

Soth

You play cultists.

Cultists are nasty, insane, and sacrifice their friends to summon the dark God Soth who will end this pitiful world.

Let's make up some Cultists now.

You live in a small town (pop. 5000).

Choose a name, and a respectable occupation in the town.

You have a starting Insanity of 1.

Objectives + Style

The higher your cultist's insanity is, the more magic they can do and the more control they have over the cult. But high Insanity also makes you more of a target for investigators.

Your cultist will probably be killed. Either by investigators or by someone in the cult. If you die, you are not out of the game. Instead you get to control one of the investigations against your fellow cultists.

Soth is sort of a board game. It has a strict order of play (which you can find on the last page). It's sort of an RPG, in that I'd expect you to have in-character conversations every time you move to a new scene or have rolled the dice. t

The GM's job is to play the NPCs. The GM also controls investigations.

Rituals

Your cult regularly conducts rituals. These always involve a human sacrifice, and they lead to closer contact with Soth and the gaining of magical power.

We are going to start the game with your cultists performing their first ritual - on someone who is a complete

stranger to them and the town. The process for playing out a ritual is always the same.

Decide on the circumstances of the ritual. Where is it? Are you wearing anything odd? How is the sacrifice being conducted? What sort of conversations are you having? Continue until you feel you've done enough narration to set up the situation.

Each player rolls a number of d6 equal to their Insanity score. If you're sacrificing a victim who has an Intimacy score, each cultist rolls extra d6s equal to their intimacy score with the victim.

Whenever you sacrifice a victim, increase the Insight score of all NPCs by 1.

nb: This won't apply to the first ritual because there are no NPCs yet.

Only the highest result (or results, if there's a tie) on this Insanity roll counts as a Victory.

For example, if four cultists roll 1, 3, 4, 5, then the highest roll is a 5, and the ritual generated one victory.

If four cultists roll 1, 3, 4, 4, then the highest roll is a 4 and the ritual generated two victories.

The ritual adds dice to your magic pool.

$d6 \text{ in Magic Pool} = 3 + (\text{Victories}) + \text{Intimacy of victim with the winner}$

If the winner has no intimacy with the victim, use the highest intimacy score.

The cultist who contributed the most victories is called the "winner". Roll 1d6 to sort out ties.

Players who didn't contribute any Victories each get to determine one fact about Soth. A fact is a single piece of information; a sentence with no 'and' or 'but' in it.

nb: You'll have to juggle your cult's magic pool. The more dice you have it, the easier it will be to summon the dark God Soth without things going horribly wrong. But the more dice you spend, the easier it will be to defeat investigators.

Selection Scenes

In the aftermath of the ritual, we create NPCs, and determine what scenes the cultists will have as they try to live their normal lives before the next ritual.

You spend points from rituals to create NPCs.

$NPCs = 1 + \text{Victories}$

For example, if you roll three victories, you create 4 NPCs.

The winner of the ritual role creates the first NPC.

Name the NPC, and describe their role in the town.

Describe their connection to one member of the cult.

NPCs have two characteristics: Intimacy and Insight.

Intimacy equals an NPC's emotional connection to a particular cultist. How close are they? Intimacy applies to a specific cultist. It is therefore possible to have multiple intimacy scores.

Insight equals their perceptiveness, and their suspicion about the activities of the PCs. An NPC with a high insight score is very likely to begin investigating the activities of the cultists.

The first NPC is created using all of the victories. Subsequent

NPCs have one less victory to use than the NPC before. So, the formula is:

Points = Victories - number of NPCs already created.

The last two NPCs will have one victory each to use.

Divide victories as evenly as possible between insight and intimacy. If there's an odd number, favour Intimacy.

Once the winner of the ritual roll has created an NPC, the person with the next highest dice roll creates one.

The winner of the ritual scene gets to decide if cultists are allowed to access dice from the Magic Pool in the following scenes.

The winner then sets the number of dice that are allowed to be rolled, from 1 up to the total amount of dice in the magic pool. Once these dice are spent, they are gone forever.

Cultists then select the scene they want to play:

-- a personal scene, which decreases insanity. Write down who you want it with.

-- an insanity scene, which increases insanity. **nb:** Everyone who contributed a victory gets an bonus insanity scene.

-- no scene at all. That's a Pass.

-- a Confrontation scene with either an investigator or a cultist. Write down which investigator or cultist you want to confront, and how many magic dice you want to use.

Write down your scene in secret, so that a cultist who's been attacked doesn't know who's doing it.

The GM receives all the notes. They need to select the scene order. To start with, alternate personal and insanity scenes. Leave confrontation scenes to

last. Break ties in order of highest insanity to lowest.

Insanity Scenes

Choose an everyday location. Home, work, a public place.

Select an NPC and (if you want) one other cultist to be in this scene.

Do something that hints at your growing instability and insanity - it must be crazier than any previous Insanity scene action you've described.

Increase your Insanity score by 1.

n.b.: This applies to both insanity scenes you have chosen, and insanity scenes that follow from a ritual

Increase the Insight of the NPC you selected by 1. They are more suspicious of you now.

Increase their Intimacy with you by 1. If they don't currently have any intimacy with you, start a new, separate Intimacy score at 1.

Personal Scenes

Select a location and an NPC. Role-play out the conversation, and reduce Insanity by one.

Pass

If you don't want to take any action on this turn, just write down 'Pass' (and how your cultist will spend the time until the next ritual) on a piece of paper, and hand it to the GM.

Confrontation Scenes

In a confrontation scene, you take action against your enemies.

Cultists decide which NPC (who's investigating you) they'll confront.

Investigators confront their target.

Choose an isolated location to confront them.

Cultists will either (a) use magic to summon horrific creatures (servants of the dark God Soth) to do their dirty work,

or (b) rely on their own (puny) physical prowess.

If they summon a creature, choose as many dice as they want from the magic pool. Roll:

Insanity + Magic.

For each magic dice, say one word about the creatures (e.g. *big, winged, fanged*).

Each dice used represents one creature.

If there are no magic dice available, roll one d6. This represents the cultist having to rely on your own resources.

The investigator rolls:

Investigation + Insight

nb: The investigator must choose at least 3d6 Investigation dice.

To find out who won, compare the two pools. Who has the highest dice result? Eliminate dice from both pools until there is a clear winner.

How many Victories they get?

If the cultist won, they get to reduce the investigator's Intimacy and Insight by that number of victories.

If an investigator is reduced to zero in both scores, they're "taken out", and can now be sacrificed or removed.

If the investigator won, they get to decrease the cultist's Insanity by that number of victories.

If a cultist is reduced to zero insanity, then they have been "taken out" - killed, committed, imprisoned, as the investigator sees fit.

If a cultist is killed, their player can take over the investigation of their choice, or the first available investigation if there are no free ones.

Betrayal Scenes

When a cultist attacks a fellow cultist, the identity of the attacker should be kept secret if

possible. The GM rolls for the attacking cultist.

nb: If a Betrayal happens while summoning Soth, the cultist should roll for themselves.

The defender determines circumstances and location of the betrayal. They should be alone, or otherwise easy to be attacked.

See the boxed text in 'Confrontation Scenes', to determine who rolls what.

The defending cultist rolls for themselves. They have the option of using magic to defend themselves.

Narrate what happens.

Victories allow you to reduce your opponent's Insanity score.

Suspicion Checks

A Suspicion check is made against the Cultist with the highest Insanity. If the cultist fails, it will trigger an investigation of your cult activities.

If several cultists have the same Insanity score, the GM:

- eliminates ones who are already being investigated
- picks the Winner of the Ritual roll, if they're left
- picks the one who's had the most insanity scenes this cycle
- makes them roll a d6 to resolve any ties.

If that eliminates everyone, choose uninvestigated cultist with the next lowest Insanity score.

If every cultist is being investigated, choose the Winner.

The GM chooses which NPC will make the suspicion check. It can't be an NPC who is already involved in an investigation, and they have to already have an intimacy score with the cultist.

If there is no available NPC, you can't make a suspicion check.

To make a suspicion check, roll:

Insanity vs. Insight + Insanity

If a cultist wins the Suspicion roll, they can reduce that NPC's insight or increase intimacy by the number of victories.

If the NPC wins, they increase their Intimacy with the cultist by 1, then create an investigation.

Create an investigation

Each investigation targets the cultist who failed the Suspicion Check.

Each investigation has two elements to it: (a) a pool of d6 known as the Investigation Pool, which reflects your ability to damage the cultists, and (b) the number of investigators involved in it. As long as there's one survivor, the investigation can continue, even if its Investigation Pool = 0.

First, put add a free d6 into the Investigation Pool.

Then decide whether you want to spend your victories from the suspicion check to make existing NPCs join your investigation, create new NPCs who will join, or add dice to the Investigation pool.

Buy existing NPCs by spending a number of victories equal to the total of their insight + their intimacy with the target of your investigation.

You can create new NPCs buying Insight and Intimacy directly with your victories. Each new NPC must have at least 1 Intimacy with one cultist.

Alternatively, you can use your Victories to add d6 to the Investigation Pool.

The new investigation then chooses whether to investigate or confront the cultist they're targeting.

Investigation Scenes

Investigators can add to their Investigation Pool by

interviewing the cultist, exploring an area associated with the cultist (for example, breaking into their house), or conducting research.

Describe what the investigators are doing, then roll:

Insanity vs. Insight + Insanity

If the investigator wins, they can use Victories to increase the investigation pool, Insight, or Intimacy. They can also create NPCs or convince old NPCs to join them (see above).

If the cultist wins, they can decrease Insight or increase Intimacy.

Deal with existing Investigations

There can be multiple investigations going at the same time, and 2 or more investigations can target the same cultist. NPCs can only belong to one investigation.

Each investigation chooses whether to investigate or confront the cultist they're targeting.

The Dark Decision

This is where the cultists decide on their next action. They can choose to summon the dark God Soth, or sacrifice another victim to increase their chances of successfully summoning the dark God Soth.

Narrate. A location where they are meeting.

The decision to summon the dark God Soth needs to be unanimous. Whether that means there's only one cultist left, I am indifferent to. If there is even one dissenting voice, the ritual cannot continue. If everyone is agreed, the summoning can begin.

Here are the favourable conditions for summoning:

- high insanity

- a large Magic Pool
- many facts on Soth
- a large number of non-investigating NPCs.

If they are not going to summon the dark God Soth, then they must select another victim to sacrifice. Quitting is not an option - they are insane, after all.

Discuss who to sacrifice. You can't select someone involved in an investigation.

Put the decision of who to sacrifice to a vote. If there's a tie, roll insanity, and the cultist with the most victories gets to select the next victim.

Go to the next scene.

Sacrifice scenes

The capturing of the sacrifice will go off without a hitch.

The cultists should decide on the location they capture the sacrifice in. The GM should role-play out the NPC's reaction.

Go back to the beginning, and play out a new Ritual scene.

Summon Soth

To successfully summon Soth, you need:

$$\text{Victories} = (2 \times \text{cultists}) + (\text{total insanity of cultists})$$

You have kidnapped all of the remaining NPCs - a mass sacrifice of everyone not in an investigation.

Choose a victim to sacrifice (all the standard rules for selecting a victim apply).

Sacrifice the victim, as per normal, increase Insanity of the winners (no need for an Insanity scene).

The number of victories determines how many dice you can draw from the magic pool.

Split the available magic dice equally between the cultists. (

Secretly choose whether to summon Soth or betray another cultist.

We'll deal with all the betrayals first, then the summoning.

Everyone reveals who they're targeting for betrayal.

Players choose (secretly) to either abort or continue their attack. If they abort, they'll participate in the summoning. If they continue, they choose how many of their dice to use on attack.

The defendant chooses how many dice to use on attack, defence, and summoning (if applicable)

Refer to 'Betrayal Scenes', to play out the attack.

After all betrayals have been resolved, resolve the summoning attempt for this round.

Each cultist participating in the summoning rolls:

Insanity + their Magic dice

Consider all of the group's dice together.

Everyone who didn't contribute victories to this round's sacrifice, gets to use facts to adjust their own results. Cross a fact off the list, and adjust a single d6 up or down by one point.

Take your victories back, and keep them separate.

Did you get enough successes to summon Soth? If so, go to the 'Endgame', to see who controls Soth, and everyone's fate.

If not, choose another victim.

If you've run out of other victims, trigger a confrontation scene with an investigation. After that, choose one NPC from that investigation to sacrifice.

If you've run out of dice from the magic pool, refresh the pool with a sacrifice, which triggers a confrontation scene with an investigation (see above).

-- If you've run out of all available NPCs, sacrifice a cultist - using their Insanity

score as Intimacy. Vote for who you'll choose. (NB: This is a last ditch effort only available if there are no other NPCs. It's not an option during the rest of the game.)

Endgame

Only one cultist can control the dark God Soth. Each surviving cultist rolls:

Insanity + summoning Victories

The winner issues their first order to Soth.

Play out an epilogue for each cultist. Each epilogue takes place one year after the previous one. Epilogues go from the cultist with the lowest Insanity to the highest, with the cultist in control of Soth going last.

Draw on one fact (crossing it off the list) to narrate the increasingly horrid condition of the world.

If there are any facts left to draw on, then narrate how you're surviving in this world.

If there are no facts left to draw on, then it's your death scene.

If you're at 0 Insanity, then you're clear-headed. If you've got any Insanity, you're insane.