

SECRET



CTHULHU

A CULTISH RE-THEME OF SECRET HITLER

The year is unknown. The place is somewhere on Earth. In Secret Cthulhu players are attempting to stop Cthulhu devouring the planet by enacting enough Rites of Salvation to protect the planet and all that currently live on it. Watch out though, there are secret Cultists among you, and one player is possessed by Cthulhu himself. These Cultists will be doing everything in their power to pave the way for Cthulhu, and the destruction and chaos he brings with him.

OVERVIEW

At the beginning of the game each player is assigned one of three roles: **Cultist**, **Investigator**, or **Cthulhu**. The Investigators have a majority, but they don't know for sure who anyone is; Cultists must resort to what they know best to accomplish their goals: secrecy and sabotage. Cthulhu plays for the Cultists, and the Cultists know Cthulhu's identity, but Cthulhu isn't always aware of who his fellow Cultists are and must work to figure them out.

The Investigators win by performing FIVE Rites of Salvation - saving the known universe from the madness caused by the Cultists; or if Cthulhu is banished to the Void of Damnation.

The Cultists win by performing SIX Rites of Madness - destabilising the universe and allowing them to reign in chaos; or if Cthulhu is elected Cult Preacher after THREE Rites of Madness have been enacted.

Whenever Madness increases, the Cult becomes more powerful, and the Cult Leader is often granted a single-use power which must be used before the next round of nominations and voting can begin. It doesn't matter what loyalty the Cult Leader has; in fact even an Investigator might be tempted to perform a Rite of Madness to gain new powers...

CONTENTS



9 Confirmed Not Cthulhu Cards



1 Draw Pile card
1 Discard Pile Card



1 Superseding Cult Leader card



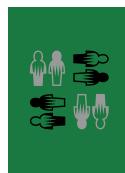
1 Nominated Cult Preacher Card



1 Currently Elected Cult Leader card



1 Currently Elected Cult Preacher card



Role Cards:
1 Cthulhu,
3 Cultist,
6 Investigator



Loyalty Cards:
4 Cthulhu,
6 Investigator



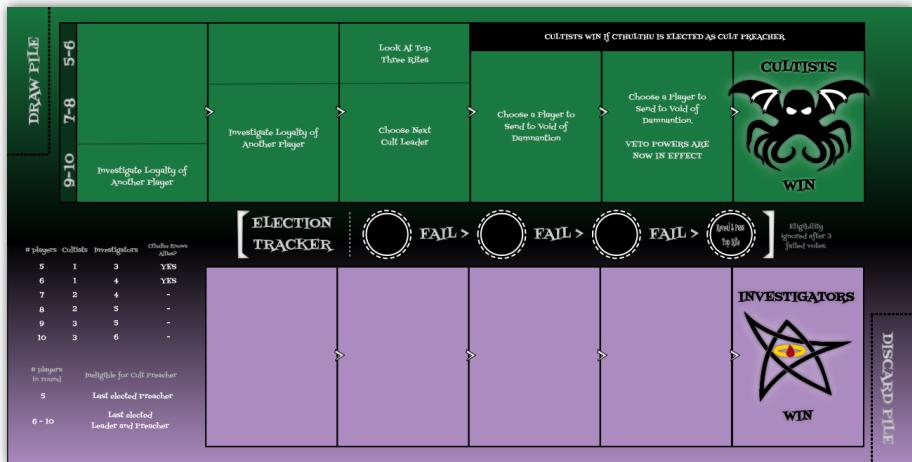
18 Rites Cards:
6 Salvation,
11 Madness



20 Vote cards:
10 Yes,
10 No



1 Election Track Marker



1 Game Board

OBJECT OF THE GAME

Every player has a secret identity as a member of either the Cultists or Investigators.

Players with **loyalty to The Investigators** win if either:

FIVE Rites of Salvation are performed

- OR -

Cthulhu is sent to the Void of Damnation

Players with **loyalty to Cthulhu** win if either:

SIX Rites of Madness are performed

- OR -

Cthulhu is elected Cult Preacher any time after
the third Rite of Madness has been performed

GAME CONTENTS

- 34 Chaos cards
- 17 Rite cards (6 Salvation, 11 Madness)
- 10 Secret Role cards
- 10 Loyalty cards
- 10 "Yes" voting ballot cards
- 10 "No" voting ballot cards
- 9 "Confirmed Not Cthulhu" cards
- 1 Currently Elected Cult Leader card
- 1 Currently Elected Cult Preacher card
- 1 Superseding Cult Leader card
- 1 Nominated Cult Preacher card
- 1 Draw Pile card
- 1 Discard Pile card
- 1 Ritual/Election tracking board
- 1 Election Tracking marker



Not Included (But Useful)

100 Card Sleeves - Dragon Shield Standard Sleeves (Clear); 66x91mm

10 Role/Loyalty card envelopes - Small Brown; approx 98x67mm

SET UP

Place the Ritual/Election tracking board on or near the middle of the playing area.
Players should be able to see the board but do not all need to reach the board.

Place "Superseding Cult Leader" and "Currently Elected Cult Preacher" cards near the board.

Shuffle the 6 Salvation and 11 Madness Rite cards into a single face-down deck, and place that deck to the left of the tracking board.

Give each player one "Yes" and one "No" voting ballot card.

Take one envelope for each player. Each envelope should contain one Secret Role card and one corresponding Loyalty card.

Use the table below to determine the correct distribution of roles:

SET UP (continued)

# PLAYERS	5	6	7	8	9	10
Investigators	3	4	4	5	5	6
Cultists	1	1	2	2	3	3
Cthulhu	1	1	1	1	1	1

Investigator Secret Role cards must always be packed together with an Investigator Loyalty card.

Cthulhu and Cultist Secret Role cards must always be packed together with a Cthulhu Loyalty card.

Once the envelopes have been prepared, **shuffle them so that each player's role is a secret!**

Each player should receive one envelope selected at random.

WHY ARE THERE SECRET ROLE AND LOYALTY CARDS?

Secret Cthulhu features an investigation mechanic that allows other players to find out what loyalty other players have. This only works if Cthulhu's special role is not revealed.

When investigated players will show their Loyalty and not their Secret Role, protecting Cthulhu's identity during the game.

Investigators who uncover Cultists must work out for themselves if they've found Cthulhu or not.

Once each player has been dealt an envelope, all players should examine their Secret Role cards in secret. Randomly select the first Cult Leader and pass that player the following cards: Currently Elected Cult Leader; Nominated Cult Preacher.

The selected player should stand the Currently Elected Cult Leader card in front of themselves.



THE DIRECTIONS

For **games of 5-6 players**, give the following directions to all players:

- Everybody close your eyes.
- Cthulhu and Cultists, open your eyes and acknowledge each other.
[Pause to give them time to do this]
- Everyone close your eyes.
[Pause a second or two]
- Everyone open your eyes.
- If anyone is confused, or something went wrong, please tell the group now.

For **games of 7-10 players**, give the following directions to all players:

- Everybody extend your hand into a fist in front of you.
- Everybody close your eyes.
- Cthulhu - keep your eyes closed.
- Cultists, open your eyes and acknowledge each other. Keep your eyes open.
- Cthulhu - force your vessel to raise a thumb into a thumbs-up gesture.
- Cultists, take note of who has raised their thumb - that player is Cthulhu.
[Take a long pause]
- Cthulhu, put your thumb down.
- Everyone close your eyes.
[Pause a second or two]
- Everyone open your eyes.
- If anyone is confused, or something went wrong, please tell the group now.

THE CHAOS DECK

The Chaos Deck ...

- separate the "Play Immediately" cards from the rest of the deck
- shuffle the remaining (non-Play Immediately) cards and deal two, face-down, to each player
- each player chooses one card to keep and passes the other, face-down, to the player on their left
- once a player has received a card from the player to their right they should choose one card to keep and discard the other, face-down.

Once ALL players have discarded a Chaos card, collect all Chaos cards not held by a player (i. e. all "Play Immediately", cards not dealt to players, and cards discarded by players) and shuffle them to form the Chaos card draw deck.

Place the shuffled draw deck near the Rites draw deck.

GAMEPLAY OVERVIEW

At a high level overview, a round of Secret Cthulhu plays through as follows:

1. Superseding Cult Leader nominates Cult Preacher

2. Vote on the Leadership

- if successful: (3) Prepare and perform Rites
- if not successful: (5) Next player receives Nominated Cult Leader card

3. Prepare and perform Rites

- Cult Leader draws 3 discards 1 passes remaining 2 to Cult Preacher
- Cult Preacher receives 2 cards, discards 1 performs the Rite for the remaining card

4. Abuse of Power

5. Time for a new Leader



GAMEPLAY

1. NOMINATE CULT PREACHER

The Superseding Cult Leader chooses a Cult Preacher Candidate by passing the Nominated Cult Preacher card to any other eligible player. The Superseding Cult Leader is free to discuss Cult Preacher options with the table to build consensus and make it more likely the new leadership gets elected.

Eligibility:

The Currently Elected Cult Leader and Currently Elected Cult Preacher are “term-limited” and ineligible to be given the Nominated Cult Preacher card.

ON ELIGIBILITY:

- Term limits apply to the Leader and Preacher who were last elected, not to the last pair nominated.
- Term limits only affect who may be given Nominated Cult Leader; anyone can be Cult Leader, even someone who was just Cult Preacher
- **IF THERE ARE ONLY FIVE PLAYERS LEFT IN THE GAME** only the Currently Elected Cult Preacher is ineligible to receive the Nominated Cult Preacher card; the Currently Elected Cult Leader may now be nominated.
- There are some other rules that affect eligibility in specific ways. These will be covered later in the rules.

2. VOTE ON THE LEADERSHIP

Once the Superseding Cult Leader has chosen an eligible player to receive the Nominated Cult Preacher card, players may discuss the proposed new leadership until everyone is ready to vote. Every player, including the current candidates, votes on the proposed leadership.

Once everyone is ready to vote, reveal your Vote cards simultaneously so that everyone's vote is public.

If the vote is a tie, or if a majority votes “No”:

The vote fails. The Superseding Cult Leader misses this chance to be elected, and the Superseding Cult Leader card moves clockwise to the next player. The Election Tracker is advanced by one Election.

Election Tracker: If the group rejects three leaderships in a row, the dimension is thrown into chaos. Immediately reveal the Rite on top of the Rite draw-deck and enact it. **Any power granted by this Rite is ignored**, but the Election Tracker resets and **existing term-limits are forgotten**; return the Superseding Cult Leader card and the Nominated Cult Preacher card to the centre of the table.

If there are fewer than three Rites remaining in the draw-deck, shuffle them with the Discard pile to create a new Rites deck.

Any time a new Rite is enacted, the Election Tracker is reset.

If a majority of players votes “Yes”:

The two nominated players take the corresponding Currently Elected card and return their nomination card to the centre of the table, near the board.

If THREE OR MORE Rites of Madness have been performed already:

Ask if the new Cult Preacher is Cthulhu. If the newly elected Cult Preacher is Cthulhu, the game is over and the Cultists win. Otherwise, other players know for sure the Cult Preacher is not Cthulhu - give them a Confirmed Not Cthulhu card.

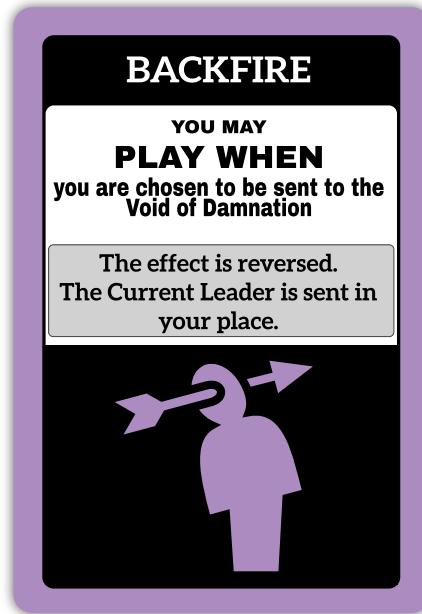
If the Cultists have not yet won, the newly Elected Cult Leader draws a new Chaos Card

Before drawing a new card the Currently Elected Leader may play the Chaos Card from their hand if they have one.

The Currently Elected Leader draws the top card from the Chaos Deck.

Once the card is drawn it must be resolved in one of the following ways:

- if the card is a Play Immediately - resolve the drawn card
- if the Currently Elected Leader has zero Chaos Cards in hand, keep the drawn card and play when the card allows.
- if the Currently Elected Leader already has a Chaos Card they must choose one of the two cards to keep and must discard the other card without resolving it. All Chaos Cards are discarded face-down.



Proceed to Step 3: Prepare and Perform Rites

3. PREPARE AND PERFORM RITES

During this step the Cult Leader and Preacher work together to perform Rites.

- The Cult Leader draws the top three cards from the Rites deck, looks at them in secret, and discards one Rites card face-down on to the Discard pile.
- The remaining two cards are passed to the Cult Preacher, who looks in secret, discards one Rites card face-down to the discard pile, and performs the remaining Rite by placing the card face up on the corresponding track on the board.

DURING PREPARATION:

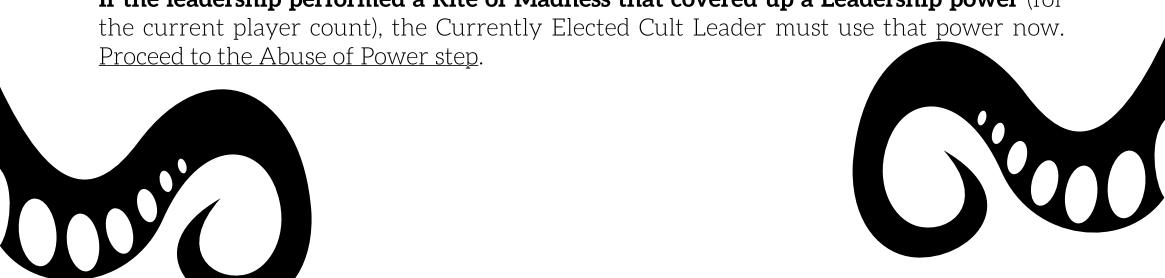
1. Both **verbal and non-verbal communication are forbidden** from the time the Cult Leader draws the Rites cards until the Rite is performed.
2. Rites **MAY NOT** be chosen at random: they may not shuffle the cards before discarding one, or attempt any other “clever ploy” to avoid secretly and intentionally selecting a Rites card to Discard.
3. Additionally, the Cult Leader should hand over both Rites cards at the same time, rather than one at a time in an attempt to gauge the Cult Preacher’s reaction.
4. Attempting to telegraph the contents of your hand, or what you have discarded in any way violates the spirit of the game - don’t do it.

Discarded Rites should NEVER be revealed to the group. Players must rely on the word of the Leader and Preacher, who are free to lie.

ABOUT LYING: Often, some players learn things that the rest of the players don’t know, like when the Leader and Preacher get to see Rites cards, or when a Leader uses the Investigate power to see someone’s Loyalty card. You can always lie about hidden knowledge in Secret Cthulhu. The only time players MUST tell the truth is in game-ending Cthulhu-related scenarios: a player who is Cthulhu must say so if assassinated or if elected Cult Preacher after three Rites of Madness have been performed.

If there are fewer than three Rites cards remaining in the draw pile, shuffle them with the Discard pile to create a new Rite deck. Unused Rites cards should never be revealed, and they should not simply be placed on top of the new Rites deck.

If the leadership performed a Rite of Madness that covered up a Leadership power (for the current player count), the Currently Elected Cult Leader must use that power now. Proceed to the Abuse of Power step.



If the leadership performed a Rite of Salvation, or a Rite of Madness that grants no Leadership power: proceed to Time For A New Leader (i.e. Step 5)

4. ABUSE OF POWER

If the newly performed Rite of Madness grants a leadership power, the Currently Elected Cult Leader must use it before the next round begins.

Before using a power the Cult Leader is free to discuss the issue with other players, but ultimately the Cult Leader must decide when and how the power is used. Gameplay cannot continue until the Leader uses the power. Leadership powers are used only once; they do not stack or roll over to future turns.

Once the power has been used: proceed to Time For A New Leader (i.e. Step 5)

5. TIME FOR A NEW LEADER

- pass the Superseding Cult Leader card to the player to the left of the Currently Elected Cult Leader; that player should stand that card in front of themselves
- begin a new round with a new Election; i.e. return to Step 1.

Leadership Powers

Investigate Loyalty: The Cult Leader chooses a player to investigate. Investigated players should hand their Loyalty card (not Secret Role card!) to the Cult Leader who checks the player's Loyalty in secret and then returns the card to the player. The Cult Leader may share (or lie about) the results of their investigation. **No player may be investigated twice in the same game.**

Call Special Election: The Currently Elected Cult Leader chooses any player at the table to be the next Nominated Cult Leader - even players that would usually be ineligible as a result of being "term limited". The Nominated Cult Leader nominates an eligible Cult Preacher and the Election proceeds as usual.

A Special Election does not skip players. After a Special Election, the Nominated Cult Leader card returns to the left of the Cult Leader who enacted the Special election.

If the Leadership passes to the next player in rotation for the Special Election, that player would get to run for Cult Leader twice in a row: once for the Special Election, and once for their normal shift in the Leadership rotation.

Rite Review: The Currently Elected Cult Leader secretly looks at the top three cards from the Rites draw-pile, and then returns them to the top of the deck **without changing the order**.

Execution: The Currently Elected Cult Leader chooses a player to send to The Void of Damnation, executing them, by saying, "*I formally send [player name] to The Void of Damnation*". If that player is Cthulhu, the game ends immediately with a victory for the Investigators.

If player is not Cthulhu, the game does not end; players SHOULD NOT learn whether a Cultist or Investigator has been killed; players must try to work out for themselves the new table balance.

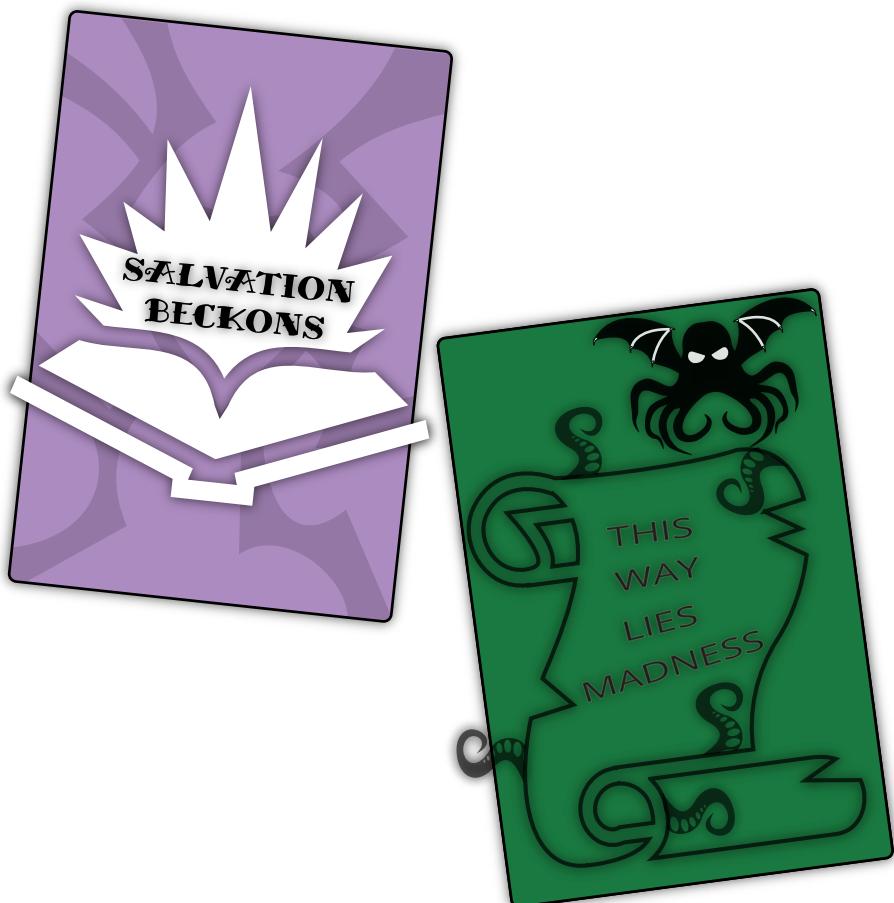
Executed players are removed from the game and may not: speak, vote, or run for leadership.

VETO POWER

The Veto Power is a special rule that comes into effect once FIVE Rites of Madness have been performed. For all Prepare And Perform sessions after the fifth Rite of Madness has been performed, the Leadership gains a permanent new ability to discard all three Rites cards if **both** the Currently Elected Cult Preacher and Currently Elected Cult Leader agree.

- The Cult Leader draws cards as normal, discards one, and passes the remaining two to the Cult Preacher.
- Instead of performing Rites, the Preacher may say, “I wish to veto this ritual”.
- If the Cult Leader consents by saying, “I consent to this veto”, both Rites cards are Discarded and the Nominated Cult Leader card is given to the next player.
- If the Cult Leader does not consent, the Cult Preacher must perform Rites as normal.

Each use of the Veto Power represents an inactive leadership and advances the Election Tracker by one.



CREDITS

Secret Cthulhu is a re-theming of Secret Hitler. (<http://secrethitler.com>)
Secret Cthulhu was re-themed by Chisel Wright. (<https://chizography.net>)

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THANK YOU

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Masha; for allowing me to disappear down a rabbit-hole while working on this project.

Secret Hitler; for being a great social game that we all want to play, and drove me to attempt this re-theming by being utterly unavailable anywhere in the known universe. :-)