The Dark Edge

or

CthulhuPunk Made Easy/Cthulhu Lite:

How to Have a Horror Game Sneak Up on Em

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A few attempts have been made at converting **Call of Cthulhu** into **Cyberpunk 2020**. This is *Not* such a conversion. While those attempts have been excellent (especially the one from Interface magazine) they have all had two things in common; they are fairly detailed (read: complicated), and the players can see it coming a mile away. This "conversion," which I coined **Dark Edge** is pure **Cyberpunk 2020**; with a twist. It's meant to be simple and quick for the GM and should leave him a lot of latitude for creativity. It accomplishes this by adding only a couple of minor rule mechanics and skipping out on all of the detail that the GM would change for his own campaign anyway. But best of all, it's meant to be almost completely transparent. The players don't even have to know that their dark campaign is about to fade to black!

What in the Hell is "The Dark Edge"?

Simple question. It may not be entirely what's in the **Call of Cthulhu** book. But it is mostly. I find that it's a lot of things. GURPS' Atomic Horror is pretty good. The **Dark Edge** is anything that's dark and on the edge of our reality. And that opens the door a crack or two wider than **Call of Cthulhu** did.

What Will the GM Need?

Various **Cyberpunk 2020** books as in all CP campaigns. A copy of **Call of Cthulhu** might be needed if you want to convert a lot of stuff from it. The later isn't really required for the **Dark Edge**. In fact, these guidelines provide enough flavor that a GM could actually get by with nothing but his imagination and his or her interest in the horror genre.

The New Rules for "Dark Edge"

And now a word or two about the game mechanics. **Dark Edge** is meant to be invisible to the players. If they don't change things on their character sheets they won't know what coming, now will they? All of the important numbers that need to be kept are kept by the GM. All calculations are handled indiscreetly by the GM. It's your job Mr. GM to just smile knowingly at the players. It's the players job to be afraid, and mystery is the best way to accomplish that. Transparent mechanics also have another benefit; characters don't have to be altered in any way other than the addition of a skill or two (and that doesn't have to be introduced until later). One week they can be punkers on the Edge in your bro's campaign and the next they can be Investigators of the **Dark Edge**. You can sneak CthulhuPunk upon them without them knowing diddly.

Dark Edge incorporates only three things from **Call of Cthulhu**; Sanity, Sanity Loss and a certain skill that will certainly ruin a punker's day: Dark Edge Lore. The premise is the same as in **Call of Cthulhu**...man's perception of the real universe is veiled behind a very thin tapestry of illusion. Those that lift the corners and peek behind risk everything. The more that one knows...

What is not in this system is a lot of detail for converting stuff back and forth from either game system. I find that it's not necessary. If you as the GM can create stuff you're all set. Just wing it and make things up using **Call of Cthulhu** as a reference if you like. I've used it and GURPS: Atomic Horrors.

Sanity and Other New Stuff

This is a GM ONLY stat and the players shouldn't ever know what their totals are (you could be real mean and not let them even know about it at all!) This new stat is similar to Humanity. Simply note the PC's COOL stat and multiply it by 10. This is the total number of points that a character can lose before going nuts and becoming, gak, an NPC. Just write out each character's name on a piece of paper along with their COOL x 10 (you might put a slash after that for their new totals during play). Like I said, transparent mechanics. As the characters encounter weird stuff they will lose these points but this does NOT take away from their COOL stat. Why not, you ask? Answer: who wants holes in their character sheet from all that erasing??? Sanity is simply meant as a measure of someone's resistance to the **Dark Edge**, not whether or not they can face off with a booster gang. As the score reaches 0 the character is more and more possessed by a passion for

things dark, leaving them with their COOL where it was and the associated skills untouched. This may seem unrealistic, but the goal is not total realism. Besides, not *all* insane people are cowards. There are quite a few nut cases out there and I'll bet you good euro they don't flinch. A gradient scale of sanity loss and odd behavior on the way down could be easily made, but the above reason gets me outa' doing it myself. Anyway, I've always found players very resistant to a GM telling them how to play their characters. A lot of quarrels have started that way.

Dark Edge also introduces a new skill. This new skill is called Dark Edge Lore. Just like in **Call of Cthulhu**, gaining this kind of knowledge is deadly. This skill covers everything that Cthulhu Mythos does in **Call of Cthulhu**. The character should gain IP in this skill as they do in any other skill: by it's use. It's up to you, Mr. GM, to make them *have* to use it and use it well! In order to keep the character tampering to a minimum I use this skill for just about everything dealing with the dark. You may choose to add other skills, however...

The Rules

Losing Sanity Points:
Sanity points are lost whenever PCs have an 'encounter' that is truly over the **Dark Edge**. Keep in mind, life in the fragmented United States of 2020 is not exactly kind. Most people are not going to go catatonic at the sight of blood or missing limbs. Therefore sanity points are lost for truly *bizarre* stuff. If a PC's input shoots herself in the head and then rolls the bullet down her tongue for him to see; bingo- he could lose Sanity Points. If she sticks a flashlight all the way in the bullet hole and kills the lights, and starts saying "chooo chooooooo", he could lose A LOT OF SANITY POINTS. If a snake oozes out of her navel...you get the picture, right?

At the beginning of each 'encounter' in the **Dark Edge**, all exposed PCs should make a roll using the standard difficulty ladder in CP2020. The more bizarre and horrifying the incident the higher the difficulty should be, of course. You as the GM will have to be the judge of this. No skill adds to the base roll. It's up to you how to use LUCK, as it seems every GM has his own views anyway (personally, I don't allow luck to be added to this roll). The amount by which the player failed the roll determines the amount of Sanity Points that are lost immediately.

Dark Edge Lore will also reduce Sanity Points. The mechanics for this are simple; for each skill level [not IP] the PC gains in DEL, he must roll 1d10. Since the skill is a permanent thing for the character so is the loss

in sanity. You should probably keep this amount separate from the losses incurred during encounters. Even though this type of sanity loss doesn't roll around every fifteen minutes, it'll still make your bookkeeping easier, believe me.

Regaining Sanity Points:
Regaining Sanity Points isn't *too* hard. It just takes time, and a lot of it. Most PCs will never recover fully, especially if they got educated in the subject. A PC may regain 1d10 Sanity Points if they manage to kill whatever they encountered. They will regain this immediately. All those who participated indirectly will also regain 1d6 immediately. It helps if you're the bastard that fragged the critter, you know. After the encounter is over and as the campaign progresses all of the characters involved both directly and indirectly may regain 1 point of sanity per day per encounter, if the player successfully rolls under his cool stat. Fail one roll and the process ends (for that encounter, at least).

Zeroing Out:
What happens exactly when a character goes negative on his/her Sanity Points? Hmmmm. I scratch me head on that one, eh? As I've suggested, they should probably become NPCs and go ape over the **Dark Edge**. I can only make suggestions, as every GM will feel differently about this and it's something they will decide on anyway. Personally, I treat it a lot like when they go cyber-cuckoo I do not allow them to regain ANY Sanity Points at that point. But again, your decision.

Conclusion

And that's all there is to starting a very weird game of **Cyberpunk 2020**. A game that the players will never forget.