deal of trouble, bringing a lot of personality to the game.*

It is important that an investigator's aspects answer some key questions about the character, so aspects for investigators are further broken down into the following different types:

### HIGH CONCEPT

The most crucial character aspect, but also often the most straightforward, a character's High Concept sums up who they are. Most commonly it incorporates their profession or occupation, their ethnicity or social standing, and an important facet of their life to this point. Once investigator might be a

*Reclusive Author from Maine Whose Family Died in a Fire*, another might be a *Wealthy Dilettante Turned Famed Female Explorer*, and still another could be *Brilliant Surgeon Haunted by his Time in the Great War*.

### TROUBLE

A character's Trouble describes something from his or her past or some innate character flaw that has a tendency to make their life more difficult or dramatic. *Desperate to Find Anything to Give Life Meaning Again*, *Price on Her Head for Betraying the Mob*, and *Only the Bottle Keeps the Nightmares at Bay* are just some examples of Troubles for investigators.

### MOTIVATION

Investigators differ from everyone else in one key respect – they are not content to simply sit idly by and let others figure out what's going on. They need to know the truth for themselves, they feel compelled to provide aid or protection to those that need it, or maybe they simply cannot abide living a boring, ordinary life. A character's Motivation briefly describes why they are the kind of character that would explore the unknown, seek out the truth behind the unexplained, or take action when others would simply turn away. *Who Else is Gonna Do It?*, *Within the Past Lie Truths Beyond Beyond Any Modern Sciences*, and *I Live for Mystery* are all good examples of character Motivations.

### SANITY

An investigator's Sanity aspect represents how they see the world around them, what keeps them grounded, or what they view as being important in life. It could be a core belief, an idea describing how they think the world 'really works', or even a default attitude they adopt in their daily life. Some examples of Sanity aspects include *Only the Worthy Shall Inherit the Earth*, *All Things Can Be Explained by Science*, and *Faith Shall Sustain Us*.

Of course, investigating strange mysteries, uncovering clues pointing to dark truths, and coming face to face with horrors beyond your worst fears are the kinds of things that tend to leave their mark on a person.

When players first begin playing the game, they will have a fairly narrow selection of characters aspects from which to choose when creating their investigators. However, after playing a scenario or two and becoming more familiar with the game players will be able to create characters aspects from scratch. Guidance on creating aspects of all kinds is provided in the next chapter.

Sanity is discussed in more detail in chapter X, Sanity and Otherwise.

Learn about skills in greater detail beginning on page X.

Taking action and rolling dice is discussed beginning on the next page.

As in real life, characters in Our Terrible Fate change over time, so naturally the aspects that describe a character will change as well. Most character aspects change slowly, perhaps one aspect will change each scenario, but a couple of aspects can change more frequently.

## DRIVES

A character's Drives describe their goals, motives, commitments, or even suspicions – think of them like a short-term Motivation aspect. An investigator typically has two Drives, which will often relate to the issues in the current scenario or the characters involved. As more clues are revealed, issues emerge or change, and characters interact with one another, an investigator's Drives will also change.

*Agnes' character, Samantha, begins the game with the Drive Looking for Answers to My Past. After the investigation into the current scenario reveals that her family has connections to a town in Massachusetts, Agnes changes Samantha's Drive to My Answers Lie in Arkham, Massachusetts.*

## TIES

Everyone has someone in their life that is important to them, be they a family member, close friend, professional colleague, or even a pet. A character's Ties are aspect that describe their most important relationships. These are the people they lean on when times are tough and the ones they will stop at nothing to protect. Investigators usually have three Ties, each of which briefly describes a relationship with an important person in his or her life. For example, a character might have Ties like *Gloria, Darling Daughter Away at University* or *Jon, My Best Friend the Detective*. As investigators face the Mythos they may fall back on these relationships for aid or to help them deal with the stress of what they have encountered. Of course, as investigators are changed by their experiences, it is only natural that their relationships with those around them may change as well.

## SKILLS

Skills represent a character's knowledge and capabilities, including things like perceptiveness, physical prowess, professional training, education, and other measures of ability. They are primarily used during the game when the outcome of a character's actions are in doubt and you need to roll the dice. Each character has a variety of skills, most of which can improve over time.

At the beginning of the game, the player characters have skills rated in steps from Average (+1) to Great (+4). Higher is better, meaning that the character is more capable or succeeds more often when using that skill.

If for some reason you need to make a roll using a skill your character doesn't have, you can always roll it at Mediocre (+0). There are a couple exceptions to this, like unusual skills that most people don't have at all.

*An antiquarian by the name of Gaius has the Lore skill at Great (+4), which makes him ideally suited to knowing about obscure myths and legends. He does not have the Stealth skill, however, so when events lead to him finding it necessary to sneak up on someone, he'll have to roll that at Mediocre (+0). Bad news for him.*

## STUNTS

Stunts are special tricks that your character knows that allow you to get an extra benefit out of a skill or alter some other game rule to work in your favor. Stunts are like special moves in a video game, letting you do something unique or distinctive compared to other characters. Two characters can have the same rating in a skill, but their stunts might give them vastly different benefits.

*Samantha has a stunt called Another Round? It gives her a bonus to get information from someone with her Rapport skill, provided that she is drinking with her target in a pub or bar.*

## STRESS

Stress is one of the two options you have to avoid being taken out — physically it represents temporary fatigue, getting winded, superficial injuries, and so on. Stress also represents the shock of seeing the horrors of the world, both natural and otherwise. This could be witnessing a murder, coming across a particularly gruesome crime scene, or encountering a creature that seemingly defies all known laws of physics. You have a number of stress levels you can burn off to help keep you in a fight, and they reset once you've had a few moments to rest and catch your breath.

## CONSEQUENCES

Consequences are the other option you have to stay in the fight, but they have a more lasting impact. Every time you take a consequence, it puts a new aspect on your sheet describing your injuries. Relative to stress, it takes longer to recover from a consequence, and it's stuck on your character sheet in the meantime, which leaves your character vulnerable to complications or others wishing to take advantage of your new weakness.

## REFRESH







Refresh is the number of fate points you get at the start of every game session to spend for your character. Your total resets to this number unless you had more fate points at the end of the last session.

## TAKING ACTION OR DICE AND WHEN TO ROLL THEM

When your character tries to do something uncertain in *Our Terrible Fate*, you will often roll dice to see if he succeeds. Not everything requires a dice roll; usually you'll only roll dice when the action your character is attempting is dramatically important or carries a certain weight of tension, such as if it's opposed by the efforts of another character, or if there's a significant obstacle in your way. Otherwise, as long as the Keeper says your action is physically possible, your character simply does what you say.

There is another important rule for the Keeper to remember throughout the game. You don't need to roll dice every time a character does something. **Only roll the dice when both (or all) the possible outcomes of the roll are interesting.** If the story only moves forward if the investigator succeeds, then just assume they were successful and continue playing.




Anything a character (or even a group of characters) may attempt can be treated as one of the following five basic actions.

-  To overcome an obstacle. If what you're attempting doesn't fit one of the other actions, it's an Overcome action.
-  To find things and learn about the world around you. Commonly used to find clues and so one of the most commonly used actions.
-  To create or unlock an advantage for your character, or otherwise set yourself up for future success.
-  To inflict stress, harm, or similar unwanted effect on another.
-  To defend yourself or another from harm.
-  To defend yourself or another from harm.

Details on using stress and consequences, both inside and outside of conflict, are presented in Chapter 11, *Playing the Game*.

Fate points and refresh are discussed in detail in Chapter 6: *Aspects and Fate Points*.

## ROLLING THE DICE

When you need to roll dice in Fate, pick up four Fate dice and roll them. When you read the dice, read every  as +1, every  as 0, and every  as -1. Add them all together. You'll get a result from -4 to +4, most often between -2 and +2.

Here are some sample dice totals:

$$\text{+ + 0 +} = +1$$

$$\text{+ - 0 0} = 0$$

$$\text{+ + + -} = +2$$

$$\text{- 0 0 0} = -1$$

The result on the dice isn't your final total, however. If your character has a skill that's appropriate to the action, you get to add your character's rating in that skill to whatever you rolled.

So, once you've rolled the dice, how do you determine what a particular result means? Glad you asked.

## THE LADDER

Fate uses a ladder of adjectives and numbers to rate the dice results, a character's skills and the result of a roll. Here's the ladder:

+8	Legendary
+7	Epic
+6	Fantastic
+5	Superb
+4	Great
+3	Good
+2	Fair
+1	Average
+0	Mediocre
-1	Poor
-2	Terrible

It doesn't really matter which side of the ladder you use—some people remember the words better, some people remember the numbers better, and some people like using both. So you could say, "I got a Great," or "I got a +4," and it means the same thing. As long as everyone understands what you're communicating, you're fine.

Results can go below and above the ladder. It is encouraged that you to come up with your own names for results above Legendary, such as "Zounds!" and "Ridiculously Awesome."

## INTERPRETING RESULTS

When you roll the dice, you're trying to get a high enough roll to match or beat your opposition. That opposition is going to come in one of two forms: active opposition, from someone rolling dice against you, or passive opposition, from an obstacle that just has a set rating on the ladder for you to overcome. (Keepers, you can also just decide your NPCs provide passive opposition when you don't want to roll dice for them.)

Generally speaking, if you beat your opposition on the ladder, you succeed at your action. A tie creates some effect, but not to the extent your character was intending. If you win by a lot, something extra happens (like uncovering additional information or doing more harm to your opponent in a fight).

If you don't beat the opposition, either you don't succeed at your action, you succeed at a cost, or something else happens to complicate the outcome. Some game actions have special results when you fail at the roll.

When you beat a roll or a set obstacle, the difference between your opposition and your result is what is called **shifts**. When you roll equal to the opposition, you have zero shifts. Roll one over your opposition, and you have one shift. Two over means two shifts, and so on.

The Keeper can find additional guidance on how to interpret results in Chapter 10: Actions and Outcomes.

*Brousseau, Paul's character, is trying to escape from a house that is supposedly "haunted". He doesn't believe in such things, but the door to the bedroom he is in just slammed shut, and his friends down the hall are screaming about something coming out of the walls. As if that wasn't bad enough, furniture has started flying around the room, blocking his way to the only remaining exit - the window.*

*Steve, the Keeper, says, "This is passive opposition, because it's just getting in your way. It's opposing you at Great (+4). Dodging a bed and shelves full of books to dive through a window isn't going to be easy."*

*Paul sighs and says, "Well, I've got Athletics at Good (+3), so I'll try to run and dive through it, hoping to dodge the big stuff."*

*He takes up the dice and rolls, getting +++, for a result of +2. This steps up his result on the ladder by two, from Good (+3) to Superb (+5). That's enough to beat the opposition by one shift and succeed.*

*Steve says, "Well, it may not have been graceful, but you managed to jump through the window without being flattened by an inanimate object that seemed determined to crush you, or any other serious injury. Of course, now you're lying in the front yard while everyone else is still trapped inside."*

*Paul replies, "I knew the pay for this job was too good to be true," and Brousseau continues dusts himself off before circling around the side of the house, hoping to find some way to help his friends.*

## FATE POINTS

You use tokens to represent how many fate points you have at any given time during play. Fate points are one of your most important resources in Fate — they're a measure of how much influence you have to make the story go in your character's favor.

- You can spend fate points to invoke an aspect, to declare a story detail, or to activate certain powerful stunts.
- You earn fate points by accepting a compel on one of your aspects.

A word of warning: Don't use edible things as tokens, especially if the food hasn't arrived yet.

### INVOKING AN ASPECT

Whenever you're making a skill roll, and you're in a situation where an aspect might be able to help you, you can spend a fate point to invoke it in order to change the dice result. This allows you to either reroll the dice or add +2 to your roll, whichever is more helpful. (Typically, +2 is a good choice if you rolled -2 or higher, but sometimes you want to risk a reroll to get that +4.) You do this after you've rolled the dice — if you aren't happy with your total.

You also have to explain or justify how the aspect is helpful in order to get the bonus — sometimes it'll be self-evident, and sometimes it might require some creative narrating.

You can spend more than one fate point on a single roll, gaining another reroll or an additional +2, as long as each point you spend invokes a different aspect.

*Having escaped the house - Brousseau still refuses to call it haunted - a little shaken but otherwise unharmed, the investigators decide they need more information before they return. Brousseau decides to see what he can find out from a local deputy, but she is surprisingly tight-lipped. The deputy is giving him passive opposition at Good (+3), and his Rapport skill is Fair (+2).*

*Paul rolls. He breaks even, getting a 0. That leaves his result at Fair, not enough to get the information he wants.*

New players might be tempted to hoard fate points until they are faced with a truly desperate situation. Resist that impulse. There are ways to earn more, and doing so usually makes the story more interesting.

Don't be afraid to suggest interesting compels for your character, or even the characters of other players. Accepting compels is important to sharing in a compelling story, and a great idea just makes the game more fun and memorable.

*He looks at his character sheet, then to Steve, and says, "You know, as a Former Enforcer for the Miami Mob, I spent my share of time sitting in police stations, and I know the kinds of stress police officers have to deal with on a daily basis. I'm going to talk about a cop friend who used to be drinking buddy of mine' to get her to open up."*

*Steve grins and nods. Paul hands over a fate point to invoke the aspect, and gets to add +2 to his standing roll. This brings his result to a Great (+4), which exceeds the opposition. The deputy begins to think Brousseau might not be such a bad guy and starts talking about some of the strange incidents that have been reported recently. Brousseau listens intently....*

### DECLARING A STORY DETAIL

Sometimes, you want to add a detail that works to your character's advantage in a scene. For example, you might use this to narrate a convenient coincidence, like retroactively having the right supplies for a certain job ("Of course I brought that along!"), showing up at a dramatically appropriate moment, or suggesting that you and the NPC you just met have mutual clients in common.

To do this, you'll spend a fate point. You should try to justify your story details by relating them to your aspects. Keepers, you have the right to veto any suggestions that seem out of scope or ask the player to revise them, especially if the rest of the group isn't buying into it.

*While Brousseau tries to work the cops for information, Samantha decides to try the historical archives in the local library. Unfortunately, many of the older documents are not accessible by the public.*

*Alex looks at her sheet and says, "Hey, I have Adjunct Professor of Anthropology at Miskatonic University on my sheet. Can I declare that the library has an agreement with universities to allow scholars access, so I can access the rest of the archives?"*

*Steve thinks that's perfectly reasonable to assume. Alex tosses over a fate point and describes Samantha showing the library staff her university credentials and assuring them she will be careful with the documents.*

*Steve describes the head librarian leading Samantha to the restricted section and saying, "We're always happy to assist our colleagues from Miskatonic. Right this way professor."*

### DECLARING STORY DETAILS WITH DISCOVER

Spending a fate point is not the only way to introduce a story detail. Players can use their characters' skills to introduce new details to the story as well.

For Fate veterans, the inclusion of the Discover action is a key difference from Fate Core. Just as the Create an Advantage action enables you to invoke an aspect without spending a fate point, the Discover action can be used to declare a story detail without a fate point.

Of course, this involves rolling some dice and is not without risk...

### COMPELS

Sometimes (in fact, probably often), you'll find yourself in a situation where an aspect complicates your character's life and creates unexpected drama. When that happens, the GM will suggest a potential complication that might arise. This is called a compel.

Sometimes, a compel means your character automatically fails at some goal, or your character's choices are restricted, or simply that unintended consequences cloud whatever your character does. You might negotiate back and forth on the details a little, to arrive at what would be most appropriate and dramatic in the moment.

Once you've agreed to accept the complication, you get a fate point for your troubles. If you want, you can pay a fate point to prevent the complication from happening, but it is not recommended that you do that very often — you'll probably need that fate point later, and getting compelled brings drama (and hence, fun) into your game's story.



Players, you're going to call for a compel when you want there to be a complication in a decision you've just made, if it's related to one of your aspects. GMs, you're going to call for a compel when you make the world respond to the characters in a complicated or dramatic way.

Anyone at the table is free to suggest when a compel might be appropriate for any character (including their own). GMs, you have the final word on whether or not a compel is valid. And speak up if you see that a compel happened naturally as a result of play, but no fate points were awarded.

*Tom's character, Jackson, has the aspect Problems with Authority. Figuring he wasn't suited to helping his friends talk to the locals, he volunteered to stay behind and keep an eye on the house.*

*Steve tells the players, "Evidently sitting parked in a van for several hours has gotten the attention of someone in the neighborhood, because a patrol car has just pulled up behind you." She turns to Tom. "What do you do?"*

*Tom says, "Uh... well, I'll stick around and try not to look suspicious. If the deputy talks to me, maybe I can at least find out who called the cops."*

*Steve holds up a fate point and says, "And is that going to go wrong, given how well Jackson is likely to get along with a police officer in uniform?"*

*Tom grins and replies, "Yeah, I suppose Jackson will lose his cool pretty quickly, and that'll get complicated. I'll take the fate point."*

*Steve and Tom play a bit to figure out just how Jackson puts his foot in his mouth, and then Steve describes the deputy ordering Jackson to step out of the van. "Sir, I'm going to need you to open the back of the vehicle so I can take a look inside."*

*Tom shakes his head, remembering that some of the equipment they have in the back might be a little difficult to explain.*

## NOW WHAT?

Actually, that covers just about everything you need to know to play *Our Terrible Fate*. The rest of this book expands on these basic rules, describing how they are applied in different situations and how they relate to the setting.

Here are a few key chapters you might look at:

- Character Creation
- Playing the Game
- Running the Game

## ROLEPLAYING TERMS

This section describes a number of key terms which will help new players understand the game more easily. Many of the following terms are common to most roleplaying games, while some of them are specific to *Our Terrible Fate*.

**Keeper:** The person responsible for narrating the story and determining the consequences of the actions performed by the player characters. The Keeper also controls the actions of the non-player characters and other aspects of the game world.

**Player:** The player creates a character and takes on the role of that character in the game, deciding what the character will do and how he or she will respond to events in the game world.

**Character:** Any sentient being played by the GM or a player during the course of the game.

**Investigator or Player character (PC):** A character controlled by a player. In most cases, each player is responsible for the creation and roleplaying of a single investigator during the game.

**Non-player character (NPC):** A character controlled by the gamemaster. A non-player character could be anyone from the bum on the corner to the player characters' arch-nemesis.

**Scenario (or Investigation):** A self-contained plotline in which the characters take part. Like a single television episode, a scenario may share elements with aspects of

other scenarios, like characters and settings, but each scenario has its own objectives and storyline.

**Scene:** Scenarios are made up of scenes, also called encounters; this is similar to a single scene in a movie. Scenes often take place in different settings and are linked together by the plot.

**Campaign:** A campaign is a collection of related scenarios. These scenarios are often interlinked and dependent on one another - perhaps investigations into multiple incidents all point to something much larger. Major characters usually remain constant throughout the campaign.

**Party:** A group of player characters is often referred to as a party. Normally a party works together to accomplish the same goals and help one another throughout a scenario.

**Gamer:** Gamer is a general term used to describe people who play roleplaying games and applies to both the gamemaster and players. Gamers are sometimes referred to as roleplayers.

**Game session:** A game session is the time when gamers get together to play a roleplaying game. Sometimes a session lasts only long enough to play a single scenario, while longer sessions may allow for the play of several scenarios. Longer scenarios may take more than one game session to complete.

**Game world:** The game world is the setting in which the Our Terrible Fate roleplaying game takes place. By default the game world includes the the entire world of the 1920s as well as all of the characters and other entities that inhabit it.

## KEY CHANGES FROM FATE CORE

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While much of *Our Terrible Fate* operates just like *Fate Core*, there are many differences as well. Some of these are included to support the themes and styles of play expected in a game of investigation and cosmic horror - characters' sanity slowly eroding, searching a bizarre crime scene for clues, strange cultist magics, and sleepless hours spent pouring over dusty tomes. Other changes are intended to make the game more accessible for new players, open up new ways to support inner turmoil and drama, and integrate player characters more fully into the world around them.

Here is a brief list of these differences from *Fate Core* so that veteran *Fate* players can get a broad overview of the changes and quickly locate them in this book.

- Lasting aspects and character drives are described in chapter...
- Character ties are discussed in chapter...
- Professions and character backgrounds are discussed in Chapter 7: Character Creation and detailed fully in Chapter 8.
- Automatic noticing, skill specializations, and skill drain are described in Chapter 9: Skills and Stunts.
- The Discover action is detailed in Chapter 10: Actions and Outcomes.
- The Sanity system is presented in Chapter 12.
- Changes to recovering from stress and consequences are discussed in Chapter 11, Playing the Game. This chapter also provides additional information on using character drives and ties in play.