

Call of
CATTHULHU

BOOK I

THE
NEKONOMIKON
(THE BOOK OF CATS)

JOEL SPARKS

*for Sammy, Moe, Daisy, Zeke, Chelsea, Winnie, Moose, Spats, & Marlowe; Dora, Beau, Kona, Jordan, Jack;
and all the other beautiful little idiots whom we allow to touch our lives*

*That is not dead which can indefinite sleep,
And in dream-shadows, lively spirits leap.*

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the real world... the world in which human civilization exists for the comfort of cats, in which incredibly ancient and powerful spirits vie for control of reality, in which only brave and clever felines have the wit and wherewithal to oppose grim and mystic cabals, and in which two-footed people live in blissful ignorance of all of these facts.

In *Call of Catthulhu*, a few friends take on the roles of ordinary cats, who must rise to heroism as they encounter the sinister plots and vile supernatural conspiracies of chaotic Animal Cults, bound on undermining the reality of dull-witted humankind. One person becomes the Cat Herder (CH), arranging challenges, secrets, dangers, and rewards. Then each player just *acts like a cat*: meeting new challenges with quick wits, clever ideas, sharp claws, and fast feet. The player Cat Herder calls for a roll, or doesn't bother, then explains the outcome, and the game moves forward. Together, everyone makes the story of what happened to these cats one time—an adventure that no one could have predicted.

The Character Sheet on p38 shows how simple it is to make and play a cat—and it's against the rules to write any numbers on the sheet, because cats don't do math!

There's only a little more to it. A couple of Cat Dice add random results, so even the Cat Herder never knows exactly what will happen next. Players have Treats that they can spend to get a second chance. At the end of a few hours of play, surviving cats gain new Experiences: knowledge of the world that will come in handy in later adventures.

Everything else is mouse gravy. Let's begin.

MR. JOEL
CATTHULHU.com



About *The Nekonomikon*

This first volume of *Call of Catthulhu* contains everything needed to play the game: How to make up cat characters, how to use Cat Dice to meet Challenges, how to Scrap with other critters, how to use Treats to get a little edge in play, and how to get ready to play again another time. After a little fooling around with this book and some pencil and paper, one person can volunteer to be Cat Herder for the evening and invent some Challenges for everyone's cats to encounter. With 30 different types of cats facing countless unsuspecting humans, mice, dogs, fish, and birds; so many treats to liberate, toys to demolish, and cultists to foil; and all the other challenges to meet, the cat's world is one big sandbox.

About *Unaussprechlichen Katzen*

The second volume of the game, *Book II: Unaussprechlichen Katzen*, includes far more detail about the Gods, Humans, Dogs, secret rituals, otherworldly servants, and creating adventures that go beyond the sunbeams into dark, sometimes unpleasant places. *Unaussprechlichen Katzen* serves as the Cat Herder's Guide to the ever-deepening universe of *Call of Catthulhu*. Get your claws into everything at Catthulhu.com.

*Call of Catthulhu Book I:
The Nekonomikon
April 2014*

*Call of Catthulhu Book II:
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CALL OF CATTHULHU

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*Nouvelles Observations sur les Phénomènes
Félin et Animal dans la Vallée Des Rois*



*À la Cour du Khedive
Kyril de Tour-Bouillon
Ministre de la Mystopafie
A.D. 1814*

Overleaf of the fragmentary *Notebook of Tour-Bouillon* (New Observations of Feline and Animal Phenomena in the Valley of the Kings) by French naturalist Kyril de Tour-Bouillon (b.1779, d.?), Minister of Mystery Studies to the court of the Ottoman Viceroy in Egypt. Cairo, 1814: charcoal, sepia, chalk.

K The KS symbol indicates a creepy critter picture created as a reward to a Kickstarter backer for *Call of Cattedubu!* The model above is Hudley, courtesy of known human and top backer, the mighty Shawn R. See more about the Kickstarter campaign on p37, and stay tuned for the next one at [catthulhu.com!](http://catthulhu.com)

PART I

Being Cats

A part from their level of mental activity, the cats in this game are cats. They cannot talk, or read, or write, or drive cars, or post on the Internet. They don't wear clothes, except as an occasional indulgence of a sentimental human, and they don't have thumbs to use tools, nor a primate's tool-using mindset. To oppose the strivings of evil cabals and brutish foes, players have to be inventive, use trickery, and find ways to make others do the dirty work. A cat's life is improv.

CAT CHARACTERS

As seen by a glance at the Cat Character Sheet on p38-39, defining a cat does not require scores, skills, randomization, or calculation. In fact, a cat character uses *no numbers at all*. Cats don't do math. That's for Two-Foots. Appearance, lifestyle, expertise, and the effortless projection of the Self: these distinguish one cat from another.

To define a Player Cat (PC), the player chooses the new kitty's Role, Background, and Description. These things tell the other players what this cat is all about, and when she might just be the Right Cat for the Job (p20): the best choice to handle the challenge at hand when battling Chaos or elusive toys.

Role answers the question: What is this cat good at? The game offers five roles: Catrobat, Pussyfoot, Scrapper, Tiger Dreamer, and Twofootologist (or Poker).

Background includes things that happened before the cat was even born—her breed—and everything that's happened to her since, up to the time play begins. Is this cat a rare Purebred or a common Mixed bBreed? Is she a Feral cat living without humans, a regular House Cat, or a Show Cat treated as highly valued property? How experienced is the cat at hunting?

Description includes everything someone could tell by just looking at this cat, or hearing, touching, or even smelling her. What color are her eyes? Does her fur have patterns? Is her coat long or short? Does she reek of muddy alleys, or fancy perfume? Is her voice normal, high and squeaky, deep and rusty?

The section called *A Cat's Tale* shows how the five Roles, the two types of Breed, and the three Lifestyles combine to give 30 different kinds of cats to play. Add in physical description, which can become important, and the available variety grows huge; add player imagination, and the world of cats becomes limitless—just as it should be.

Role

From the toughest alley fighter to the most pampered sofa-puff, each cat occupies one of five key Roles in the feline world. A cat's role is like a character class or archetype, defining what she can do best. Role plays the biggest part when convincing the Cat Herder that a certain feline hero is the Right Cat for the Job (RCFTJ, p20). If a Challenge is right up that role's alley, the cat almost always succeeds. Less appropriate actions require adjudication by the Cat Herder and her fickle servants, the dice.

Background

All cats are born in the dark and very few know who fathered them. After that, each cat's life proceeds uniquely. Defining a cat hero's background gives the player and the Cat Herder more hooks on which to hang important happenings in the game. Details vary by setting, but certain general information is relevant to any cat's background.

LIFESTYLE

Feral cats have no place in a human home and no regular human contact. They live on the street, or in abandoned cellars, or even in the wilderness.

House Cats have adopted at least one human and dwell in ordinary homes. Some never go outside at all, but that isn't natural and makes for a very limited adventuring career. Unlike other cats, most House Cats have been spayed or neutered.

Show Cats live in luxury, whether they actually compete in cat shows or just have the looks for it. Almost always Purebreds, show cats are sheltered from the hard knocks most cats go through. For example, one might know a great deal about caviar and nothing about mice. A show cat doesn't have to be a Pussyfoot.

HUNTING

The player should also decide how much experience the cat has in stalking, catching, killing, and eating small animals. Does she hunt to survive, or only for fun between meals of cat food? Is she a professional mouser or barn cat? Does she eat her prey, or only toy with it? Has she never hunted anything but string?

The Five Roles

CATCROBAT

All cats can climb, jump, balance, and move with great stealth. The Catcrobot's natural gifts and style take this to another level. Feats of dexterity considered downright supernatural by most creatures are daily accomplishments for this cat. Whenever athletic Challenges come up, the Catcrobot handles them quickest and best. In any situation, Catcrobat acts first: getting into Scraps, running away, or whatever else comes along.

PUSSYFOOT

Cute, playful, and sweet with just a touch of spoiled temperament, the Pussyfoot has spent a lifetime charming the Two-Foots out of treats, toys, and special treatment. Even cats, even sometimes other animals, can fall prey to the sheer adorableness of the Pussyfoot and give in to demands. Most Pussyfoots live with pampering humans to serve them; a few have many friends but no fixed home.

SCRAPPER

Big, tough, and mean, a Scrapper has had a life of vicious fights, with the scars to prove it. A snarl from a Scrapper can stop even a dog in its tracks. When it comes down to a tussle, or a Challenge of brute strength or intimidation, this is the cat to count on.

TIGER DREAMER

All cats know that they are tigers in disguise. If humans and dogs choose to be fooled by size, all the easier to get away with things. A Tiger Dreamer has a special connection with cats' mighty ancestry. This cat sleeps a lot, even more than other cats, and in dreams, finds answers. Awake, the Dreamer's lifetime of accumulated wisdom about the True Tiger Way helps other cats succeed.

TWOFOOTOLOGIST (POKER)

Many cats live with humans. Some brainy cats have made a close and extensive study of the Two-Foots and their ways. Twofootologists don't like the nickname "Poker," but that's what many call them. A Poker often knows, or can figure out, how human devices work, from doorknobs to toilets to simple machines.

The **Typical Challenges** (p24) give some idea of when each Role might qualify the hero as the Right Cat for the Job (RCFTJ) (p20).

Description

Players can describe their cats in any way they like. In turn, any time the Cat Herder wants to hang a plot point or happenstance on a cat's description, she can do so.

PUREBRED OR MIXED BREED?

A **Purebred** cat stands out in a crowd and is often treated better by humans, even those who don't actually know the cat's nature or possible value. For example, if half a dozen cats are caught in the rain, a human's eye might be caught first by the Purebred, and she might get picked up and taken to shelter while the rest are left in the downpour. On the other hand, the Purebred has a more delicate constitution than her hybrid Mixed Breed cousins, and might suffer more from exposure, injury, dust in the nose, or other unpleasant conditions. Purebreds do especially well with the Pussyfoot role, and exotic types can make for mysterious Tiger Dreamers.

Cat fanciers count more than 50 different pure cat breeds. The player can choose a real variety, from Norwegian Forest Cat to Chocolate Point Siamese, or make up whatever name and traits seem most interesting to play. Seven-toed Etruscan Pécadillo, perhaps, or Snow Leopard Longhair?

A cat of **Mixed Breed** will never win a ribbon at a cat show. She comes from an indiscriminate variety of ancestors and looks like any other cat that might be found in a pet shop or in a litter under a bridge. The Mixed Breed can blend into a crowd of cats easily. Non-cats who don't know her well won't be able to tell her from other, similar-looking cats even after meeting her once or twice. Mixed Breeds are strong and nimble and make excellent Scrappers and Catrobats. They resist threats to their health much better than Purebreds can.

FUR COLOR?

Attractive, varied color patterns, like tabby, calico, or tortoiseshell, appeal to humans and other cats. All-black cats hide more easily in the darkness, which makes for good Catrobats, but are the last to be adopted. Some humans consider them bad luck or even kill them. All-white cats, of course, shed white fur, which disappears against light-colored furniture; for this reason, Pussyfoots are often white.

SHORTHAIR, LONGHAIR, OR HAIRLESS?

For a Purebred, this characteristic should match the selected breed. For Mixed Breeds, anything goes. **Shorthairs** don't shed much, leaving less evidence behind, and find it easy to clean up with a quick tongue bath. A Shorthair makes a good Scrapper, more protected than a Hairless but less susceptible than a Longhair to the grip of hands, claws, or teeth.

A **Longhair** can suffer from matted-in dirt and often leaves telltale hairs at the scene of shenanigans. On the other hand, Longhairs are well adapted to cold conditions. Many humans favor Longhair cats for Pussyfoot pets due to their luxurious beauty.

Hairless cats are rare, and almost always some kind of Purebred. They find it easy to slip out of the grasp of humans and other animals, but stand out in a crowd and suffer more than others from cold and wet. For some reason, perhaps because they most need a house to live in, the Hairless often become Twofootologists.

EYE COLOR?

Cat eyes can be yellow, green, gold, brown, blue, or any other color that a player chooses. The only time this makes a difference in play is for identifying one cat from another. The underlying color can be noticed even from seeing the eyes reflecting in the dark. A cat with eyes of two different colors may be a Tiger Dreamer, touched by unusual visions.



Names

The cat may go by any number of names, such as the three described by Professor Eliot, or by none at all, in which case, feline peers are sure to hang a soubriquet on the prideful animal. As for the noises made by humans, the majority of cats in the history of coexistence have been addressed by the local equivalent of “Cat,” but many a hero finds it acceptable, or at least convenient, to adopt specific twofootisms such as Clarissa, Lord Rexington Archolemev of Pattering Meadows, or Mister Tiddles. Still others insist on such highly personal bits of braggadoccio as Throat-catcher, Shadowfur, or Leapingest. Any or all will do.

The Notebook of Tour-Boullion (fragment)

Model: Anastasia, courtesy of outstanding human and Kickstarter backer Justin H.

A CAT'S TALE

A player can choose any combination of background, breed, and role for her new cat hero. Suggestions below offer a starting point for defining a cat's personality and backstory, but are by no means set in stone. For example, a player might well choose "Circus Cat," a Show Cat/Catrobat story, for a Feral Scrapper, fallen on hard times and living on the street, using her old athletic skills to fight her way out of trouble. In the chart, the personality before the slash is suggested for a cat of Mixed Breed; the second suggestion is for a Purebred.

<i>Role</i>	Feral (Mixed/Purebred)	House Cat (Mixed/Purebred)	Show Cat (Mixed/Purebred)
<i>Catrobat</i>	Slippery Street Cat / Proud Street Cat	Flycatcher / Ceiling Cat	Circus Cat / Refined Artiste
<i>Pussyfoot</i>	Pitiful Beggar / Friend to All	Lap Cat / Pampered Baby	Crowd Favorite / Judges' Favorite
<i>Scrapper</i>	Alley Champ / Ronin	Mouser / Stud	Physical Paragon / Breeder
<i>Tiger Dreamer</i>	Street Preacher / Underground Prophet	Lazybones / Mother to All	Nervous Beauty / Diva
<i>Twofootologist</i>	Wily Tramp / Lost Princess	Switcher / Sensitive Soul	Seasoned Traveler / Sage of Foreign Lore

Stories for thirty kinds of cat.

USING STORIES

The vignettes below tell something of each cat's experiences and attitudes. Once per play session, the player can call on something from the cat's backstory to garner useful information about the circumstances currently happening in play. Something about what the heroes face reminds this cat of a lesson learned long ago, and the player asks the Cat Herder for a little information or advantage as a result. Certain of the stories below include specific examples, but the player can always invent a suggestion, which the Cat Herder may then approve, modify, or reject based on the cleverness of the idea, the appropriateness to the backstory, and the reasonableness of the advantage claimed. If the CH says no, the player must wait for a different situation, later in play, before trying a new suggestion.

FERAL CAT STORIES

The **Slippery Street Cat** knows that in order to be caught, you first must be seen. Slipping from shadow to shadow, silent as a zephyr, this cat steals what she needs to survive and is the first to run when the dangers start to outweigh the rewards. She is a survivor.

The **Proud Street Cat** stalks the alleys and gutters with a strut. She knows that she's the best and always responds to a challenge to her skills. After all, breeding tells, even in the wild.

A **Pitiful Beggar** sometimes grows fat even without any regular human assistance. One look at those big, sad eyes and bedraggled fur, and any heart melts. The poor thing! If only we could keep her. Maybe she'd like a blanket.

The **Friend to All** makes a circuit of many associates, from fellow street cats to friendly restaurant workers to house cats in windows to kindly old ladies. A saucer of milk here, a place to sleep in a catpile there, some choice scraps, and life works out pretty well for this free spirit. Once per session, as the Cat Herder allows, she can find rumors and information among her wide circle of admirers.

An **Alley Champ** stalks her home ground as a prominent Scrapper: one to beat. Other cats treat her with cautious respect because most cats really don't want to fight her. On the other hand, other Scrappers may strive for the chance to match skills with the Champ, and the currency of reputation frequently changes paws. A cat just starting out won't yet have her own turf, but an established Alley Champ can become known as *de facto* ruler of a well-defined territory.

Not only does the **Ronin** lay down the hurt on the regular, but she also looks good doing it. She roams as an elite warrior, testing her combat skills and building reputation. Other cats may turn to a Ronin in time of need and entreat her to fight on behalf of their cause. A starting Player Cat won't have much reputation yet, and so won't be offered the fattest rewards, but sometimes no one else is available or willing to take the job. That's the Ronin's chance to gain fame, which is far more important than a few moldy fish heads. In theory.

Other cats turn to the **Street Preacher** for advice on day-to-day matters such as queening, sickness, dealing with dog gangs, or how to keep from starving. She interprets the catma of Fftar-Axlan in a practical way, often improvising rules or advice based on her own experience and understanding. The longer a Street Preacher practices, and the more prosperous those who turn to her for help, the greater her influence becomes.

An **Underground Prophet** eschews petty matters of quotidian life as unimportant in the cosmic scheme. She sees vast, sweeping visions of the multiverse and the crucial role of catkind therein. Seekers after arcane wisdom search out a Prophet to advise them; in exchange, she generally requires grim and perilous service in pursuit of goals that defy rational explanation.

The **Wily Tramp** knows the dangers of living on the margins of the human world, and hoards a repertoire of tricks for survival. This sharp-eyed rascal understands obscure human behaviors such as schedules, like when the milkman comes or when the factory gate is locked, and can rapidly suss out the routines of a new area. She's seen one too many friends run into traffic or carelessly jump into a yard guarded by dogs, and treads cautiously at all times, with one eye on the fastest way out.

A **Lost Princess** (or Prince) comes from a soft background, or her mother did and whispered to her of comfort and ease before her eyes even opened. She seems perpetually out of place on the street, to herself and others. Rough treatment bewilders the Princess, who on some deep level knows that things shouldn't be this hard. She studies humans carefully for signs of the one that will one day take her in and restore her, gratefully, to the life for which she was born.

HOUSECAT STORIES

The **Flycatcher** may sleep in a human domicile, but that doesn't mean that she's not a mighty hunter. Any tiny harbinger of the Insect God that dares creep or flit into the Flycatcher's house is doomed, smacked out of the air or off the wall and definitively smooshed. The same applies to wandering lint, bottlecaps, hairbands, errant reflections, dust motes in sunlight, and of course the flitting, logic-defying, glowing red eyes of the Machine God. Some say the Flycatcher can never resist a chase; she says that it's just a matter of staying in practice.

Not content with hunting bugs and other small fry, the **Ceiling Cat** slyly stalks the humans themselves. A CC masters every high perch in his home, from door tops to cabinets to mantels to newels; he also knows the nooks and shadows, under furniture, behind doors, and in the occasional laundry basket. His goal is to spy on the Two-Foots and remain unseen. They must be watched, because even the best human could fall prey to the suggestive influence of an evil god and be up to no good. Discovered, the Ceiling Cat leaps to the attack, batting a face or tackling an ankle just to show that he can, then bolting away at full tilt.

True, a **Lap Cat** spends a lot of time in human laps, but not just for sleeping. Two-Foots need a lot of care and attention, and this cat appoints herself to provide it. Sometimes they try to get up too early and must be held in bed with cozy cat-weight; other times they almost sleep through important feeding times and need thorough reminding. From time to time a human also needs nose kisses, foot warming, exercise, sympathetic cuddles, or a good surprise, and the Lap Cat provides it all.

The **Pampered Baby** might occupy a lap as well, but not on any human's schedule, and the biped better not pet her wrong. Nor is a cuddle session an excuse for late feeding. Since the Great Idea claims humans as servants of catkind, the Baby feels justified in exploiting them for her every need and whim. Those who falter earn reminders, from a look to a growl to a calibrated prick of the claws.

Mouser cats often look down on those who accept human shelter and companionship but contribute nothing in return. Whether based in a barn or a house, the Mouser patrols for vermin and turns the problem into a source of meat and pride. Rats in grain, rabbits in gardens, mice in pantries, and many others can become a Mouser's prey, and the Rat God names him enemy.

The **Stud**, usually an intact male, considers it his privilege and duty to pass on his superior physique and assertive nature to future generations: as many of them as possible. Any fertile member of the opposite sex is a potential mate, although other Purebreds of similar lineage naturally take priority. Unlike the Breeder Show Cat, the Stud tolerates no interference by humans or other cats in his personal selection of lucky paramours.

Lazybones cats sleep even more than other Tiger Dreamers, to the point of resenting the need for wakefulness even to eat. A player character Lazybones drags his heels at all times, the last to follow any lead and the first to turn any boring delay into instant nap time. Others may find his sloth annoying, but sometimes, the Lazybones pulls an insight out of Dream at a crucial moment.

The **Mother (or Father) to All** is a wise soul, and she defines the highest wisdom as kindness. She sees the frightened kitten inside the meanest cat, the potential ally inside a tooth-baring dog, the salvageable soul in the cruelest human. Every creature suffers, and all suffering deserves comforting. Bad behavior, however, must first be stopped and corrected.

Even more than most Pokers, a **Switcher** watches humans using their many devices, memorizing the ritual gestures and sequences that manipulate latched cupboards, wall switches, pianos, radios, scales, toilets, computers, telephones, doors that swing or slide, and even the dangerous sharp and burning things in the food rooms.

Tentative, shy, silent, and solitary, the **Sensitive Soul** ranks among the least assertive of cats. He keeps his ears and eyes not focused on fingers and gadgets, but open to larger patterns of human behavior: the way they form bonds of fear, duty, greed, and love. The Sensitive can predict what *this* one will do when that *other* one comes home late; what cats can get away with around certain folks; whether familiar Two-Foots see a newcomer as dangerous, and perhaps whether they should.

SHOW CAT STORIES

Circus Cats have undergone long periods of training with human beings— primarily, of course, to teach the humans to offer rewards at the right time. During an adventure, a Circus Cat can discover that one challenge resembles some highly specific trick from her act, making it easier to succeed. For example, perhaps she's used to the "flaming hoop" and can jump past a small fire without fear.

Trainer, associate, streetcorner crowd, packed venue: All meaningless. The only audience that matters is the Art itself, and its only qualified witness is the **Refined Artiste**. To perform the trick at hand with perfection: Only such moments count as living. Yet perfection forever retreats, each success revealing a new gap between the ideal and the real. We cannot but fail. We do not accept failure. We try again.

Why submit to the indignities of a career? Why tolerate the clumsy groomings, the nauseating travel, the chilly air, the stifling rooms, the vile food, the endless idiot Two-Foots stumbling about, and all the thrice-cursed noise? Because they love you, darling! The **Crowd Favorite** charms others in great numbers, whatever their species, whatever the locale. Her very vulnerabilities and tantrums invite the crowd into her heart, and thus onto her side. To make them want you to win: This is the ultimate appeal.

With a finely-discerning nose, the **Judge's Favorite** can immediately scent power. On a cat show floor, or in a room with just a pawful of humans, he can tell whom to impress, and whom to safely ignore. Away from the rarified world of ribbons and such, the same applies: Which dog in a pack is the real Alpha? Which human commands the rest? Which cats recognize the authority of the elder in the corner, and which do not? Read the flow of power, and do what it takes to please those who have it.

As the Refined Artiste considers others underqualified to judge the Art, the **Physical Paragon** revels in, displays, and works to refine his bodily perfection for exactly one admirer: Himself. These shoulders clearly manifest the ideal form of Fftar-Axlan... yet the slope of the middle sinew there could be just a bit more acute. Swatting helps. Haunches fit to launch a fellow right over some boorish hound... a bit more meat in the diet, and more leaping practice in the mornings, will engorge them yet another smidge.

The role of **Breeder**, unlike that of the self-appointed Stud, is of human determination. For reasons of cat fancy most likely obscure to the cats themselves, humans consider the genetic heritage of this cat valuable. For a female, this can mean a life of confinement, each heat an opportunity for her owners and not herself. Even a male Breeder, while not burdened with pregnancy and parturition, might live caged as a mere biological machine. Escaping from such circumstance can launch the former Breeder on a life of adventure, with human cultists of Mammon never far behind.

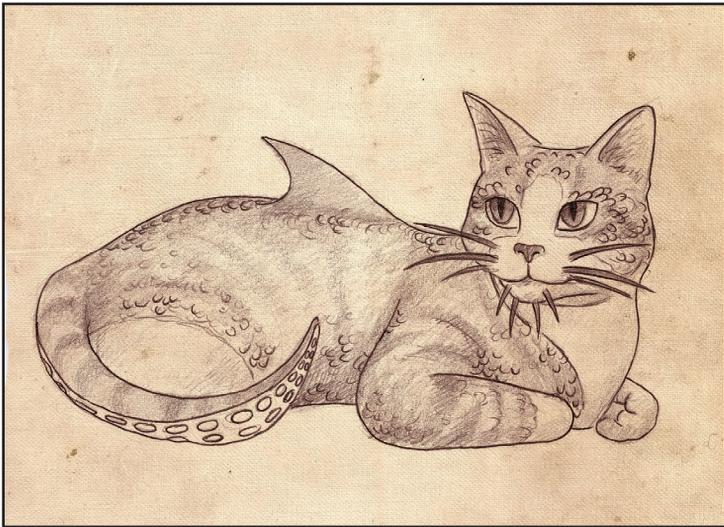
To the spiritually-attuned **Nervous Beauty**, the physical world makes little sense. Again and again, someone wakes her from Dream, where the song of living will raise the light to disperse the mists of entropy, into a place of clanging lifeless objects, bustling about, and incomprehensible goings on. Humans adore her, but what of that? More often

than not, when the doings of the waking world reveal any meaning whatever, they show dark intent and the maw of Chaos.

Such a burden, knowledge. The kits about need wisdom, to be sure, poor things, but how can one be expected to provide it under these conditions? All must attend, and stop that fidgeting; one must have water, else how can one speak? Really now, some take such offense even when hardly using a cushion that one simply must have; at least, it will do. Is everyone's attention properly focused where it belongs? Hmm? Listen, then, to the words of the **Diva**.

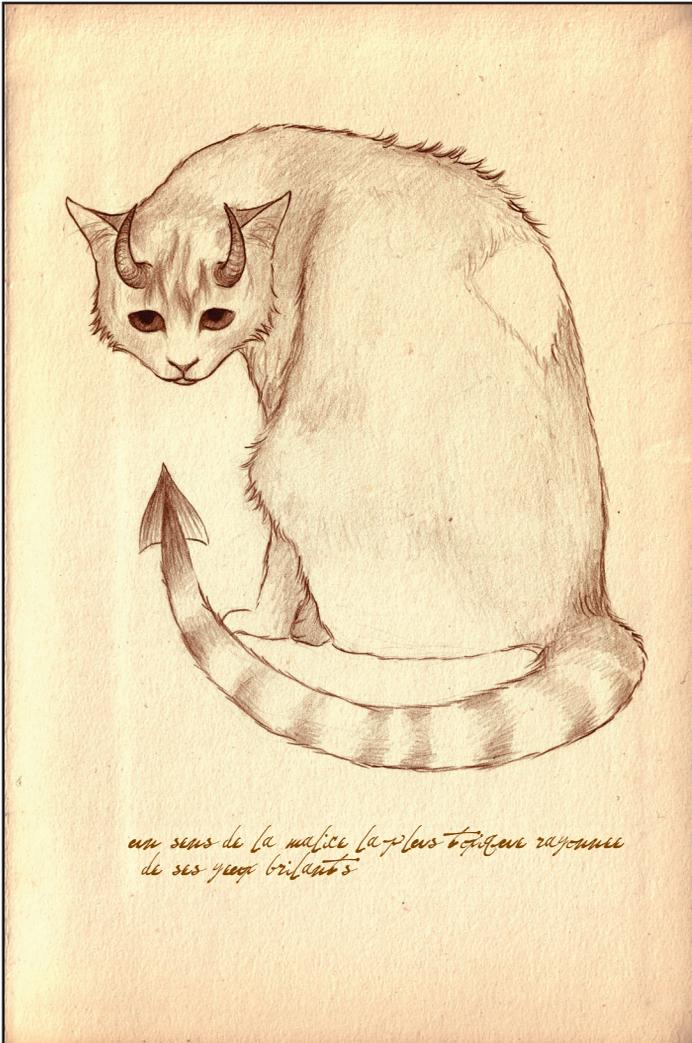
A cat's mind can see the world as a complex map of scenes, connected by more or less forgettable transitions. The **Seasoned Traveler** knows thousands of such environments, connected by hours, days, or weeks of travel. During an adventure, the cat can recognize something about one situation, however strange, that reminds her of someplace she once visited, and use the familiarity to advantage.

Not every human behavior appears in every locale. An ambitious Twofootologist, wishing to understand the First Servants, gains much from a perspective wider than a single vicinity. Some live in museums, universities, or bookstores; some accompany globe-trotting investigators and explorers. Whether by physical travel or scholarly association, the **Sage of Foreign Lore** gains exposure to ideas, languages, imagery, objects, smells, animals, and Two-Foots from many parts of the world. During an adventure, the Sage can recognize something utterly foreign to the setting and deduce useful information.



The Notebook of Tow-Boullion (fragment)

Model: Natz, courtesy of human and Kickstarter pal Holzl.



The Notebook of Tour-Boullion (fragment)

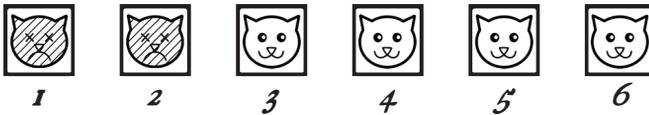
Model: Bernard, courtesy of human Scott K. of Kickstarter fame.

PART II

Playing the Game

USING CAT DICE

The Cat Die (dC) is a six-sided die, numbered 1 through 6 as usual. The 1 and 2 sides show a Sad Cat Face, or possibly a dead one. Sides 3 through 6 show the Happy Cat face. (Yay!) The Sad Cat indicates a Failure, or a result that is *Bad for the Cat*. A Happy Cat is a Success, or means that the outcome is *Good for the Cat*. (Ordinary six-siders can work instead, reading a 1 or 2 as a Failure and a 3 through 6 as a Success.) Two Cat Dice (2dC) are usually enough.



When two or more Cat Dice are rolled together, players read each one separately. They do not add up. For example, a roll of 5 and 2 on 2dC reads as “One Success,” not seven. (Adding would be math! Cats don’t do math.)

Everything in *Call of Catthulhu* uses Cat Dice, but the dice always read as good or bad for the Player Cats. When foes, humans, players, or even the Cat Herder rolls, a Sad Cat outcome is always bad for the cats, not necessarily for the creature rolling the die, and a Happy Cat makes for happy cats. Even enemies making their own rolls only succeed in doing something *Bad for the Cat* on a roll of 1 or 2; on a 3 through 6, the outcome is *Good for the Cat*, and thus bad for the enemy. This gives cats a significant edge, as is only appropriate.

THE RULE OF TWO DICE

Most of the time, the Cat Herder resolves an uncertain situation by calling for one or more players to roll 2dC. Then she awards the cats progress or frustration based on the outcome, as if it were a Normal Challenge (p20). The CH says what happens and the game moves on.

The paw print symbol indicates a Rule of Paw: A shortcut to help the players act like cats, help the Cat Herder keep up the pace, and help everyone remember how the game goes. See more about Rules of Paw on p31 and the compiled list on p36.

CHALLENGES

A Challenge is any task that isn't simply automatic for ordinary catkind. To attempt a Challenge, the player rolls two Cat Dice (2dC). Each Happy Cat (result of 3 through 6) indicates a Success. Each Sad Cat (result of 1 or 2) counts as a Failure.

Challenges come in three levels: Easy, Normal, and Difficult.

To meet an **Easy Challenge**, the roller needs at least one of the Cat Dice to come up a Success.

For a **Normal Challenge**, a single Success means that the cat makes a little progress, or gains a little information, but doesn't quite complete the task at hand. She'll have to change tacks and try again. Two Successes, on the other paw, means that the Challenge is accomplished first try.

To overcome a **Difficult Challenge** requires double Successes. *Both* Cat Dice have to come up Successes, or the cat fails completely.

The Cat Herder decides how hard to make each Challenge, and what success or failure will mean, based on the circumstances as she imagines them, the cat involved, the importance to the adventure, her gut instinct, and whatever seems most amusing.

The Right Cat for the Job (RCFTJ)

Much depends on whether the cat attempting a particular Challenge is the one best suited to the task. The obvious RCFTJ is the one with the most appropriate Role, but players can suggest any other reason why a given Challenge might come easily to a particular Player Cat. For example, something in the cat's personal backstory might apply, or in her physical description, or Experiences written on the character sheet from prior adventures, or even "remembering" something (made up on the spot) that ties in well with the circumstances. The player suggests, but only the Cat Herder can decide. Often enough, there *is* no RCFTJ, and all cats try as equals, for example on Notice Rolls (p32).

If the player does persuade the Cat Herder that this is the Right Cat for the Job (RCFTJ), he rolls 2dC like anycat, but *one automatically counts as a Success*. Thus an Easy Challenge is automatic, a Normal Challenge always results in at least partial success, and even a Difficult Challenge only requires one die to come up happy. On the potentially deadly Dire Challenges (p22), however, the RCFTJ gets no automatic Success, and the wrong cat cannot even make an attempt.

Rolling is always fun, and allows for special outcomes like Snake Eyes and Midnight (p23). For trivial tasks, however, the Cat Herder may simply declare that the RCFTJ gets the job done at once, with no die roll at all. This keeps play moving quickly and gives the players a pleasant and informative sense of feline competence.

Treats

Each cat starts each play session with one Treat. The Cat Herder hands out another Treat when she feels that a player has done something particularly clever, unexpected, or amusing to the table. After a Challenge roll, the player can spend a Treat to pick up the Cat Dice and try again. However, this does not work for Dire Challenges, below.

To represent each Treat, any small, useless object will do: a poker chip, for example. The *Call of Catthulhu* Boxed Set comes with wooden goldfish tokens for the purpose. It is against the rules to use candy, as it tends to be gone when looked for.

No cat can ever have more than three Treats at a time. Between adventures, all Treats and accompanying luck are presumed eaten up. Each cat gets one fresh Treat when play starts again.

In written adventures, places where the Cat Herder might give out a Treat are often marked with the little fish icon.

THE PETTING CURE (The Rule of No Treats)

When a cat is completely out of Treats, she can recover some psychic energy from contact with a sympathetic human. The cat must find a human and get him to pet her, scratch behind the ears, and so on. A Pussyfoot can always get caresses; other cats may have to invent means of persuasion. Crucially, the cat alone must decide when the petting is sufficient, traditionally exactly three strokes; the human is not allowed to stop by his own choice, nor to go on too long. Once the perfect petting is accomplished and the human dismissed, the player receives a new Treat.

Lives

Every cat, humans say, has nine lives. Of course, they get it slightly wrong. No one really has more than one life. Dead is dead. What cats enjoy is the ability—sometimes—to escape a situation that would have killed a less nimble, fortunate, and clever animal. Each cat starts out on her First Life. There are two ways she might choose to give up one of these irreplaceable chances at survival:

- To instantly recover from Injury (p27)
- To add Glory to her attempt at a Dire Challenge (p22)

In either event, the player then makes a note that the cat is on her Second Life (or Third, etc.). As even humans know, the Ninth Life is the last, so players should be very hesitant to give up a Life when it can be avoided.

Dire Challenges

If the cat attempting a Challenge could get hurt doing it, or if she only has one shot before Something Bad happens, the stakes goes beyond the ordinary to make a Dire Challenge. Cats should not attempt a Dire Challenge except when the result seems extraordinarily important. A bad result can cause injury or even death.

Only the Right Cat for the Job can even attempt a Dire Challenge. The wrong cat automatically fails! (Exception: *Blaze of Glory*, below.) The RCFTJ needs two Successes on two Cat Dice, with *no automatic Success*, and each Failure inflicts an Injury (p27). Depending on circumstance, the Cat Herder might apply the resulting damage to someone or something besides the cat: a hostage, or the chain holding up the escape hatch above the burning hold, or the magic field sealing a dimensional gate between Here and a Bad Place. Risky business!

Glory

The RCFTJ can choose to push her luck and try a Dire Challenge without regard to her own safety. She gives up one of her irreplaceable Lives just to make the try. This is called Glory, or a *Glorious Attempt*. The sacrifice allows an extra Cat Die thrown into the roll. Two Successes wins the Challenge, but each Failure results in an Injury, as shown on the Challenge Charts (p25). If all three dice come up Failures, the cat suffers three Injuries and is Dying (p29).

Reminder: *Treats do not work* on Dire Challenges, including Glorious Attempts.

BRUSH WITH DEATH

When a cat really gets in trouble, due to his own curiosity, overwhelming odds, or just bad luck, and according to all logic should simply die, the Cat Herder can give him one chance to escape with his furry hide intact. To allow a *Brush with Death*, the CH treats survival as a single Glorious Attempt at a Dire Challenge. The player marks off one of the cat's nine irreplaceable Lives and makes the 3dC roll. On two Successes, the doomed kitty escapes, coming out with a single Injury. On three Successes, he gets away unscathed! If the dice don't offer up at least two Successes, though, the cat's luck has run out, and Death gets his own.

BLAZE OF GLORY

Any cat—even the “wrong” cat for the job—can succeed at one Challenge roll, Dire or otherwise, by going out in a Blaze of Glory. The cat *automatically dies* in the attempt, using up all remaining Lives and unable to attempt a Brush with Death or any other tricks to avoid her fate. She also automatically succeeds in spectacular manner; see *Midnight*, p23.

The Cat Herder should be generous in allowing the player to describe resounding triumph for the cat willing to lose everything in this manner. However, the Blaze of Glory applies only to a Challenge roll: in other words, to a single task that could succeed on a 2dC roll. Solving vast mysteries, defeating overwhelming foes, and fixing complex problems central to the adventure do not lie within the scope of a single Challenge, so not even the ultimate sacrifice can accomplish such goals. For example, a cat could give her life by throwing herself into a fire of unholy incense, disrupting the mass mind-control of an Evil High Priest. Knocking the Priest unconscious, however, and driving his pet shaggoth back through the Fissure of Shed-Napparuth, and sealing the gate, remain for the survivors to handle if they can.

SNAKE EYES & MIDNIGHT (*The Rule of Doubles*)

This rule is optional, but fun. Without it, the players and Cat Herders can ignore the numbers on Cat Dice and just count Happy and Sad Cats. However, many play groups enjoy treating certain 2dC outcomes as special results.

SNAKE EYES (Double Ones)



When both Cat Dice rolled for a Challenge come up 1s, the result is Snake Eyes, or an Embarrassing Failure. The player who rolled the dice has the first chance to describe the improbable and mortifying circumstance that has befallen her cat. If she chooses, she can invite other players to chime in with suggestions. Finally, the Cat Herder adds her own input and describes what actually happens. Quick, witty, and amusing ideas from the rolling player might be worth a Cat Treat to offset slightly the flop just suffered. Of course, it's too late to use the Treat on the Snake Eyes roll.

Embarrassing Success: If the RCFTJ attempts an Easy Challenge and the dice come up Snake Eyes, she still gets her one automatic Success, so the roll does succeed. It is also still an embarrassment! The rolling player gets first dibs at describing the unlikely accident that somehow, when the dust settles, ends up with the goal accomplished despite the crazy flop of the cat's original plan.

MIDNIGHT (Double Sixes)



When both Cat Dice rolled for a challenge come up 6, the result is Midnight, indicating a Triumphant Success. Again, the rolling player gets first crack at suggesting the scene, followed by other players, and finalized by the Cat Herder. Usually the great success serves as its own reward, but of course the CH can always throw in a Treat for especially funny or awesome results.

Typical Challenges

What each Role can always do, and sample Challenges for which each is the RCFTJ.

A Catrobat...

- Always acts first.
- With ease, can climb a rough wall, leap a fence, slip out of sight of a human, slip through a closing door, walk a rope.
- With luck, can leap from roof to roof, run across a wire, slip out of sight of an animal.

A Pussyfoot...

- Always attracts attention.
- With ease, can appeal for help, beg for food, distract a human, recognize exotic food.
- With luck, can appeal for help to a dog, distract a cat, understand riding in human vehicles.

A Scrapper...

- Can always evaluate a physical threat.
- With ease, can bite through a string, catch a mouse or baby bird, scare off some kittens, land a surprise blow.
- With luck, can catch an adult city rat, face down a dog, tear a bag, or rip open a box.

A Tiger Dreamer...

- Can always smell when Something Isn't Right.
- With ease, can comfort a human, interrupt a magic ritual, notice unnatural behavior, recognize that a pattern is mystical.
- With luck, can comfort a dog, communicate with an alien being, identify what a mystical pattern might mean.

A Twofootologist...

- Always notices what a human is up to.
- With ease, can distinguish car keys from house keys, flip a switch, flush a toilet, pull open a kitchen cabinet, pull out an electrical plug.
- With luck, can memorize what buttons a person pushed, open a door chain from inside, position a rolling chair.

Challenge Charts

GAME

Easy Challenge One Success required	
Normal Challenge One Success: Partial progress Two Successes: Challenge met	
Difficult Challenge Two Successes required	

{On a regular six-sided die, a Success is a roll of 3 to 6}

DIRE CHALLENGE (RCFTJ Only)		
Results	Outcome	Injuries
	Success	None
	Failure	 {Injured}
	Failure	 {Disabled}
GLORY: Give up a Life to roll three Cat Dice on a Dire Challenge		
	Success	Without a scratch!
	Success	 {Injured}
	Failure	 {Disabled}
	Failure	 {Dying}

The Rule of Silence (MEOWAWKI)

A Glorious Attempt at a Dire Challenge raises the possibility of *triple ones* or *triple sixes*. Should such a result ever fall to table, each having only a 1 in 216 chance to occur, everyone except the player rolling the dice must *immediately stop talking*, involuntary shouts of amazement aside. *No one may even SUGGEST what happens next*. The player alone takes all the time desired to contemplate, and then describe, the incredible heights or depths of destiny to which this cat has uniquely risen or fallen. The Cat Herder could fairly inflict harsh penalties on a player who dared interrupt.

MEOWAWKI stands for “*My* end of the world as we know it.”

MARKING (The Rule of Three Smelly Things)

By rubbing a creature or object with her face, forehead, or paws, a cat transfers scent to the subject with special glands. That person, animal, place, or object is familiar, and the Cat Herder can take this into account when describing the results of challenges. Example: A cat tears around a street corner to escape pursuers. The Cat Herder calls for a Difficult challenge, and the player succeeds. The CH announces that the cat jumps into hiding behind a garbage bag, but can’t move without revealing herself. Then the player reminds the CH that her cat had passed that corner before and specifically taken the time to mark it. The CH changes the result to say that the cat, knowing just what to expect, slipped by the obstacles cleanly and got out of sight while still on the run.

A cat can only have three things effectively marked at any given time. Marking a fourth means that the scent on the first-marked object, and the cat’s detailed memory of it, have faded. Scent and detail also disappear after a day; less if rain or cleaning products intervene. Also, it takes time for scent glands to recharge; players should restrain themselves from using this rule too often, lest the Cat Herder declare the relevant glands exhausted for the rest of the session.

Often a cat seeks to renew familiarity with important targets, such as well-known humans, immediately upon reuniting in the same vicinity. Two-Foots love to interpret such behavior as a friendly “welcome home,” which is in some sense true.



The Notebook of Tour-Boullion (fragment)

Model: Jess, courtesy of Jon the Wosamag, Kickstarter backer.



INJURY & RECOVERY

It's no fun to detail all the painful things that might happen to a cat who ventures beyond her cozy bed. Still, if great achievements required no risk, everycat would do them. In *Call of Catthulhu*, a cat in less than perfect health is considered Injured, Disabled, or Dying. In the text, the bandaged cat icon indicates an Injury.

 **Injured:** A cat with one Injury no longer counts as the RCFTJ for any physical Challenge for the rest of the adventure. All such Challenges also become harder: An Easy physical Challenge becomes Normal; Normal becomes Difficult. A Difficult Challenge becomes Dire, and therefore failure can lead to more Injuries.

  **Disabled:** A cat with two Injuries is Disabled and can do nothing but lie around, bleed, mewl pitifully, slowly drag herself along the ground in pain, or pass into a restless slumber. She purrs constantly and pants, and her heartbeat is rapid. She cannot attempt any physical Challenges, and even non-physical Challenges become one step harder. The cat cannot defend herself and cannot communicate to other cats more than a few feet away.

   **Dying:** A cat with three Injuries is Dying. She is unconscious and cannot do anything at all. The only way to communicate with her is in Dream. Unless her friends find her some extraordinary assistance, such as admission to an animal hospital, she will pass away by the end of the play session. Any physical harm while Dying kills the cat instantly.

RECOVERY

Injuries go away when the Cat Herder says so, usually between sessions of play. Players can also force healing by spending Treats after play ends, or by sacrificing a Life during play. In either case, the Injury healed does not have to be on that player's cat; he can choose to heal a different animal instead, or even an important object.

Recovering with Treats

The Cat Herder might declare all Injuries healed at the start of the next session... or she might not. Since all leftover Treats get eaten up between adventures anyway, when play stops for the night, players can turn in each Treat to heal one Injury.

Giving Up a Life

This desperate move gets a wounded cat back on her feet at once, at great cost. To recover at once from all Injury, she takes a quick nap, calls on Fftar-Axlan in Dream, licks herself clean, and starts fresh, eliminating one of her nine Lives forever.

SCRAPPING (Fights)

Cats may tussle among themselves, but smart heroes avoid tangling with big, nasty critters. When necessary, fights resolve quickly as a series of contests, each leading to one of five Results.

To resolve a contest, each fighter rolls 2dC. Non-cats count a Sad Cat result as a Success and a Happy Cat as a Failure! A Scrapper, being the RCTFJ, gets *one automatic success*. So does a non-cat with pointy teeth or violent ways. Snake Eyes, Midnight, and use of Treats apply just as with any Challenge roll.

The fighter with more Successes chooses what Result to inflict on the other. A tie is a tie, with spitting, noise, flying fur, and no other effects.

RESULTS

At the winner's option, the losing creature is *Dodged*, *Stunned*, *Shoved*, *Grabbed*, or *Hurt*. The exact outcome depends on what creatures are involved: their relative size, nature, weapons, and defenses. Examples appear below, but only the Cat Herder can decide for sure.

DODGE: The winner completely avoids the attacks and intentions of the loser. The winner can use this opportunity to flee.

- No matter how big or scary an opponent, Dodge always gets the winning fighter out of the way of its attacks.
- The only way to Dodge is to go in Scrapping and risk the other creature winning the contest; it can't be done "from the shadows."

STUN: The losing fighter is taken aback, temporarily confused, or otherwise not able to act. A second Stun may convince the target to flee, but the tougher the foe, the faster it recovers its nerve.

- Stunning a mouse knocks the thing for a loop, semi-conscious.
- Stunning a fellow cat counts as winning the fight. The loser backs off a little, maybe nursing a small nip or scratch.
- Stunning a large dog surprises it, perhaps with just an impressive display of fluffed tail, arched back, and hissing. The dog stops attacking, for the moment.
- Very tough, large, or supernaturally stupid foes won't notice Stun attempts at all.

SHOVE: The winner forces the loser to move a few steps in a direction of the winner's choosing.

- A Shoved prey animal may seem to be loose, but it goes exactly where the cat intended and cannot escape before the next attack. This game can go on for a long time.
- Shoving another cat pushes it back just out of mutual reach, leaving both combatants ready to start again, or carefully back off.
- Shoving a larger creature may mean tripping it up, body checking, or attacking its face after successfully Grabbing on. The result is a single, staggering step.

GRAB: The winner gets a grip on the loser, with teeth or limbs. The grabber can let go at any time, unless the fighters have Grabbed each other.

- A cat that Grabs a mouse-like foe has it pinned and completely at her mercy.
- Grabbing another cat keeps either from going anyplace until the Grabbed fighter breaks the grip by either Dodging or Shoving the grabber away.
- Grabbing a human means that the cat is clinging on, subject to blows that might Hurt the cat, but also able to make continuing Stun or Shove attempts with scratches and bites.
- If a cat is Grabbed by a large creature, such as in the jaws of an attack dog or the hands of a human, that creature can throw the cat the next time it wins a Scrapping contest. The throw flings the cat far out of reach, as a Shove, and depending on where she lands, might also Stun or Hurt her.

HURT: The winner does her best to bloody the loser, causing real harm if possible. Cats cause Hurt with their fangs, or with rakings of their hind legs after a Grab. The front claws are for less lethal play.

- A cat that Hurts a bug or other tiny pest has killed the thing.
- Hurting another cat is serious; it causes an Injury. Stunning is more appropriate for asserting dominance.
- Victims much larger than a cat won't suffer real injury. Some may not even feel any pain.

Advanced Scrapping

Prey: Small, skittering foes, the type that cats evolved to hunt, have little hope against feline attacks. Such a creature is Prey and rolls only a single Cat Die; against a Scrapper, who gets one automatic success, the best such a target can do is tie.

Surprise Attacks: The Cat Herder, at her discretion, may decide that an attack comes as a complete surprise to the victim. An attacking Scrapper, or fighty non-cat, automatically succeeds against a surprised victim and imposes the Result of choice. A less warlike attacker can do the same on a Normal Challenge roll. Sometimes a Pussyfoot, not usually a fighter, can get in a surprise attack through sheer unexpectedness. An ordinary move is never enough to catch a Catrobat off guard, so they don't suffer normal surprise attacks. Truly shocking situations, such as a giant claw bursting through the wall, can affect any cat.

Mixing It Up: In scraps with more than one fighter, each creature only rolls once. The resulting successes count defensively against every other fighter, but can only be used once to actual inflict a Result. The Cat Herder may rule differently for otherworldly creatures with too many eyes and tentacles.

Holding Action: To hold off a larger, stronger, or otherwise dangerous foe, a cat can interpose herself, rolling 2dC for Scrapping as usual. If she beats the foe, she imposes the Result of her choice, usually a Stun which keeps the thing from advancing. Win or lose, however, each Failure rolled means that the foe chooses one Result to inflict on the brave cat. Results are simultaneous but each must be different. At worst, the cat could roll two Failures *and* lose the Scrapping contest, thus suffering three Results. For example, she might be Grabbed, Thrown against the wall (for a combined Shove and Hurt), and finally left Stunned, unable to rejoin the fray until the Cat Herder so declares—paying a high price to delay a monstrous foe for a few precious moments. The Holding Action is the Scrapping equivalent of a Dire Challenge.

Non-Combat Contests: Scrapping contests can resolve non-combat conflict as well, such as two animals striving for control of an inanimate object. Results are inflicted on the target, not on the opponent, with the Cat Herder having final interpretation of the outcome.



The Notebook of Tour-Bouillon (fragment)

Model: Spooky, with big thanks to
Kickstarter backer David J.



RULES OF PAW FOR PLAYERS

When at table, quite apart from any business of dice and character sheets, certain Rules of Paw help keep everyone in the spirit of being illiterate, thumbless, four-footed monsters who can fit in a mailbox, walk on a wire, and hear a blade of grass bend at twenty yards, but can't tell the *Mona Lisa* from a wad of old newspaper.

Rules of Paw from throughout this book are compiled in the list on p36. Individual play groups may develop many more such ideas, and are invited to share them with other players through the thickening congeries of social media around *Catthulhu.com*.

CAT'S TONGUE (The Rule of Meow and Yowl)

Cats communicate through vocal sounds, eye contact, facial expression, body posture, tail movement, psychic convection via touch, and twitching of the ears, fur, and whiskers. Note that darkness doesn't matter; cats in the same place and able to occasionally brush against each other can communicate fine, no matter how dim the area might seem to a Two-Foots.

When out of sight and touch, however, cats can only use sound to exchange ideas, greatly limiting what can be said. Players should simulate this by using only wordless cat noises when their cats are talking but can't see each other. Quite a bit of emotion can be expressed without words, but no humming out syllables! That's human stuff.

CARRYING (The Rule of Wum Fing)

A cat can carry exactly one thing at a time, by holding it in her mouth, or by dragging it with her teeth for larger or heavier objects. While using her mouth to grip this way, the cat cannot make normal cat-sounds, impeding communication. Also, carrying things in the mouth is annoying and a cat will look for the first chance to drop her burden. Therefore, when a cat character picks something up, the player should put a pencil between her teeth and leave it there, talking around it, as long as the cat still carries the object in the game. When the player gets annoyed and takes the pencil out of her mouth, even for an instant, the cat drops the object.

SHARE THE KILL (The Rule of the Cat Herd)

No matter how good a time some or all might be having, everyone at table has the obligation to stop now and then, take a breath, and think, "Am I eating up more than my share of the time, the talking, and the action?" Share the fun; share the kill.

NOTES FOR CAT HERDERS

Much alarming wisdom appears in *Call of Catthulhu Book II: Unaussprechlichen Katzen*, also known as the Cat Herder's Guide. That volume reveals a great deal about the Catthulhu universe, including the Animal Gods and their sinister cults, the many varieties of human in the *Book of the Two-Foots*, the canine lore in the *Book of the Dog*, three complete Catventures, and much more.

In the meantime, an aspiring Cat Herder who only has this book can start improvising great adventures right away, using the following quick notes and her inborn senses of drama and humor. Just have fun!

Putting the Cat Dice to Work

While, in her sole, godlike discretion, the Cat Herder can dictate any circumstance whatsoever during play, that can become dull. The point of the game is that no one knows exactly what will happen when dread circumstance encounters quick player wits. Using Cat Dice to randomize the answers to select questions lets everyone enjoy a bit of unpredictability and keeps even the most confident Player Cats on their toes.

NOTICE ROLLS

In general, the Player Cats notice what they need to for the game to move forward. If it's not crucial, or if ignorance may prove at least as amusing as being informed, the Cat Herder can call for rolls from players whose feline heroes might be in position to see, smell, or, especially, hear something. Each player rolls 2dC.

On two Failures, the cat doesn't notice a thing; on Snake Eyes, this might be due to amusingly foolish distraction. One Success is enough to catch what's in the wind. If some cats are further away or more distracted than others, those cats might need two Successes. Often the CH can move the game forward by simply saying that whichever cats get the best results notice whatever the Cat Herder wants the players to know.

Next to hearing, scent is the best feline sense, far better than human (although not nearly canine). Their noses alert them to the presence of animals; good food, and substances that would be dangerous to breathe, eat, or drink; fresh or stale air. Cats leave marks from their many scent glands (p26) and can identify which cat left a mark, or tell a strange cat's gender, time of visit, recent diet, and even mood.

LUCK ROLLS

Glitch: If the cats' plans are proceeding smoothly, the CH might secretly roll an Easy Challenge. If both dice come up Failures, some element that should have worked fine proves unreliable or acts in an unexpected way. Example: "While you were checking for dogs outside, one of the kittens wandered off someplace."

Minor Luck: When the cats want to achieve a minor step forward and the CH doesn't have a preference, she might roll 1dC. On a 1–2, the outcome is the opposite of what the cats would prefer; otherwise, they get what they want and play moves on. Example: "No, the kitchen door's not latched. You can just push it open."

Sinister Fortune: When things are going badly for the cats, the Cat Herder might choose to make a Difficult Challenge roll and keep the pressure building. Unless both dice come up successes, the forces of darkness tighten their grip and things get just a little worse. Example: "As you struggle with the stones, the fire spreads. Suddenly, from down the hall, you hear the squishy approach of what must be a lot more toads."

STUPID TWO-FOOTS

When a cat is trying to get an idea into a human's head, the Two-Foots can prove remarkably dense. Understanding even the plainest urgings of another animal is a Difficult Challenge for humans, requiring two successes on 2dC. If the dummy fails, the cat will have to change tactics and try again. Example: "You tangle up the butler's steps and even pull on his trouser leg with your teeth, but he just mutters and shoves you away with his foot."

Belling the Cats (The Rule of the Next Thing)

In any adventure, the Cat Herder has some idea of at least a few things that have to happen for the story to proceed. In play, the way to make sure that the group reaches all those milestones is called "Belling the Cats." When the game seems to be slowing down, or some players are losing focus, the CH asks, "Okay! Is there anything else anyone wants to do before the Next Thing happens?" Each player gets one more chance to try something, Catcroats first, and then the Plot moves on. Actually ringing a physical bell is optional.

Gaining Experiences

After an adventure, surviving cats know more than they did before. Like everything else on their character sheets, Experiences do not use numbers at all. Instead, each is a simple statement of fact. Some Experiences help define the RCFTJ in future Challenges; others help players make informed choices; others amount to near-traumatic memories. The Cat Herder defines Experiences, but players can make suggestions. Examples:

- That Bug Ain't Right (cat has met unnatural servants of the Insect God)
- Clear Doors Open For Fat Cats (familiar with automatic doors)
- Bad Monsters Live Under Hoods (once stepped on a gas pedal)

What Cats Know about the World

Cats talk among themselves and to other animals, and know of basic things even beyond personal experience. Cat elders have also gathered information about gods and horrors, but Player Cats themselves cannot sense the existence of, say, *Spazzathoth*, mindless ball of fury at the center of the universe, any more than humans can. The heroes learn about the manipulations of sinister cults or various impending dooms by the evidence of their delicate, but natural, cat senses.

The exception is the Tiger Dreamer. In addition to knowing the lore of the gods and animals, a Dreamer is sensitive to cosmic vibrations—mostly while sleeping. Awake, she might get a vague sense that there is Something Wrong with a person, animal, object, or situation—other details have to wait for a snooze. The Cat Herder uses these visions to give players hints, warnings, and a useful sense of urgency.

DREAM

All thinking, feeling beings manifest in the Spirit World, also known as Dream. Individual minds appear as lights, patterns, smells, winds, throbs of emotion, skeins of pain, drops of music, or incomprehensible voices. Sleeping Tiger Dreamers wander this realm in dreaming, and can make wordless contact with other minds. Some occupants of Dream, however, are more than just animals, and touching the awareness of certain Spirits can prove dangerous indeed to mortal souls.

DEATH

No one is completely sure what happens when a cat passes on. Some say that her being is snuffed out completely. Some say she is reborn as a kitten at the same moment. Certain Tiger Dreamers describe visions of cat spirits hunting forever with great Fftar-Axlan in a pleasant grassland rich with prey, and this is the notion that, while they may not actually believe it, many cats find the most comforting.

INFLUENCING HUMANS

Humans have very large and agile minds, capable of solving intricate problems and grasping great ideas. However, these minds are unwieldy and not well-defended. Humans live in ways out of touch with their own ancestral Ape God, so animals with stronger spiritual connections can influence human thoughts. To put a single thought into a human head, a cat spends at least a few minutes in calm physical contact with the Two-Foots, concentrating on a brief suggestion; for example, “*Leave the bedroom window open tonight...*” The Cat Herder calls for a Difficult Challenge and secretly determines the later result, if any at all. A Tiger Dreamer is the RCFTJ.

The more simple and subtle the notion, the more likely that it nudges a human a bit closer to acting the way the cat wants. Highly detailed, emotional, or frantic urgings get ignored, and make the person irritable to boot.

OTHER DIMENSIONS

As everyone knows except humans, the multiverse contains countless rotating and overlapping dimensions of space and time. In some of those crooked corners dwell gods and spirits exiled from the physical world. At certain patterns of sympathetic correspondence, expressed in chaotic, fractal geometries, the worlds can intersect.

A major activity of Animal God cults is trying to arrange perfect conditions for the manifestation of Presences from the home dimensions of their own ancestral gods. No known gate will admit a god itself, but their monstrous servants are legion and much easier to slip through.

Such dangerous contact between realities can arise from any sort of mystically perfect physical pattern: intersecting beams of starlight among the shifting constellations; *vévé* beacons inscribed by Voudoun priests; crop circles made by Bull God cultists; hedge mazes designed by lonely gardeners; steel frameworks hidden in the floor plans of huge modern buildings; the secret sketchbooks of Sir Isaac Newton; necromantic street plans laid out by Illuminati; ancient petroglyphs; sacred tattoos; the drawings of schizophrenics; natural cavern systems; tectonic faultlines; railways; telegraph wires; circuit boards; and many more.

In the 21st century, a new network has emerged: the ever-shifting pattern of connections and signals known as the Internet. The resulting geometries may not be visible, but that doesn’t mean that they can’t leak into other worlds.

For more about the many different setting and eras in which the great struggle continues, see the *Call of Cthulhu* supplement *Whirls of Cthulhu!*



Rules of Paw

THE RULE OF NO TREATS. p21

When out of Treats, a cat can get a new one by getting a human to pet her exactly three times.

THE RULE OF WUM FING. p31

A cat can carry one thing—just so long as the player keeps a pencil in her mouth.

THE RULE OF TWO DICE p19

When in doubt, the Cat Herder calls for a roll of two Cat Dice, improvises on the result like a Normal Challenge, and moves forward.

THE RULE OF THREE SMELLY THINGS. p26

A cat can mark up to three things at once with her scent, making them usefully familiar in case of relevant Challenges.

THE RULE OF THE CAT-HERD p31

Don't hog all the action or do all the talking. Share the kill!

THE RULE OF DOUBLES p23

Snake Eyes: Double ones on the Cat Dice is an Embarrassment.

Midnight: Double sixes is a Triumphant Success.

The player rolling the dice gets to describe what happens.

THE RULE OF MEOW & YOWL p31

When the cats are out of sight, players cannot talk or gesture to each other, only make emotive noises.

THE RULE OF THE NEXT THING p33

Belling the Cats: The Cat Herder gives each player a chance to try one more action, and then the Next Thing happens. Ringing an actual bell is optional.

THE RULE OF SILENCE (MEOWAWKI). p26

Should the dread Triple Ones or the mighty Triple Sixes ever fall to table, only the rolling player may say what happens next.

SO MANY THANKS!



Call of *Catthulhu* could never have come to be without the support of an amazing community of Kickstarter backers. These fine folks chipped in not only their hard-earned money, but a never-ending willingness to talk about new reward ideas, vote on things like dice colors, and support each other as our November 2013 campaign grew, and grew, and grew. All 783 backers earned my lasting gratitude; in fact, the level of support positively left me dazzled. It's been a long road crafting the game that these people made possible. With luck, there'll be lots more Catthulhu goodness to come, for all of us!

Particular thanks go out to some backers who went beyond the call of duty to really make a personal commitment. In addition to various physical rewards, these supporters have more than earned official thanks right here in the book itself.

SHAWN R., gentleman and scholar, jumped at the chance to immortalize his departed companion Bubba as the new, official face of Catthulhu. That's Bubba right now, staring back at us all from the cover, daring us to think that we know everything there is to know... Shawn's cat Hudley also stars, in monsterized form, on the overleaf of the mysterious *Notebook of Tour-Bouillon*, seen on p.vi.

PIERRE G., PETER D., RON G., and **SOSRER** also nominated images of their pets to become divine avatars of certain major Animal Gods. You'll have to look in Book II to see the beautiful yet disturbing paintings that resulted from that!

Ten more companions transformed into frightening yet charming creatures of the night, or *les phénomènes félin et animal* as Tour-Bouillon put it. Some of these monster pets appear in this book and some in Book II. Their helpful humans are known as *Kara B., James C., Michael H., David J., MK, Scott K., George P., Jon S., Sean,* and *Mr. Anthropy.*

Just when we were running out of reward ideas, an amazing *forty-six people* stepped up to claim the **ULTIMATE** version of *Call of Catthulhu*, never to be offered again, thus cementing their role in history. These *Ultimate Cool Cats & Kittens* are G. A., Michael A., Masaaki B., Jonathan B., Matthew C., Stéphane C., Victoria Elizabeth-Francis de M., Thierry de G., Sebastian D., Brett E., Mark E., Dean E., Donald F., John G., Rick G., Jennifer G., Richard H., Sam H., Paco J., Scout J., Jacob K., Aaron K., Michael K., Mark M., Thomas M., M. Sean M., Sophia O., Peter P., Frederick P., Alexander P., David P., Becky R., Graeme R., Lee R., Robert S., Ryan S., Thomas S., Nicholas T., Jennifer W., Charlton W., Kevin W., and Neil, Lobo, Stacey, Mike, and Nicolo.

ETERNAL THANKS TO YOU ALL!

Love, Mr. Joel



Role: Caturday, Pussfoot, Scrapper, Tiger Dreamer, or Twofootologist?

Background: Purebred or Mixed Breed? Feral, Housecat, or Showcat? Hunt for food, for fun, just toys, or can't be bothered?

Description: Short or long hair? Fur colors? Eye color? Voice? Scars, injuries, markings? Extra toes? Male or female? Neutered?

Easy Challenge Need one Success	 / <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Normal Challenge One Success: Partial progress or insight Two Successes: Challenge met!	  / <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Difficult Challenge Need two Successes	  / <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

{ On a regular six-sided die, a Success is a roll of 3 to 6 }

Scrapping: Winner chooses 1 Result —

Dodge: Winner avoids all attacks and can flee.

Stun: Loser becomes temporarily unable to act.

Show: Winner moves loser a little.

Grab: The winner gets a grip on the loser.

Hurt: The winner does her best to draw blood.



Trade in a Treat to retry any roll, except a Dire Challenge!

Draw your kitty here!



CAT CHARACTER SHEET

Free to copy for personal use

NO NUMBERS ALLOWED
Don't forget to be awesome!

Player _____

Cat Name(s) _____

Role _____

Background _____

Description _____

Story & Experiences: _____

Life: _____