

# Sleepwalkers

"Wake up. Time to die."

-Leon the Replicant, Blade Runner

The Sleepwalkers setting is a post-apocalyptic future, where the dire predictions of H.P. Lovecraft's cosmic horror fiction are beginning to come true. Humanity is now split into two factions. There are the organized populations of the Redoubts, who are struggling to remain uncorrupted. On the other hand are the feral humans, some of whom are simply trying to survive in the wilds and ruins, while others are servants, slaves or livestock for various Mythos entities.

I've set Sleepwalkers up to use S. John Ross's great Risus rules. If you aren't familiar with it, I heartily recommend downloading a copy and taking a look. It's six pages of pure roleplaying dynamite, or at least guncotton. Plus the rest of this section of my site will be much less useful without it...

Another book that has heavily influenced this game setting is Chaosium's great Call of Cthulhu RPG. Further influences and inspirations can be found [here](#).

## The Sleepwalkers setting

Here is the future history of humanity, when the stars have wheeled around again and Chaos is about to swallow the earth.

What came before the Fall is not all that important. What matters is that over the course of a few years, the mundane problems of a near-future world were overrun by a series of increasingly deadly, and increasingly paranormal, events. Rampant storms and "heavy weather," plagues, disappearances, earthquakes, and madness swept the earth. Slowly at first, and then swifter and surer, the forces of what humanity came to call the Mythos became more and more blatant. Paris was overrun by the Ghouls of her famed catacombs; New England and then New York were by rising waves that brought Deep One colonists in their wakes. Across the roof of the world, Ithaqua the Windwalker took back his old domain. Deep in the Australian Outback, shattered stone doors appeared in satellite photography one week; by the next week, there was no living human left on that continent. Cthonians are churning the solid rock of the American West like melting butter. And somewhere in the South Pacific, a mountain of twisted masonry has heaved itself above the waves once again... Now the Earth is in the hands of various 'lesser' Mythos races, each pursuing their own incomprehensible agendas. The very plants and animals are beginning to warp and change as the Earth is made ready for a hundred eerie goals. Beasts, madmen and desperate survivors scavenge the wreck of human civilization. And the worst is yet to come.

This is a game of claustrophobic horror. Most of humanity is subjugated by eldritch terrors. Most of the rest is living a nightmarish hunted life, while the very land they are trying to live off is becoming something alien. And the tiny remainder lives sunk into bleak stone and steel warrens, growing weaker and weaker while their leaders become more paranoid and ruthless. There are two main divisions of the surviving members of the human race. One is the "Organized" faction, hiding in various fortified enclaves scattered around the world, most of which are hastily expanded, hardened military bases (think of NORAD's Cheyenne Mountain facility). Each redoubt is basically its own little world,

although there is some communication between certain of the bases. Most have begun sending out armed tactical teams to defend their locations and search for useful items. What they define as useful can range from uncontaminated foodstuffs to possibly useful arcane artifacts to 'clean' feral humans for breeding stock. The flip side of the coin is the aforementioned feral population. These run the gamut from insane cultists to armed bandit groups to desperate people who, for one reason or another, haven't been able to find or gain admittance to a redoubt. Some of these wild people are powerful magicians; others have turned to the Dreamworld in an attempt to build a place more hospitable to humanity than the waking world. Most of the survivors in the wild are master trackers, skulkers and survivors. Those that are not do not last long.

The material on this site tends to focus on one of the Redoubts, the Appalachian Mountain Redoubt Bravo - Alpha has entirely vanished, as well as most of the mountain it was buried under. Bravo's P/R/B thinks it was either an experimental Mi-go mining technique or a badly botched invocation. Most American redoubts have a P/R/B - the surviving vestiges of the nationwide Parabiological Research Bureau, instituted before the Fall by the Centers for Disease Control to investigate and combat the strange things that eventually destroyed the world. In some Organized strongholds, the P/R/B is wholly discredited, treated as scapegoats for failing to halt the tide of the Mythos. In others, the P/R/B acts as advisors. In the Appalachian Redoubt, the P/R/B has become a ruling clique with the power of life and death over everyone living under the mountain. Bravo's P/R/B has become more and more ruthless. Two years ago, they began segregating all tactroop and exploratory personnel into an upper level of the Redoubt which has been unofficially dubbed the "Waiting Room." If your job takes you into the outside world, you are not allowed to mix with the rest of the redoubt population. Further, there are incredibly stringent identification and decontamination procedures one must go through to reenter. To prevent infiltration or contamination, exiting and returning personnel are subjected to rigorous genetic, psychological, magickal and Dreaming tests to confirm their identity. Anything being brought back into the Redoubt is subjected to just as much scrutiny. And anyone bypassing these strictures (or many other P/R/B regulations) is subject to summary execution.

So the troopers go out, sealed into their environmental armor; some are just soldiers, some are Dreamers with injectors full of Sleepdust, and others are half-lunatic Willworkers, desperately using the magic of the Mythos to try and buy some time for what is left of mankind. And more and more are becoming Sleepwalkers - slipping in and out of a "fightstate" where time seems meaningless and the horrors of the Mythos somehow less threatening. Meanwhile, the redoubts themselves are already beginning to crumble. A rising number of people appear to be sterile, and many births are clearly (or not so clearly) tainted by the Mythos. Many of the fortresses are already below a sustainable breeding population, and most others are not far behind. The number of people who die or are expelled greatly outpaces the birth rate. In Redoubt Bravo, the P/R/B's stopgap solution is compulsory pregnancy for all fertile women older than 16 (although the P/R/B is considering dropping this to 14). Some groups look to space, wanting to somehow make it to the few operational space stations left in orbit, or even to the tiny settlements on the Moon. Others plan on staying in the buried fortresses permanently, eeking out a circumscribed survival for humankind as rats in the walls. A few even hope to reach an accommodation with one or more Mythos factions. No one seriously expects to be able to retake the surface world.

## Cliches for Sleepwalkers characters

The cliches below have suggested die types (plain, double-pump, or funky) as well as possible uses.

- Trooper (d6) - battlesuit piloting, guns and advanced weapons, sensors, tactics, basic Mythos lore (3 or 4 dice for 'vanilla' troopers. 2 or 3 for specialists)

- Sleepwalker [d6] - fightstate (frenzied combat), hand-to-hand, ignoring Mythos fright checks (these characters have a compulsory hook: the Taint of Yog-Sothoth)
- Willworker [d6] - reading Mythos tomes, summoning/binding things, casting spells (regular Troopers can have 1 or 2 dice in Willworker; anything above that and they are considered full-time Willworkers)
- Dreamer (d6) or possibly (d8) - Dream travel, Dream lore, taking material things into the Dreamworld, percieving hidden things in the real world that have a significant Dreamworld presence
- Artist (d6) - whatever type of art you want, affecting people's moods, sensing Mythos disturbances
- Wildman (d6) - survival, camouflage, tracking, hiding, identifying safe but altered plants and animals
- and possibly...
- P/R/B field assessor (d8) or (d10)? - finding Mythos artifacts or texts, making horrifying decisions, ruthless commissaring (yes, I know it's not a word), gauging other people's sanity (another compulsory hook: P/R/B conditioning - whatever strange process that makes the field assessor more powerful than most humans also leaves him subject to posthypnotic compulsions - i.e., the GM can tell this PC "You are going to go do this now.")
- Ghoul (d6) or (d8) - eating corpses, sneaking in tunnels, underground lore, knowing sinister secrets
- I highly recommend that these cliches be used with appropriate and interesting modifiers, such as Bloodthirsty Trooper (4) or Bibliophobic Willworker [3]. See the characters page of this site for some ideas as to what I mean.

[More about the setting and character creation...]

## The Sleepwalkers setting (p.2)

### More character information

The Sleepwalker is subject to an automatic hook, the so-called Taint of Yog-Sothoth. Conceptually, it is similar to the Innsmouth Look that precedes a hybrid human's metamorphosis into a full-blooded Deep One. The early stages actually are beneficial; the sufferer begins to enter a timeless fugue state when fighting, where there seems to be all the time in the world to decide what to do. Mythos entities that would ordinarily produce Sanity checks simply don't seem that horrifying. Dangerous, certainly, even sickening... but the Sleepwalker fugue takes the soul-blasting horror out of the situation. However, as the Sleepwalker becomes faster, more powerful, his day to day existence seems less and less real - as does the Dreamworld, if he possesses any Dreaming skill. By the time someone is a Sleepwalker [5] he seems to flicker a little around the edges. At Sleepwalker [6] others can see through him occasionally; while in fightstate, the Sleepwalker seems to snap in and out of the normal frame of reference. Eventually, the influence of Yog-Sothoth permeates the Sleepwalker to the point that he simply comes loose from reality. In game terms, if a character "succeeds" on an advancement roll at Sleepwalker [6], he goes into an extended fugue and disassociates across space and time. Some P/R/B theoreticians think the Taint is a racial "escape valve" for humanity; that as mankind runs out of time, some individual people might step out of time and be free. More sober types believe the Sleepwalker is either subsumed by Yog-Sothoth's growing presence in our local spacetime or simply ablated into nothingness.

Willworkers are users of barely-controlled Mythos Magick. Some can use their arcane knowledge to summon or command some Mythos entities, or perform other "small competences." For the player or GM who wants some guidance on this subject, I can't think of a better source than the Greater and Lesser Grimoires from Chaosium's Call of Cthulhu to keep the proper Mythos feel. In short, fireballs or Arcane Arrows© don't fit the milieu, while the Red Sign does... Willworker/troopers typically paint their battlesuits with runes and eldritch signs, and most carry sealed panniers of arcane materials or enchanted items to be used when necessary. Feral willworkers seem to have stockpiles of necessary ingredients throughout their stomping grounds. Of course, it is significantly easier to amass and maintain a pile of children's skulls or similarly horrific ingredients in the post-Fall environment. The GM should set Sanity TNs for most spells (based on what exactly the character is trying to accomplish) and require Sanity Checks when they are cast. See the rules page for guidelines.

Dreamers are those people who are able to perform great feats in the Dreamlands, the collective higher plane that all human dreamers can occasionally touch. But Dreamers can enter this land intentionally, and command power and respect there. Wild Dreamers simply have to hope they can get to sleep. But those in the more technologically advanced enclaves have access to drugs that can put them under and bring them up with a fair amount of reliability. There are two types of Dreamers by Redoubt operational standards. The most common are "Waking Dreamers" (d6 and d8 level). The name is a bit of a misnomer, as they still must sleep to dream. However, Waking Dreamers are usually trained as troopers as well, and are issued power armor with autoinjectors of various sleep and revival drugs. They are deployed with other troopers, and if the strategic or tactical situation calls for it, they can quickly launch themselves into the Dreamlands to explore or do battle. This can be very useful, as some threats are vulnerable to Dream attack, while sometimes valuable information can only be obtained in the Dreamworld. The downside is that while she is in the Dreamworld, a Dreamer is asleep, and obviously vulnerable to attack. Furthermore, the Dreamworld itself can be a dangerous place - a Dreamer might leave a bad situation in the physical world to arrive in a worse fix in the Dreamworld. There are more powerful Dreamers (d10 and d12), but they rarely leave the Dreamworld. Sometimes these powerful Dreamers have to be taken to a particular place for one arcane reason or another. When this happens, they are typically loaded into an armored capsule that has been nicknamed a "Coffin".; The troopers assigned to carry these Dreamers call it "Pallbearer Duty." The Waking Dreamer assigned to be the communications path between the waking world and one of the Coffin Jobs is usually nicknamed "Edward," although the derivation of this term is obscure.

The generic Artist cliché is included as a nod to all the Lovecraftian artist characters who seem to be exceptionally attuned to Mythos phenomena. It also makes a very "appropriate" inappropriate cliché. And whatever happened to Lovecraft's Erich Zann raises the question of whether Violin (6) was an appropriate or inappropriate cliché...

The world is filled with people with at least a few dice in Wildman. After all, it is the closest thing to a generic Feral cliché. But it should be tailored to the character's home environment. A Sun-baked Wildman (3) who has been dodging Cthonian larvae in the ruins of Santa Fe will be very different from a Salt-caked Wildman (3) eating sand fleas and dodging Deep One hunting parties on the Outer Banks. There are several Reconstructed ferals in the Reboubts, who proved to have no physical or psychic corruption. These characters can be mostly civilized, not much different from their Redoubt compatriots. Others are more like the Hollywood portrayal of the Indian Scouts attached to the U.S. Cavalry at the end of the 1800's.

The P/R/B Field Assessor is listed as a possible player character. This is because agreeing to play one is agreeing to be the cleric of a deity even more fell and unpredictable than Great Cthulhu himself... the Game Master. While individual GMs will have to decide what the exact nature of the P/R/B enhancements are (brainwashing? cybernetics? dire enchantments?), the price of that power is being well and truly on the GM's hook. Further, if you play it correctly, every other PC in the group should hate your character's guts. However, in the right kind of group, this could be a very interesting PC indeed.

Finally, in some areas, there might be opportunities for limited cooperation between Ghoul communities and a Redoubt population. In such a case a Ghoul Liason or Ghoul Ambassador could be another interesting, but unusual character.

## Characters

As compact as a Risus character is (even with the standard Overwrought Backstory a post-Fall character should have), I've just put them all on this one page.

Note that all these characters use the Hook/Tale option for 2 bonus dice. Some use double-pump dice, and one (Dominguez) uses funky dice, although all are 60 point/10 dice equivalent.

Also, these characters' Tales were all constructed with the Background Machine from the Risus Companion, which is currently available at S. John Ross's Cumberland Games website. Go ye hence and buy it, yea verily, for it doth rock. You can get there from the Risus page, and until I'm sure about how he wants his stuff linked to, I'll leave it at that.

## ANNABELLE GORDON, doom-haunted Sleepwalker

Ice-hearted Sleepwalker [3]  
Wild-eyed Berserk Trooper (3)  
Former Civil Engineer (2)  
Apocalyptist Lay Preacher (1)

Hook: Taint of Yog-Sothoth (will eventually slip into a permanent fuguestate and dissociate across time and space)

Tale: Annabelle was a wealthy civil engineer before the Fall; her basic patents on several not-quite-revolutionary but very cost-effective optimization techniques made her quite a bit of money. Of course, that hard-won money means nothing now that humanity is fighting for its very survival. Her spacious summer home in the Adirondacks is now a Mi-go breeding pit - she knows, she's seen the recon photos. She helped a little in the expansion of the Appalchian Redoubt when the Great Retreat began, but as the horizons of her world closed in, her concentration and her work began to suffer. Finally, a propaganda film of a successful counterraid on a Deep One outpost in Wilmington, NC flipped some switch inside her head. A routine medical check showed she was infertile (like so many women of the time) and eligible for combat duty. Three weeks later she was her squad's Sandman (Dreamcannon gunner). Six months later she was beginning to suffer from occasional blackouts and fugue states. One year later, and she had become a Sleepwalker. Now she waits for the end of the world, having adopted the hidden but increasingly popular syncretic Apocalyptist faith.

## **MALACHI WHATELY, brine shaman**

Fanatical Willworker [4]

Barely Reconstructed Barbarian Acolyte (3)

Sketchily Trained Light Irregular (1)

Hook: Reconstructed Feral Wizard (mistrusted misfit with strange urges and a cortex bomb)

Tale: Malachi Whately was born after the fall, to human parents in a shore community. His half-sister, however, was born to his father and a 10,000 year old Deep One priestess. Sarai (his half-sister) was meant to be a priestess as well, and Malachi was to be her bodyguard and acolyte. Young Malachi learned much eldritch lore, and became less a human child and more a personification of surf and marsh. But one fall day, he was savagely attacked by an evolved turbot while swimming out to the fishing nets. He staggered home late, bleeding and dazed, to see his family besieged by Organized humans from the Appalachian Redoubt. His sister and her mother were holding their own... until a P/R/B Willworker immobilized them with the Red Sign. He sprang out to aid them, but was knocked unconscious by stun gas and carried back to the Redoubt for possible recruitment. The Willworker who helped take his village recognized his native ability, and made sure Malachi was selected for psychic decontamination and formal Willworker training. Despite a deep-seated resentment toward his mentor, Malachi took to the P/R/B grimoires like a duck (or Deep One) to water. Malachi now feels that Organized humanity is his clan, and he has fought against Mythos forces, even Deep Ones. But he still feels the call of the surf, and while he does not have the Innsmouth Look, at night he still dreams (not Dreams) of the chill beauty of Y'ha-nthlei.

## **AVI GREENBAUM, falsely jovial squad leader**

Secretly Horrified Trooper (4)

Almost Ready to Burn Out Commander (3)

Ex-Used Car Salesman (2)

Reluctantly-trained Willworker (1)

Hook: On the Brink of Madness (Treat checks for temporary insanity as if he had lost an additional point already this session)

Tale: Avi Greenbaum had actually adjusted fairly well to the Fall - as well as anyone could. The fact that most of his family and friends were lost in the Slagging of Chicago paradoxically made things easier for him; unlike most people, he didn't have to worry about what unspeakable fates his loved ones might have suffered at the hands of eldritch horrors or insane cultists. After the Retreat, he became fast friends with the leader of one of the Pioneer units that later evolved into the tactteams. His National Guard skills were useful, and he had a can-do attitude, so he joined the Pioneers right as they became more overtly military. 3 years later, Avi was the leader of his own tactteam, and was told to deliver a shipment of winter clothes to a nearby feral population to 'win their hearts and minds.' However, the clothes were bathed in one of the first P/R/B-brewed batches of Space-mead. Avi's team went back a week later, ostensibly to begin discussion of an allegiance. In the interim, a P/R/B theoretical Willworker had summoned several Byakhee and tried sending the ferals to the Moon and back. Avi discovered that interesting fact by stumbling onto a village full of freeze-dried victims of explosive decompression and the Byakhee-savaged corpse of the magician. That more than anything is the event

that started Avi down his long slide toward madness. He has begun studying magick in the hope of protecting himself from such a fate, but the little knowledge he's gained has just made things worse...

## **CONRAD SIGMUNDSON, phlegmatic killer**

Blank-eyed Trooper (4)  
Coldly Brilliant Classical Violinist (3)  
High School Track Star (2)  
Quiet Black Marketeer (1)

Hook: under P/R/B surveillance (anytime he gains a die in any cliché, roll 2d6. On a roll of 2, he will be "drafted" by the P/R/B - take his new die as a d8 in Field Assessor, and replace this hook with the usual P/R/B Conditioning Hook)

Tale: Conrad was a well-respected musician at the regional level before the Great Retreat. During the social upheaval that preceded the Fall, he was making plans to gather his 8 brothers and sisters and move to a survival-ready retreat. However, he was conned, and the land he bought was already occupied. Before he could make other plans, his siblings were killed in a food riot, and he wandered through the death of civilization. There he discovered that killing didn't really bother him. That's the kind of thing he probably would never have discovered barring the end of the world, but he doesn't mind. Now he is the best classical violinist in Redoubt Bravo, as well as a rock-solid trooper. He feels no need for his standard issue tranquilizers or mood stabilizers, since combat doesn't worry him (although he is still vulnerable to Sanity Checks). So he trades them, as well small items from Outside for... favors. This activity has not gone unnoticed by the P/R/B, and before long Conrad will probably get invited in for a "job interview" and walk out a Field Assessor.

## **TERESA WASHINGTON, drug addicted Dream Trooper**

Insomniac Dreamer (4)  
Twitchily Alert Trooper (3)  
Shivering Addict (2)  
Inveterate Movie Watcher (1)

Hook: On the Nod (has to use sleep drugs to Dream or even fall asleep; but is prone to attack by Dreamland creatures)

Tale: Teresa Washington hated broccoli passionately, and her parents split up when she was seven years old. That kind of thing is common enough, but for someone born to be a Dreamer such childhood miseries can become the Silver Key. At night, Teresa was the graceful chatelaine of a beautiful estate - but in the waking world she was a failed actress. Long before the Fall, the needle was already in her arm. Still, P/R/B screenings discovered her raw power as a Dreamer, and Teresa Washington and Lady Sessessiphon of the Grey Manse were drafted. Teresa is off smack, but just as hooked on Somna. In the Dreamworld, Lady Sessessiphon grows ever more haggard, while her Grey Manse falls into disrepair.

## **JOSEPH SMITH DOMINGUEZ, intimidating martinet**

Cold-blooded P/R/B Field Assessor (3d8) [note: this costs the same as 4d6]

By-the-book Trooper (3)  
Secretly Tormented Dreamer (2)  
Amateur Astronomer (1)

Hook: P/R/B Conditioning (subject to an array of posthypnotic? commands - GM can dictate PC action freely)

Tale: When he was 12, long before the Fall, J.S. Dominguez was given a telescope. He grew to know the night sky like the back of his hand, and became an astronomer. J.S. would have been happy spending the rest of his life studying the universe. But before he was 30, the human race learned more about the universe than it ever wanted to know. Dominguez made it to Redoubt Bravo, but early on he rubbed a member of the P/R/B the wrong way and got "drafted." Now he is a callous Field Assessor, easily as hated as any Soviet political commissar ever was. No one ever sits down and has a conversation with him, but if someone did they would discover that J.S. no longer knows anything about the field he dedicated his life to.

## Tainted Meat

Cliches for the creatures of the Cthulhu Mythos in the Sleepwalkers setting

I've listed some typical things a horrible inhuman entity might use its cliches for, as well as suggested die types. This is to represent the raw power of a given species; individuals may of course have more or less dice to indicate their personal competence. Also note that many of these cliches will have some other facet listed; Deep One warrior, Mi-go scientist, Serpent Man shaman. On the other hand, the more bestial or incomprehensible nonhumans might best be represented by just "Dhole (6d20)," for example.

Finally, some of these suggested uses have been written in the spirit of the 'oddball skills' used in some Chaosium products to provide cues for the GM on how to play a given NPC.

- Ghoul: (d6) or (d8) - eating corpses, sneaking in tunnels, underground lore, knowing sinister secrets
- -note: In my opinion, a Ghoul is one of the few Mythos species that might make an acceptable PC. Consider "Ghoul Ambassador(3d8)," which could be entertaining in the right group.
- Serpent Men: (d6) - hiding, sneaking, ambushing, poisonous bite -note: In my campaign, I'm using the "degenerate Serpent Men" concept, treating them like the Victorian conception of an Unseelie faerie as a devolved killer. Atavistic Serpent Men might have double-pump dice or d8's, plus spellcasting competency.
- Deep One: (d8) - being immortal, interbreeding with humans, fishing
- Mi-go: (d6) - (but will sometimes have ultratech devices granting bonus dice) - prodigious mechanical and surgical skill, talking in weird buzzy voices
- Dark Young: (d10) Marching out of the woods and eating/mating with sacrifices, looking vaguely like trees
- Shoggoth: [d10] - shapeshifting (basically ANYTHING physical), sullenly serving OR sullenly rebelling, going "Tekeli-li!" really loudly
- Invisible Polyp: (d12) - be invisible, sucking winds, piping horribly, killing big cones
- Hound of Tindalos: [d10] tracking prey through time, manifesting through corners, horrifically killing prey



- Dimensional Shambler: (d8) - materializing, shambling, grabbing and dematerializing
- Cthonian: (d6) through (d20), depending on which instar you encounter - moving through solid rock, causing earthquakes, tracking Cthonian Eggs, swallowing things up whole
- I have also (so far) refrained from generating stats for the major entities. Use them as plot devices, not people in big rubber suits stomping on models of Tokyo. If you really must, something like "Great Cthulhu [6d30]" or "Azathoth (4d100)" should suffice.

Sanity Check Task Numbers (TNs) for these creatures are on the new rules page, with the Sanity mechanics.

## Gaze into the Abyss

A Sanity mechanic for Risus Sleepwalkers.

It depends on your style of play; I prefer for the GM to handle the mechanics of the Sanity rules, giving the PCs roleplaying cues as necessary. However, there's no reason why this can't be done "In Public," so to speak, with the players making their own rolls and keeping track of their Sanity Tally themselves. The mechanics are:

Sanity Tally=character dice total (note: I include bonus dice, as from taking Hooks and/or Tales, in this total, so a "Normal" character has a Sanity Tally of 12)

Sanity Cliche=character dice total/4, rounded down. This means a standard character with a Hook and Tale has a Sanity Cliche of (3)

In a Sanity Check, roll the character's Sanity Cliche against the creature or event's TN (see below); if the character loses, take one off the Sanity Tally.

The GM or player (depending on who's handling the mechanics) can pump the Sanity Cliche before a difficult test, to simulate holding on to your sanity by sheer force of will, but being psychologically exhausted and more vulnerable to further shocks afterward.

Each time a character loses a point from the Sanity Tally, roll dice equal to the Tally points lost in that session vs your Sanity Cliche. This is a combat, where horrified insights into the workings of reality battle the character's sense of how things should be - roleplay it! If the character loses this combat, he or she goes temporarily insane.

If a character's Sanity Tally ever goes to zero, they become permanently insane, and the player must go through the lengthy, tedious process of making a new Risus PC. Break out a fresh Post-it note...

Anytime a new die for a cliche is earned, add 1 to the character's current and total Sanity Tally. At the GM's whim, other major successes may add to the current Tally, although the total may never exceed the character's dice total. This intentionally does not differ for those with funky dice.

And don't forget the primal rule; the GM is free to do whatever he sees fit to make things work as he sees fit. If a PC pumps or double-pumps or uses a lucky shot to stare down Hastur, that's all well and good. But feel free to ding his or her Sanity Tally anyway. PCs can escape from Great Old Ones, but they shouldn't stroll away whistling...

## Sanity TNs for various events

- Performing minor Willworkings: 5
- Seeing a Deep One: 6
- Reading a minor Mythos text: 8
- Seeing a Ghoul feast: 10
- Performing significant Willworkings: 12
- Discovering an unbelievable atrocity: 15
- Performing major Willworkings: 17
- Seeing an enraged adult Cthonian: 20
- Seeing a nest of Dholes: 25
- Reading the Necronomicon: 30
- Seeing Cthulhu: 30

As always, GMs should bump these numbers up or down to represent different situations. Additionally, some cliches can allow characters to ignore some Sanity Checks for a period.

## Double-Edged Swords

This is a list of human and inhuman technologies usable in the Sleepwalkers setting, some of which can be as dangerous to the wielder as the target.

### Tools of the trade

Trooper

battlesuit (also bonus die gear), maser carbine, mollyknife (monomolecular wire blade)

Willworker

Mythos texts, enchanted talismans for summoning and binding, Space-mead

Dreamer

autoinjectors of Somna (sleep) and Rooster (wake-up) drugs, sensory deprivation gear in helmet (in Dreamlands) staff, robes, house or manse

Sleepwalker

heavy battlesuit, Fetchpike (enchanted melee weapon, allows attacks against creatures who are vulnerable to enchanted items)

Artist

trumpet/painbrushes/whatever, brooding books of fin-de-siecle art criticism or theory

Wildman

appropriate weapons (from flint knives to surplus military small-arms), preserved food, stout footwear

P/R/B Field Assessor

Command battlesuit (with kill switches for other squad suits), voice stress analyzers, psychically secure cargo bags

Ghoul

funeral rags, grime and mold, sharpened bones, a few haunches of gamy human meat, grave loot of surprising utility

## Bonus die equipment

- Battlesuits give +1d bonus die for fighting, as well as noticing things with its sensors.
- (give characters a bonus pip +1 if they describe using appropriate weaponry for the type of target)
- Dreamcannon: +1d bonus for fighting immaterial creatures; also allows attacks against creatures who are only vulnerable to enchanted weapons, but provides no bonuses in that situation. (note: excessive Dreamcannon use might be the trigger for the Sleepwalker transformation)
- Psychotronic Battery: gives +1d to +2d to Willworker rolls to cast spells; but caster must make 2 Sanity Checks.
- P/R/B Theoretical Maunal: gives +1d to "raw knowledge" about Mythos subjects - but not for spells/Willworking.

## Paranatural artifacts

- Snarler: this is P/R/B slang for a common Mi-go weapon that looks like a knot of dull copper rods. In game terms, it is +1d bonus combat gear for Mi-go; captured snarlers stop working after a few minutes. Although it has no visible discharge of material ammunition or energy beams, targets feel as if they are being tangled up and crushed, and their ability to move is severely limited. Current P/R/B theory is that snarlers distort space-time on a very localized scale, possibly by a method similar to the phenomenon that allows mi-go to fly and travel in space. This has not been proven yet due to the fact that captured snarlers stop working so quickly. All attempts to disassemble one have failed in one baffling manner after another. For example, the last snarler investigated by Redoubt Alpha turned three P/R/B scientists into a small grey ovoid (about 2 inches across) and created an exact duplicate of the lab twenty meters further back in the solid rock of the mountain. It may be telling that snarlers seem to be less effective when used against powerful Sleepwalkers, possibly since they are only weakly attached to local reality.
- Deep One Armor: +1d bonus combat gear. Beaten gold adorned with the shells of long-extinct marine life shouldn't be able to stop modern monomolecular blades or 20mm electrothermal rounds... but no one is surprised that it does. It's occasionally taken in combat as trophies, so its not impossible to see bits of this armor riveted to Tactroop battlesuits. Large amounts of such scavenged armor may even provide a +1 bonus pip, in the GM's discretion. Of course, feel free to have such PCs consumed by dreams of batrachian horrors and/or purged by their P/R/B commissar for psychic unreliability.
- Elfshot: They doesn't provide bonus dice, but these semi-immaterial arrowheads and spearpoints do explain how the devolved remnants of the Serpent Men can fight on an equal footing with people in power armor. The further good news is that shards of the elfshot can embed themselves in the victim's Dream-self, with debilitating effects in both worlds. In Redoubt Alpha, all captured elfshot is confiscated by the P/R/B. Among the tactroops, the current theory for this is that the P/R/B wants to have yet another handle on the Dreamers, since cutting off their drug supplies might be too slow a countermeasure. The elfshot weapons so far

encountered all appear to be carved from bone that has been treated with a pale blue resin of unknown composition.

- **Summoning Tools:** this is a generic category, meant to cover all the eldritch apparatus used to call up Mythos entities. There is a bewildering variety of these things, each only of use to contact or summon a single entity or species. The effectiveness of any given item is up to the GM, but a good guideline to follow is that the more difficult or distressing the procedures needed to build and enchant an item, the more powerful it will be. My "house rule" is that if I can describe the materials or techniques required and at least one player (not player character) doesn't wince, it only grants a +1 pip. On the other hand, if I can barely describe the thing myself without getting a little uneasy, maybe it's worth +1d. I'm steadfastly unwilling to put the one thing I came up with horrible enough to grant a +2d bonus on this website. Suffice it to say it's a method a feral band is using to contact Shub-Niggurath, and it explains why they have to keep raiding the neighboring tribes for captives...

## **Fiddling While the World Burns**

Campaigns and adventure seeds for the Sleepwalkers setting

### **Hobson's Choice**

The PCs' team is going out on a normal recon patrol. Nearing the edge of their range and preparing to turn back, the PCs hear strange buzzing voices up ahead, on the other side of a large rock. Before they can do much else, something flashes quickly overhead and out of sight. Warily approaching the rock, they find... three healthy human babies, apparently about 2 or 3 months old. Carved into the rock (on close inspection, it looks like it was burned in by acid) is the following message:

"you need young we need old you give us old we give you young you give one we give three leave at rock day get at rock night we have myraid young"

Take it from there. If the PCs take the children back to the base, all available tests show them to be completely healthy, untainted human children. The redoubt's healthy birth rate is well below the overall death rate; will the P/R/B decide to go along with this plot, sacrificing older members of the community to get a much-needed boost for the future? (I think the only answer is yes, hence the title of this section.) If so, perhaps the PCs are the ones who have to escort the first sacrifice back out to the rock (important question: is the sacrifice willing, restrained, or sedated?). Or perhaps the P/R/B wants to hedge its bets; while one team takes the first sacrifice, the PCs are supposed to shadow them and see who or what they're trading with, what is being done with the sacrifices, and where or how the unknowns are getting these babies. And why does the note say "myraid?" Do they mean "lots?" Or do they mean "Thousand?"

### **Perchance to Dream**

The PCs find a crudely camouflaged longhouse, guarded by a handful of feral fighters, and full of sleeping ferals of all ages. The guards say (and PC Dreamers can confirm) that the sleepers are drugged with an altered herb recently found in the area. They are Dreaming nonstop as a team, trying to create a safe haven in the Dreamworld for as many humans as possible to escape into, abandoning the horrors

of the waking world. But something seems odd, both in the waking world and the Dreamworld... What is the nature of this altered plant, which appears to be a mutated foxglove? Is it corrupting the Dreamer's work? Making them more powerful (single use bonus die item)? Or just killing them? Are these Dreamers really as altruistic as they claim, or do they plan to build a Dream kingdom that they can people with human slaves? And this many Dreamers in one place must be a veritable psychic beacon; why are there no Mythos threats within 50 miles? These Dreamers might have a guardian angel they don't know about. Or maybe just the psychic equivalent of a sign saying "Private Property: no hunting without owner's permission."

## Halls of the Mountain King

The P/R/B has made a heart-stopping discovery in the aftermath of a moderate earthquake. An unused tunnel, dug during the first frantic days of the Great Retreat, has been breached. A segment has been cleanly burned out of one side of the tunnel, and it looks like the work of a young Cthonian. Probes sent down the new vertical shaft indicate a bewildering maze of small tunnels, none much larger than 10'-15' across (break out all your old dungeon maps!). Clearly the PCs have not been living right, because they are the team the P/R/B has chosen to explore this tunnel system. If there is just one young Cthonian, the PCs are ordered to kill it. But if they discover a nest of younglings, or a breeding triad of mature Cthonians, the next adventure your group runs might well be scouting for a new Redoubt location, or negotiating with Redoubts Charlie or Delta to move in there.

## Peace in Our Time

There is a large Ghoul nest living in the ruins of the nearest town. This is a well known fact; there have even been some inconclusive skirmishes between them and Redoubt forces, but neither side has the resources for all out war. However, while resting in the Waiting Room, the PCs are scrambled to go intercept a small group of Ghouls approaching the Redoubt. But when the PCs are spotted by the Ghouls, the Ghouls begin waving a white flag. What has driven the fatalistic and inhuman Ghouls to seek human assistance? And why does the P/R/B agree to help them so quickly?

## Suspicious Growths

These are just seeds or ideas that can be slipped into other adventures or expanded into full campaigns. On the other hand, they can also be used simply as odd or unnerving background.

- The local trees seem to be changing more quickly, taking on an air of distinct menace.
- Another Tacsquad starts doing odd things like finishing each other's sentences, moving together as if choreographed, even breathing synchronously.
- The P/R/B initiates a ruthless series of purges, exiling or executing almost a quarter of the Redoubt's civilian population.
- Food is running low, and the humans of the Redoubt must start eating some of the altered flora and fauna infesting the Outside.
- A nearby Feral tribe that had previously been neutral or even cautiously friendly begins ambushing the Redoubt's troopers.
- A woman in advanced environmental armor is found next to a wrecked machine; she claims to be a scout from one of the orbital colonies, and is immune to any psychic or Dream investigation.

- The squad's Dreamcannon is broken open in a battle, and the PCs discovers what exactly makes one tick - which makes the enchanted skull at the butt of each Fetchpike not seem so bad...

## Sleepwalkers (the Sleepmaster version, 1.2)

"Wake up. Time to die."

-Leon the Replicant, *Blade Runner*

The *Sleepwalkers* setting is a post-apocalyptic future, where the dire predictions of H.P. Lovecraft's cosmic horror fiction are beginning to come true. Humanity is now split into two factions. There are the organized populations of the Redoubts, who are struggling to remain uncorrupted. On the other hand are the feral humans, some of whom are simply trying to survive in the wilds and ruins, while others are servants, slaves or livestock for various Mythos entities.



I've set *Sleepwalkers* up to use S. John Ross's great [Risus](#) rules. If you aren't familiar with it, I heartily recommend downloading a copy and taking a look. It's six pages of pure roleplaying dynamite, or at least guncotton. Plus the rest of this section of my site will be much less useful without it...

Another book that has heavily influenced this game setting is Chaosium's great *Call of Cthulhu* RPG. Further influences and inspirations can be found [here](#).

### Setting Information

This is a more in-depth look at the *Sleepwalkers* setting, including a brief history, a discussion of various Mythos threats, and the rise of the ambiguous leadership of the P/R/B. New [cliches](#) for the *Sleepwalkers* world are also here, with an explanation and some possible uses for each.

### Characters

This page is a list of several characters, suitable as PCs or NPCs for a standard (10 dice/60 point) *Sleepwalkers* campaign.

### Gods and Monsters

A list of Risus cliches for things by their very nature undefinable - Mythos entities! (in other words, I'm giving myself plenty of weasel room on these stats...)

## New Rules

Primarily, the Sanity rules I've cobbled together for the Risus *Sleepwalkers* setting.

## Equipment

This is a list of common 'totem' equipment for uncommon cliches. Included is some bonus-dice equipment as well.

## Campaign Ideas

Things to do while waiting for the world to end. After all, hunting Deep Ones isn't the only thing worth doing...

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## Inspirations for the *Sleepwalkers* setting

There are several things that all fell together when I was trying to come up with the *Sleepwalkers* setting. In no particular order:

- the short story "Shaft Number 247" by Basil Copper, collected in [Cthulhu 2000](#).
  - the unpublished [End Time](#) project by Dr. Michael C. LaBossiere, which can be found here and there on the web
  - S. John Ross's "Spacedock Stencil" font (seriously!)
  - [GURPS: Reign Of Steel](#) by Daniel Pulver (author of [Transhuman Space](#), which I have a [webpage](#) for as well)
  - [GURPS: Cthulhupunk](#) by Chris McCubbin
  - [GURPS: Horror, 3rd Edition](#) by Kenneth Hite (really, anything of his is good)
  - the handful of episodes of the anime series [Blue Gender](#) that I've seen on the Cartoon Network
  - not to mention all the other Lovecraftian stuff I've read over the years
  - and last but not least, Fred Saberhagen's Berserker story "Wings out of Shadow"
- PLUS
- the Brian Setzer Orchestra's cover version of "Sleepwalker," for the core idea.

After I get more of the important stuff out of the way, I might revisit this and try to figure out what influence led to what part of this setting.

There are also some good Cthulhu/Lovecraft RISUS pages already out there. You can find them at the Risus [main page](#), along with other coolness.

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## The *Sleepwalkers* setting

Here is the future history of humanity, when the stars have wheeled around again and Chaos is about to swallow the earth.

What came before the Fall is not all that important. What matters is that over the course of a few years, the mundane problems of a near-future world were overrun by a series of increasingly deadly, and increasingly paranormal, events. Rampant storms and "heavy weather," plagues, disappearances, earthquakes, and madness swept the earth. Slowly at first, and then swifter and surer, the forces of what humanity came to call the Mythos became more and more blatant. Paris was overrun by the Ghouls of her famed catacombs; New England and then New York were by rising waves that brought Deep One colonists in their wakes. Across the roof of the world, Ithaqua the Windwalker took back his old domain. Deep in the Australian Outback, shattered stone doors appeared in satellite photography one week; by the next week, there was no living human left on that continent. Cthonians are churning the solid rock of the American West like melting butter. And somewhere in the South Pacific, a mountain of twised masonry has heaved itself above the waves once again... Now the Earth is in the hands of various 'lesser' Mythos races, each pursuing their own incomprehensible agendas. The very plants and animals are beginning to warp and change as the Earth is made ready for a hundred eerie goals. Beasts, madmen and desperate survivors scavenge the wreck of human civilization. And the worst is yet to come.

This is a game of claustrophobic horror. Most of humanity is subjugated by eldritch terrors. Most of the rest is living a nightmarish hunted life, while the very land they are trying to live off is becoming something alien. And the tiny remainder lives sunk into bleak stone and steel warrens, growing weaker and weaker while their leaders become more paranoid and ruthless. There are two main divisions of the surviving members of the human race. One is the "Organized" faction, hiding in various fortified enclaves scattered around the world, most of which are hastily expanded, hardened military bases (think of NORAD's Cheyenne Mountain facility). Each redoubt is basically its own little world, although there is some communication between certain of the bases. Most have begun sending out armed tactical teams to defend their locations and search for useful items. What they define as useful can range from uncontaminated foodstuffs to possibly useful arcane artifacts to 'clean' feral humans for breeding stock. The flip side of the coin is the aforementioned feral population. These run the gamut from insane cultists to armed bandit groups to desperate people who, for one reason or another, haven't been able to find or gain admittance to a redoubt. Some of these wild people are powerful

magicians; others have turned to the Dreamworld in an attempt to build a place more hospitable to humanity than the waking world. Most of the survivors in the wild are master trackers, skulkers and survivors. Those that are not do not last long.

The material on this site tends to focus on one of the Redoubts, the Appalachian Mountain Redoubt Bravo - Alpha has entirely vanished, as well as most of the mountain it was buried under. Bravo's P/R/B thinks it was either an experimental Mi-go mining technique or a badly botched invocation. Most American redoubts have a P/R/B - the surviving vestiges of the nationwide Parabiological Research Bureau, instituted before the Fall by the Centers for Disease Control to investigate and combat the strange things that eventually destroyed the world. In some Organized strongholds, the P/R/B is wholly discredited, treated as scapegoats for failing to halt the tide of the Mythos. In others, the P/R/B acts as advisors. In the Appalachian Redoubt, the P/R/B has become a ruling clique with the power of life and death over everyone living under the mountain. Bravo's P/R/B has become more and more ruthless. Two years ago, they began segregating all tactroop and exploratory personnel into an upper level of the Redoubt which has been unofficially dubbed the "Waiting Room." If your job takes you into the outside world, you are not allowed to mix with the rest of the redoubt population. Further, there are incredibly stringent identification and decontamination procedures one must go through to reenter. To prevent infiltration or contamination, exiting and returning personnel are subjected to rigorous genetic, psychological, magickal and Dreaming tests to confirm their identity. Anything being brought back into the Redoubt is subjected to just as much scrutiny. And anyone bypassing these strictures (or many other P/R/B regulations) is subject to summary execution.

So the troopers go out, sealed into their environmental armor; some are just soldiers, some are Dreamers with injectors full of Sleepdust, and others are half-lunatic Willworkers, desperately using the magic of the Mythos to try and buy some time for what is left of mankind. And more and more are becoming Sleepwalkers - slipping in and out of a "fightstate" where time seems meaningless and the horrors of the Mythos somehow less threatening. Meanwhile, the redoubts themselves are already beginning to crumble. A rising number of people appear to be sterile, and many births are clearly (or not so clearly) tainted by the Mythos. Many of the fortresses are already below a sustainable breeding population, and most others are not far behind. The number of people who die or are expelled greatly outpaces the birth rate. In Redoubt Bravo, the P/R/B's stopgap solution is compulsory pregnancy for all fertile women older than 16 (although the P/R/B is considering dropping this to 14). Some groups look to space, wanting to somehow make it to the few operational space stations left in orbit, or even to

the tiny settlements on the Moon. Others plan on staying in the buried fortresses permanently, eeking out a circumscribed survival for humankind as rats in the walls. A few even hope to reach an accomodation with one or more Mythos factions. No one seriously expects to be able to retake the surface world.

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### Cliches for *Sleepwalkers* characters

The cliches below have suggested die types (plain, double-pump, or funky) as well as possible uses.

- Trooper (d6) - battlesuit piloting, guns and advanced weapons, sensors, tactics, basic Mythos lore (3 or 4 dice for 'vanilla' troopers. 2 or 3 for specialists)
- Sleepwalker [d6] - fightstate (frenzied combat), hand-to-hand, ignoring Mythos fright checks (these characters have a compulsory hook: the Taint of Yog-Sothoth)
- Willworker [d6] - reading Mythos tomes, summoning/binding things, casting spells (regular Troopers can have 1 or 2 dice in Willworker; anything above that and they are considered full-time Willworkers)
- Dreamer (d6) or possibly (d8) - Dream travel, Dream lore, taking material things into the Dreamworld, percieving hidden things in the real world that have a significant Dreamworld presence
- Artist (d6) - whatever type of art you want, affecting people's moods, sensing Mythos disturbances
- Wildman (d6) - survival, camouflage, tracking, hiding, identifying safe but altered plants and animals and possibly...
- P/R/B field assessor (d8) or (d10)? - finding Mythos artifacts or texts, making horrifying decisions, ruthless commissaring (yes, I know it's not a word), gauging other people's sanity (another compulsory hook: P/R/B conditioning - whatever strange process that makes the field assessor more powerful than most humans also leaves him subject to posthypnotic compulsions - i.e., the GM can tell this PC "You are going to go do this now.")
- Ghoul (d6) or (d8) - eating corpses, sneaking in tunnels, underground lore, knowing sinister secrets

I highly recommend that these cliches be used with appropriate and interesting modifiers, such as Bloodthirsty Trooper (4) or Bibliophobic Willworker [3]. See the [characters](#) page of this site for some ideas as to what I mean.

## More character information

The **Sleepwalker** is subject to an automatic hook, the so-called Taint of Yog-Sothoth. Conceptually, it is similar to the Innsmouth Look that precedes a hybrid human's metamorphosis into a full-blooded Deep One. The early stages actually are beneficial; the sufferer begins to enter a timeless fugue state when fighting, where there seems to be all the time in the world to decide what to do. Mythos entities that would ordinarily produce Sanity checks simply don't seem that horrifying. Dangerous, certainly, even sickening... but the Sleepwalker fugue takes the soul-blasting horror out of the situation. However, as the Sleepwalker becomes faster, more powerful, his day to day existence seems less and less real - as does the Dreamworld, if he possesses any Dreaming skill. By the time someone is a Sleepwalker [5] he seems to flicker a little around the edges. At Sleepwalker [6] others can see through him occasionally; while in fightstate, the Sleepwalker seems to snap in and out of the normal frame of reference. Eventually, the influence of Yog-Sothoth permeates the Sleepwalker to the point that he simply comes loose from reality. In game terms, if a character "succeeds" on an advancement roll at Sleepwalker [6], he goes into an extended fugue and disassociates across space and time. Some P/R/B theoreticians think the Taint is a racial "escape valve" for humanity; that as mankind runs out of time, some individual people might step out of time and be free. More sober types believe the Sleepwalker is either subsumed by Yog-Sothoth's growing presence in our local spacetime or simply ablated into nothingness.

**Willworkers** are users of barely-controlled Mythos Magick. Some can use their arcane knowledge to summon or command some Mythos entities, or perform other "small competences." For the player or GM who wants some guidance on this subject, I can't think of a better source than the Greater and Lesser Grimoires from Chaosium's Call of Cthulhu to keep the proper Mythos feel. In short, fireballs or Arcane Arrows© don't fit the milieu, while the Red Sign does... Willworker/troopers typically paint their battlesuits with runes and eldritch signs, and most carry sealed panniers of arcane materials or enchanted items to be used when necessary. Feral willworkers seem to have stockpiles of necessary ingredients throughout their stomping grounds. Of course, it is significantly easier to amass and maintain a pile of children's skulls or similarly horrific ingredients in the post-Fall environment. The GM should set Sanity TNs for most spells (based on what exactly the character is trying to accomplish) and require Sanity Checks when they are cast. See the [rules page](#) for guidelines.

**Dreamers** are those people who are able to perform great feats in the Dreamlands, the collective higher plane that all human dreamers can occasionally touch. But Dreamers

can enter this land intentionally, and command power and respect there. Wild Dreamers simply have to hope they can get to sleep. But those in the more technologically advanced enclaves have access to drugs that can put them under and bring them up with a fair amount of reliability. There are two types of Dreamers by Redoubt operational standards. The most common are "Waking Dreamers" (d6 and d8 level). The name is a bit of a misnomer, as they still must sleep to dream. However, Waking Dreamers are usually trained as troopers as well, and are issued power armor with autoinjectors of various sleep and revival drugs. They are deployed with other troopers, and if the strategic or tactical situation calls for it, they can quickly launch themselves into the Dreamlands to explore or do battle. This can be very useful, as some threats are vulnerable to Dream attack, while sometimes valuable information can only be obtained in the Dreamworld. The downside is that while she is in the Dreamworld, a Dreamer is asleep, and obviously vulnerable to attack. Furthermore, the Dreamworld itself can be a dangerous place - a Dreamer might leave a bad situation in the physical world to arrive in a worse fix in the Dreamworld. There are more powerful Dreamers (d10 and d12), but they rarely leave the Dreamworld. Sometimes these powerful Dreamers have to be taken to a particular place for one arcane reason or another. When this happens, they are typically loaded into an armored capsule that has been nicknamed a "Coffin".; The troopers assigned to carry these Dreamers call it "Pallbearer Duty." The Waking Dreamer assigned to be the communications path between the waking world and one of the Coffin Jobs is usually nicknamed "Edward," although the derivation of this term is obscure.

The generic **Artist** cliché is included as a nod to all the Lovecraftian artist characters who seem to be exceptionally attuned to Mythos phenomena. It also makes a very "appropriate" inappropriate cliché. And whatever happened to Lovecraft's Erich Zann raises the question of whether Violin (6) was an appropriate or inappropriate cliché...

The world is filled with people with at least a few dice in **Wildman**. After all, it is the closest thing to a generic Feral cliché. But it should be tailored to the character's home environment. A Sun-baked Wildman (3) who has been dodging Cthonian larvae in the ruins of Santa Fe will be very different from a Salt-caked Wildman (3) eating sand fleas and dodging Deep One hunting parties on the Outer Banks. There are several Reconstructed ferals in the Reboubts, who proved to have no physical or psychic corruption. These characters can be mostly civilized, not much different from their Redoubt compatriots. Others are more like the Hollywood portrayal of the Indian Scouts attached to the U.S. Cavalry at the end of the 1800's.

The **P/R/B Field Assessor** is listed as a *possible* player character. This is because agreeing to play one is agreeing to be the cleric of a deity even more fell and unpredictable than Great Cthulhu himself... the Game Master. While individual GMs will have to decide what the exact nature of the P/R/B enhancements are (brainwashing? cybernetics? dire enchantments?), the price of that power is being well and truly on the GM's hook. Further, if you play it correctly, every other PC in the group should hate your character's guts. However, in the right kind of group, this could be a very interesting PC indeed.

Finally, in some areas, there might be opportunities for limited cooperation between Ghoul communities and a Redoubt population. In such a case a Ghoul Liason or Ghoul Ambassador could be another interesting, but unusual character.

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## Characters

As compact as a Risus character is (even with the standard Overwrought Backstory a post-Fall character should have), I've just put them all on this one page.

Note that all these characters use the Hook/Tale option for 2 bonus dice. Some use double-pump dice, and one (Dominguez) uses funky dice, although all are 60 point/10 dice equivalent.

Also, these characters' Tales were all constructed with the Background Machine from the Risus Companion, which is currently available at S. John Ross's Cumberland Games website. Go ye hence and buy it, yea verily, for it doth rock. You can get there from the [Risus](#) page, and until I'm sure about how he wants his stuff linked to, I'll leave it at that.

ANNABELLE GORDON, doom-haunted Sleepwalker

Ice-hearted Sleepwalker [3]

Wild-eyed Berserk Trooper (3)

Former Civil Engineer (2)

Apocalyptist Lay Preacher (1)

Hook: Taint of Yog-Sothoth (will eventually slip into a permanent fugue state and dissociate across time and space)

Tale: Annabelle was a wealthy civil engineer before the Fall; her basic patents on several not-quite-revolutionary but very cost-effective optimization techniques made her quite a bit of money. Of course, that hard-won money means nothing now that humanity is

fighting for its very survival. Her spacious summer home in the Adirondacks is now a Mi-go breeding pit - she knows, she's seen the recon photos. She helped a little in the expansion of the Appalachian Redoubt when the Great Retreat began, but as the horizons of her world closed in, her concentration and her work began to suffer. Finally, a propaganda film of a successful counterraid on a Deep One outpost in Wilmington, NC flipped some switch inside her head. A routine medical check showed she was infertile (like so many women of the time) and eligible for combat duty. Three weeks later she was her squad's Sandman (Dreamcannon gunner). Six months later she was beginning to suffer from occasional blackouts and fugue states. One year later, and she had become a Sleepwalker. Now she waits for the end of the world, having adopted the hidden but increasingly popular syncretic Apocalypticist faith.

MALACHI WHATELY, brine shaman

Fanatical Willworker [4]

Barely Reconstructed Barbarian Acolyte (3)

Sketchily Trained Light Irregular (1)

Hook: Reconstructed Feral Wizard (mistrusted misfit with strange urges and a cortex bomb)

Tale: Malachi Whately was born after the fall, to human parents in a shore community. His half-sister, however, was born to his father and a 10,000 year old Deep One priestess. Sarai (his half-sister) was meant to be a priestess as well, and Malachi was to be her bodyguard and acolyte. Young Malachi learned much eldritch lore, and became less a human child and more a personification of surf and marsh. But one fall day, he was savagely attacked by an evolved turbot while swimming out to the fishing nets. He staggered home late, bleeding and dazed, to see his family besieged by Organized humans from the Appalachian Redoubt. His sister and her mother were holding their own... until a P/R/B Willworker immobilized them with the Red Sign. He sprang out to aid them, but was knocked unconscious by stun gas and carried back to the Redoubt for possible recruitment. The Willworker who helped take his village recognized his native ability, and made sure Malachi was selected for psychic decontamination and formal Willworker training. Despite a deep-seated resentment toward his mentor, Malachi took to the P/R/B grimoires like a duck (or Deep One) to water. Malachi now feels that Organized humanity is his clan, and he has fought against Mythos forces, even Deep Ones. But he still feels the call of the surf, and while he does not have the Innsmouth Look, at night he still dreams (not Dreams) of the chill beauty of Y'ha-nthlei.

AVI GREENBAUM, falsely jovial squad leader  
Secretly Horrified Trooper (4)  
Almost Ready to Burn Out Commander (3)  
Ex-Used Car Salesman (2)  
Reluctantly-trained Willworker (1)

Hook: On the Brink of Madness (Treat checks for temporary insanity as if he had lost an additional point already this session)

Tale: Avi Greenbaum had actually adjusted fairly well to the Fall - as well as anyone could. The fact that most of his family and friends were lost in the Slagging of Chicago paradoxically made things easier for him; unlike most people, he didn't have to worry about what unspeakable fates his loved ones might have suffered at the hands of eldritch horrors or insane cultists. After the Retreat, he became fast friends with the leader of one of the Pioneer units that later evolved into the tactteams. His National Guard skills were useful, and he had a can-do attitude, so he joined the Pioneers right as they became more overtly military. 3 years later, Avi was the leader of his own tactteam, and was told to deliver a shipment of winter clothes to a nearby feral population to 'win their hearts and minds.' However, the clothes were bathed in one of the first P/R/B-brewed batches of Space-mead. Avi's team went back a week later, ostensibly to begin discussion of an allegiance. In the interim, a P/R/B theoretical Willworker had summoned several Byakhee and tried sending the ferals to the Moon and back. Avi discovered that interesting fact by stumbling onto a village full of freeze-dried victims of explosive decompression and the Byakhee-savaged corpse of the magician. That more than anything is the event that started Avi down his long slide toward madness. He has begun studying magick in the hope of protecting himself from such a fate, but the little knowledge he's gained has just made things worse...

CONRAD SIGMUNDSON, phlegmatic killer  
Blank-eyed Trooper (4)  
Coldly Brilliant Classical Violinist (3)  
High School Track Star (2)  
Quiet Black Marketeer (1)

Hook: under P/R/B surveillance (anytime he gains a die in any cliché, roll 2d6. On a roll of 2, he will be "drafted" by the P/R/B - take his new die as a d8 in Field Assessor, and replace this hook with the usual P/R/B Conditioning Hook)



Tale: Conrad was a well-respected musician at the regional level before the Great Retreat. During the social upheaval that preceded the Fall, he was making plans to gather his 8 brothers and sisters and move to a survival-ready retreat. However, he was conned, and the land he bought was already occupied. Before he could make other plans, his siblings were killed in a food riot, and he wandered through the death of civilization. There he discovered that killing didn't really bother him. That's the kind of thing he probably would never have discovered barring the end of the world, but he doesn't mind. Now he is the best classical violinist in Redoubt Bravo, as well as a rock-solid trooper. He feels no need for his standard issue tranquilizers or mood stabilizers, since combat doesn't worry him (although he is still vulnerable to Sanity Checks). So he trades them, as well small items from Outside for... favors. This activity has not gone unnoticed by the P/R/B, and before long Conrad will probably get invited in for a "job interview" and walk out a Field Assessor.

TERESA WASHINGTON, drug addicted Dream Trooper

Insomniac Dreamer (4)

Twitchily Alert Trooper (3)

Shivering Addict (2)

Inveterate Movie Watcher (1)

Hook: On the Nod (has to use sleep drugs to Dream or even fall asleep; but is prone to attack by Dreamland creatures)

Tale: Teresa Washington hated broccoli passionately, and her parents split up when she was seven years old. That kind of thing is common enough, but for someone born to be a Dreamer such childhood miseries can become the Silver Key. At night, Teresa was the graceful chatelaine of a beautiful estate - but in the waking world she was a failed actress. Long before the Fall, the needle was already in her arm. Still, P/R/B screenings discovered her raw power as a Dreamer, and Teresa Washington and Lady Sessessiphon of the Grey Manse were drafted. Teresa is off smack, but just as hooked on Somna. In the Dreamworld, Lady Sessessiphon grows ever more haggard, while her Grey Manse falls into disrepair.

JOSEPH SMITH DOMINGUEZ, intimidating martinet

Cold-blooded P/R/B Field Assessor (3d8) [note: this costs the same as 4d6]

By-the-book Trooper (3)

Secretly Tormented Dreamer (2)

Amateur Astronomer (1)

Hook: P/R/B Conditioning (subject to an array of posthypnotic? commands - GM can dictate PC action freely)

Tale: When he was 12, long before the Fall, J.S. Dominguez was given a telescope. He grew to know the night sky like the back of his hand, and became an astronomer. J.S. would have been happy spending the rest of his life studying the universe. But before he was 30, the human race learned more about the universe than it ever wanted to know. Dominguez made it to Redoubt Bravo, but early on he rubbed a member of the P/R/B the wrong way and got "drafted." Now he is a callous Field Assessor, easily as hated as any Soviet political commissar ever was. No one ever sits down and has a conversation with him, but if someone did they would discover that J.S. no longer knows anything about the field he dedicated his life to.

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## Tainted Meat

Cliches for the creatures of the Cthulhu Mythos in the *Sleepwalkers* setting

I've listed some typical things a horrible inhuman entity might use its cliches for, as well as suggested die types. This is to represent the raw power of a given species; individuals may of course have more or less dice to indicate their personal competence. Also note that many of these cliches will have some other facet listed; Deep One warrior, Mi-go scientist, Serpent Man shaman. On the other hand, the more bestial or incomprehensible nonhumans might best be represented by just "Dhole (6d20)," for example.

Finally, some of these suggested uses have been written in the spirit of the 'oddball skills' used in some Chaosium products to provide cues for the GM on how to play a given NPC.

- Ghoul: (d6) or (d8) - eating corpses, sneaking in tunnels, underground lore, knowing sinister secrets  
-note: In my opinion, a Ghoul is one of the few Mythos species that might make an acceptable PC. Consider "Ghoul Ambassador(3d8)," which could be entertaining in the right group.
- Serpent Men: (d6) - hiding, sneaking, ambushing, poisonous bite -note: In my campaign, I'm using the "degenerate Serpent Men" concept, treating them like the Victorian conception of an Unseelie faerie as a devolved killer. Atavistic Serpent Men might have double-pump dice or d8's, plus spellcasting competency.
- Deep One: (d8) - being immortal, interbreeding with humans, fishing

- Mi-go: (d6) - (but will sometimes have ultratech devices granting bonus dice) - prodigious mechanical and surgical skill, talking in weird buzzy voices
- Dark Young: (d10) Marching out of the woods and eating/mating with sacrifices, looking vaguely like trees
- Shoggoth: [d10] - shapeshifting (basically ANYTHING physical), sullenly serving OR sullenly rebelling, going "Tekeli-li!" really loudly
- Invisible Polyp: (d12) - be invisible, sucking winds, piping horribly, killing big cones
- Hound of Tindalos: [d10] tracking prey through time, manifesting through corners, horrifically killing prey
- Dimensional Shambler: (d8) - materializing, shambling, grabbing and dematerializing
- Cthonian: (d6) through (d20), depending on which instar you encounter - moving through solid rock, causing earthquakes, tracking Cthonian Eggs, swallowing things up whole

I have also (so far) refrained from generating stats for the major entities. Use them as plot devices, not people in big rubber suits stomping on models of Tokyo. If you really must, something like "Great Cthulhu [6d30]" or "Azathoth (4d100)" should suffice.

Sanity Check Task Numbers (TNs) for some of these creatures are on the [new rules](#) page, with the Sanity mechanics.

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## Gaze into the Abyss

A Sanity mechanic for Risus *Sleepwalkers*.

It depends on your style of play; I prefer for the GM to handle the mechanics of the Sanity rules, giving the PCs roleplaying cues as necessary. However, there's no reason why this can't be done "In Public," so to speak, with the players making their own rolls and keeping track of their Sanity Tally themselves. The mechanics are:

Sanity Tally=character dice total (note: I include bonus dice, as from taking Hooks and/or Tales, in this total, so a "Normal" character has a Sanity Tally of 12)

Sanity Cliche=character dice total/4, rounded down. This means a standard character with a Hook and Tale has a Sanity Cliche of (3)

In a Sanity Check, roll the character's Sanity Cliche against the creature or event's TN

(see below); if the character loses, take one off the Sanity Tally.

The GM or player (depending on who's handling the mechanics) can pump the Sanity Cliche before a difficult test, to simulate holding on to your sanity by sheer force of will, but being psychologically exhausted and more vulnerable to further shocks afterward.

Each time a character loses a point from the Sanity Tally, roll dice equal to the Tally points lost in that session vs your Sanity Cliche. This is a combat, where horrified insights into the workings of reality battle the character's sense of how things should be - roleplay it! If the character loses this combat, he or she goes temporarily insane.

If a character's Sanity Tally ever goes to zero, they become permanently insane, and the player must go through the lengthy, tedious process of making a new Risus PC. Break out a fresh Post-it note...

Anytime a new die for a cliche is earned, add 1 to the character's current and total Sanity Tally. At the GM's whim, other major successes may add to the current Tally, although the total may never exceed the character's dice total. This intentionally does not differ for those with funky dice.

And don't forget the primal rule; the GM is free to do whatever he sees fit to make things work as he sees fit. If a PC pumps or double-pumps or uses a lucky shot to stare down Hastur, that's all well and good. But feel free to ding his or her Sanity Tally anyway. PCs can escape from Great Old Ones, but they shouldn't stroll away whistling...

#### Sanity TNs for various events

- Performing minor Willworkings: 5
- Seeing a Deep One: 6
- Reading a minor Mythos text: 8
- Seeing a Ghoul feast: 10
- Performing significant Willworkings: 12
- Discovering an unbelievable atrocity: 15
- Performing major Willworkings: 17
- Seeing an enraged adult Cthonian: 20
- Seeing a nest of Dholes: 25
- Reading the Necronomicon: 30
- Seeing Cthulhu: 30

As always, GMs should bump these numbers up or down to represent different situations. Additionally, some cliches can allow characters to ignore some Sanity Checks for a period.

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## Double-Edged Swords

This is a list of human and inhuman technologies usable in the *Sleepwalkers* setting, some of which can be as dangerous to the wielder as the target.

### Tools of the trade

#### Trooper

battlesuit (also bonus die gear), maser carbine, mollyknife (monomolecular wire blade)

#### Willworker

Mythos texts, enchanted talismans for summoning and binding, Space-mead

#### Dreamer

autoinjectors of Somna (sleep) and Rooster (wake-up) drugs, sensory deprivation gear in helmet  
(in Dreamlands) staff, robes, house or manse

#### Sleepwalker

heavy battlesuit, Fetchpike (enchanted melee weapon, allows attacks against creatures who are vulnerable to enchanted items)

#### Artist

trumpet/painbrushes/whatever, brooding books of *fin-de-siecle* art criticism or theory

#### Wildman

appropriate weapons (from flint knives to surplus military small-arms), preserved food, stout footwear

#### P/R/B Field Assessor

Command battlesuit (with kill switches for other squad suits), voice stress analyzers, psychically secure cargo bags

#### Ghoul

funeral rags, grime and mold, sharpened bones, a few haunches of gamy human meat, grave loot of surprising utility

### Bonus die equipment

- Battlesuits give +1d bonus die for fighting, as well as noticing things with its sensors.

(give characters a bonus pip +1 if they describe using appropriate weaponry for the type of target)

- Dreamcannon: +1d bonus for fighting immaterial creatures; also allows attacks against creatures who are only vulnerable to enchanted weapons, but provides no bonuses in that situation. (note: excessive Dreamcannon use might be the trigger for the Sleepwalker transformation)
- Psychotronic Battery: gives +1d to +2d to Willworker rolls to cast spells; but caster must make 2 Sanity Checks.
- P/R/B Theoretical Manual: gives +1d to "raw knowledge" about Mythos subjects - but **not** for spells/Willworking.

### Paranatural artifacts

•Snarler: this is P/R/B slang for a common Mi-go weapon that looks like a knot of dull copper rods. In game terms, it is +1d bonus combat gear for Mi-go; captured snarlers stop working after a few minutes. Although it has no visible discharge of material ammunition or energy beams, targets feel as if they are being tangled up and crushed, and their ability to move is severely limited. Current P/R/B theory is that snarlers distort space-time on a very localized scale, possibly by a method similar to the phenomenon that allows mi-go to fly and travel in space. This has not been proven yet due to the fact that captured snarlers stop working so quickly. All attempts to disassemble one have failed in one baffling manner after another. For example, the last snarler investigated by Redoubt Alpha turned three P/R/B scientists into a small grey ovoid (about 2 inches across) and created an exact duplicate of the lab twenty meters further back in the solid rock of the mountain. It may be telling that snarlers seem to be less effective when used against powerful Sleepwalkers, possibly since they are only weakly attached to local reality.

•Deep One Armor: +1d bonus combat gear. Beaten gold adorned with the shells of long-extinct marine life shouldn't be able to stop modern monomolecular blades or 20mm electrothermal rounds... but no one is surprised that it does. It's occasionally taken in combat as trophies, so it's not impossible to see bits of this armor riveted to Tactroop battlesuits. Large amounts of such scavenged armor may even provide a +1 bonus pip, in the GM's discretion. Of course, feel free to have such PCs consumed by dreams of batrachian horrors and/or purged by their P/R/B commissar for psychic unreliability.

- Elfshot: They doesn't provide bonus dice, but these semi-immaterial arrowheads and spearpoints do explain how the devolved remnants of the Serpent Men can fight on an equal footing with people in power armor. The further good news is that shards of the elfshot can embed themselves in the victim's Dream-self, with debilitating effects in both worlds. In Redoubt Alpha, all captured elfshot is confiscated by the P/R/B. Among the tactroops, the current theory for this is that the P/R/B wants to have yet another handle on the Dreamers, since cutting off their drug supplies might be too slow a countermeasure. The elfshot weapons so far encountered all appear to be carved from bone that has been treated with a pale blue resin of unknown composition.
  - Summoning Tools: this is a generic category, meant to cover all the eldritch apparatus used to call up Mythos entities. There is a bewildering variety of these things, each only of use to contact or summon a single entity or species. The effectiveness of any given item is up to the GM, but a good guideline to follow is that the more difficult or distressing the procedures needed to build and enchant an item, the more powerful it will be. My "house rule" is that if I can describe the materials or techniques required and at least one *player* (not player character) doesn't wince, it only grants a +1 pip. On the other hand, if I can barely describe the thing myself without getting a little uneasy, maybe it's worth +1d. I'm steadfastly unwilling to put the one thing I came up with horrible enough to grant a +2d bonus on this website. Suffice it to say it's a method a feral band is using to contact Shub-Niggurath, and it explains why they have to keep raiding the neighboring tribes for captives...
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## Fiddling While the World Burns

Campaigns and adventure seeds for the *Sleepwalkers* setting

### Hobson's Choice

The PCs' team is going out on a normal recon patrol. Nearing the edge of their range and preparing to turn back, the PCs hear strange buzzing voices up ahead, on the other side of a large rock. Before they can do much else, something flashes quickly overhead and out of sight. Warily approaching the rock, they find... three healthy human babies, apparently about 2 or 3 months old. Carved into the rock (on close inspection, it looks like it was burned in by acid) is the following message:

"you need young we need old you give us old we give you young you give one we give three leave at rock day get at rock night we have myraid young"

Take it from there. If the PCs take the children back to the base, all available tests show them to be completely healthy, untainted human children. The redoubt's healthy birth rate is well below the overall death rate; will the P/R/B decide to go along with this plot, sacrificing older members of the community to get a much-needed boost for the future? (I think the only answer is yes, hence the title of this section.) If so, perhaps the PCs are the ones who have to escort the first sacrifice back out to the rock (important question: is the sacrifice willing, restrained, or sedated?). Or perhaps the P/R/B wants to hedge its bets; while one team takes the first sacrifice, the PCs are supposed to shadow them and see who or what they're trading with, what is being done with the sacrifices, and where or how the unknowns are getting these babies. And why does the note say "myraid?" Do they mean "lots?" Or do they mean "Thousand?"

### Perchance to Dream

The PCs find a crudely camouflaged longhouse, guarded by a handful of feral fighters, and full of sleeping ferals of all ages. The guards say (and PC Dreamers can confirm) that the sleepers are drugged with an altered herb recently found in the area. They are Dreaming nonstop as a team, trying to create a safe haven in the Dreamworld for as many humans as possible to escape into, abandoning the horrors of the waking world. But something seems odd, both in the waking world and the Dreamworld... What is the nature of this altered plant, which appears to be a mutated foxglove? Is it corrupting the Dreamer's work? Making them more powerful (single use bonus die item)? Or just killing them? Are these Dreamers really as altruistic as they claim, or do they plan to build a Dream kingdom that they can people with human slaves? And this many Dreamers in one place must be a veritable psychic beacon; why are there no Mythos threats within 50 miles? These Dreamers might have a guardian angel they don't know about. Or maybe just the psychic equivalent of a sign saying "Private Property: no hunting without owner's permission."

### Halls of the Mountain King

The P/R/B has made a heart-stopping discovery in the aftermath of a moderate earthquake. An unused tunnel, dug during the first frantic days of the Great Retreat, has been breached. A segment has been cleanly burned out of one side of the tunnel, and it looks like the work of a young Cthonian. Probes sent down the new vertical shaft indicate a bewildering maze of small tunnels, none much larger than 10'-15' across



(break out all your old dungeon maps!). Clearly the PCs have not been living right, because they are the team the P/R/B has chosen to explore this tunnel system. If there is just one young Cthonian, the PCs are ordered to kill it. But if they discover a nest of younglings, or a breeding triad of mature Cthonians, the next adventure your group runs might well be scouting for a new Redoubt location, or negotiating with Redoubts Charlie or Delta to move in there.

### Peace in Our Time

There is a large Ghoul nest living in the ruins of the nearest town. This is a well known fact; there have even been some inconclusive skirmishes between them and Redoubt forces, but neither side has the resources for all out war. However, while resting in the Waiting Room, the PCs are scrambled to go intercept a small group of Ghouls approaching the Redoubt. But when the PCs are spotted by the Ghouls, the Ghouls begin waving a white flag. What has driven the fatalistic and inhuman Ghouls to seek human assistance? And why does the P/R/B agree to help them so quickly?

### Suspicious Growths

These are just seeds or ideas that can be slipped into other adventures or expanded into full campaigns. On the other hand, they can also be used simply as odd or unnerving background.

- The local trees seem to be changing more quickly, taking on an air of distinct menace.
- Another Tacsquad starts doing odd things like finishing each other's sentences, moving together as if choreographed, even breathing synchronously.
- The P/R/B initiates a ruthless series of purges, exiling or executing almost a quarter of the Redoubt's civilian population.
- Food is running low, and the humans of the Redoubt must start eating some of the altered flora and fauna infesting the Outside.
- A nearby Feral tribe that had previously been neutral or even cautiously friendly begins ambushing the Redoubt's troopers.
- A woman in advanced environmental armor is found next to a wrecked machine; she claims to be a scout from one of the orbital colonies, and is immune to any psychic or Dream investigation.
- The squad's Dreamcannon is broken open in a battle, and the PCs discovers what exactly makes one tick - which makes the enchanted skull at the butt of each Fetchpike not seem so bad...

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