

# Monsters of the Midway

---

*A Call of Cthulhu Campaign (Document version 05-09-13 11:15am)*

## From the Dust, A New Age...

1934. Five years after the stock market crash and America has yet to recover. The mid-west has dried up, the topsoil swept away in terrible dust storms leaving the land barren.

And the great pact has ended. It's the early days of the rediscovery of magic. Long restricted from doing harm through magic, the true violent and deadly nature of magic has been blunted. The lack of true magicians has made the world vulnerable. You show an affinity for magic or some trace lineage is apparent in your physiology that says that you may be a player in the war for the souls of humanity. Misters Shadwell and Myles come to hide you from those who would keep humanity weak, and to help you hone your craft.

The Shadwell & Myles Circus travels the desolate landscape with a purpose unsuspected by those who come to partake of the traditional pleasures they advertise. The best place to hide a freak of nature is among other freaks. Thus they come calling upon the player character not long after he has discovered his own strange heritage.

You are an obvious freak, a skilled normal human being, a practitioner of minor prestidigitation, or simply a roustabout with a strong interest in keeping the world safe from the horrors that stalk us all.

## Character Background

I am using Call of Cthulhu 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, however, as near as I can tell, character creation is the same in pretty much all modern versions of the game. Please keep the following in mind when designing your characters.

- It's the 1930s.
- You are dirt poor. So if your idea is to make a Dilettante, she's likely been disinherited. Do not take any money given to you by a template in the book.
- You're working for a circus. As such you wind up with these general types of jobs (often overlapping, since everyone has to pitch in to set up and take down).
  - **Roustabout.** This is the term for a general circus hand. You raise tents, assemble rides and booths, load and unload trucks, tend animals (if any), fix broken down vehicles when necessary, and sometimes attend booths. This is where much of your "unskilled workers" are.
  - **Oddities or Freaks.** The freakshow is rife with strange characters, typically with real (albeit misunderstood) deformities. The bearded lady, Siamese twins, the human lizard, etc.
  - **Daredevils and Performers.** The snake charmer, acrobats, lion tamers, contortionists, fortune teller, etc.

- **Administration.** Shadwell and Myles Circus already has two owners, one of whom is absent. In Administration this really only leaves room for the Manager, and an Accountant. Neither necessarily need to be supplied by players. I can always use one NPC to do both jobs.
- Physical Deformity versus Usefulness. It's not at all a requirement that you be a freak. You can if you like, however, say your character has Scales over part of his face or has a second, smaller head out of his neck. It's when these things have an added benefit that they have to be considered by the GM. As for benefit: Scales that give defense in a few locations might be fine. Vestigial wings are fine; but working wings are probably a no unless they are very limited in usefulness.
- Uniqueness. This is important to the freakshow contingent. I don't need two bearded ladies.

## Character Creation

Defer to MY rules below when there's a conflict with the rules in the book.

Roll characters in front of another player or the GM because your super-character with three 18's will be met with disbelief unless you have a witness. Like most random character creations, you may have to throw out your first attempt or two.

## Characteristics

- Roll 4D6 and take the best 3. Do this five times. Assign them to STR, CON, POW, DEX, and APP in any order.
- Select your size. Normally 2D6+6, an average person is 13, but since concept could have you being really tall or really short, Pick a number between 7 and 18
- For INT (2D6+6), roll 3D6, take the best 2, and add 6.
- For EDU (3D6+3), roll 4D6, take the best 3, and add 3.
- Age: Your base age is EDU+6 (Thus 12 to 21). For every 10 years you add to your character's base age you gain 1 EDU and lose 1 point from your choice of STR, CON, DEX or APP.
- SELLING BACK POINTS: You can sell back up to 4 characteristic points (total). They can come from any of your base stats (STR, CON, DEX, APP, POW, EDU, but not SIZ). You get 1 Bonus point (see below) for each point sold back in this way. Most common one to sell is APP, if you are a freak.
- SAN equals POWx5.
- INTx5 = Idea
- POWx5 = Luck
- EDUx5 = Know
- "Cthulhu Mythos" in this game is "Forbidden Knowledge"
- (CON+SIZ)÷2 = Hit Points. Round up.
- POW = Magic Points

**Damage Bonus (SIZE + STR)**  
 02-12 = -1D6    33-40 = +1D6  
 13-16 = -1D4    41-56 = +2D6  
 17-24 = +0      57-72 = +3D6  
 25-32 = +1D4    73-88 = +4D6

## Bonus Points

You have 5 bonus points you may spend in the following ways:

- 1pt. An unspent bonus point can be used in game for one reroll of your own. You have to accept the second roll.
- 1pt. +5% on a skill. Can be bought multiple times.
- 1pt. +1% on Forbidden Knowledge. Note that this is the ONLY way you can buy forbidden knowledge, and the ONLY time it will not impact your SAN score. You 5% is the maximum you may buy this way.
- 5pts. You have an object with magical properties. You'll work with the GM to determine what the object is, though you won't know much if anything about its origin.
- 5pts. Unusual ability. This will manifest as something like psychometry (reading things from objects), rubber physiology (not literally; you just have an easy time getting out of bonds because you can bend ways people shouldn't be able to), premonitions, levitate (for short periods). Note that virtually ALL of these abilities end up costing you somewhere, be it Hit Points, POW, or Magic Points. Some may involve a roll. Mechanics of each will be determined by the GM.

## Skills and Occupations

Points to spend on skills are equal to your starting *Know* score (5xEDU). You spend them on skills available according to your selected occupation.

You are NOT limited to this list below; you can choose something out of the book if it's not listed here if you can justify it to the GM.

**Artist** (Art, Craft, Fast Talk, History, Photography, Psychology, Spot Hidden, any ONE other skill as a specialty)

**Athlete** (Climb, Dodge, Jump, Martial Arts, ride, Swim, Throw, any ONE other skill).

**Criminal** (Bargain, Disguise, Fast Talk, Handgun, Locksmith, Sneak, Spot Hidden, any ONE other skill).

**Doctor** (Biology, First Aid, Latin, Medicine, Pharmacy, Psychoanalysis, Psychology, any ONE other skill).

**Drifter** (Bargain, Fast Talk, Hid, Listen, Natural History, Psychology, Sneak, any ONE other skill).

**Engineer** (Electrical Repair, Library Use, Mechanical Repair, Operate Heavy Machinery, Physics, any ONE other skill.)

**Entertainer** (Art, Disguise, Dodge, Fast Talk, Listen, Psychology, any ONE other skill.)

**Farmer/Rancher** (Craft, Electrical Repair, First Aid, Mechanical Repair, Natural History, Operate Heavy Machine, Track, any ONE other skill.)

**Journalist/Author** (Art, Fast Talk, History, Library Use, Occult, Own Language, Persuade, Photography, Psychology, any ONE other skill).

**Manager/Bureaucrat** (Accounting, Bargain, Drive, Fast Talk, Law, Library Use, Listen, Persuade, Psychology, Spot Hidden, any ONE other skill).

**Military Officer** (Accounting, Bargain, Law, Navigate, Persuade, Psychology, any ONE other skill.)

**Musician** (Art, Bargain, Craft, Fast Talk, Listen, Persuade, Psychology, any one other skill).

**Pilot** (Astronomy, electrical Repair, Mechanical Repair, Navigate, Operate Heavy Machinery, Physics, Psychology, any ONE other skill.)

**Former Cop** (Dodge, Fast Talk, First Aid, Grapple, Law, Psychology, and any two of the following: Bargain, Drive, Automobile, Martial Arts, Ride or Spot Hidden.)

**Teacher** (Bargain, Library Use, Other Language, Persuade, Psychology, and any two of the following: Anthropology, Archaeology, Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Electronics, Geology, History, Law, Medicine, Natural History, or Physics.)

**Soldier** (Dodge, First Aid, Hide, Listen, mechanical Repair, Rifle, Sneak, any ONE other skill).

**Unskilled Labor** (Fast Talk, Listen, Fist/Punch, any TWO other skills)

**Skill Base Percentages:**

Accounting (10)	Drive (0)	Own Lang. (01)	Fist/Punch (50)
Anthropology (01)	Fast Talk (05)	Other Lang (01)	Grapple (25)
Archaeology (01)	First Aid (30)	Persuade (15)	HeadButt (10)
Art (05)	Geology (01)	Pharmacy (01)	Kick (25)
Astronomy (01)	Hide (10)	Physics (01)	Handgun (20)
Bargain (05)	History (20)	Photography (0)	Rifle (25)
Biology (01)	Jump (25)	Psychoanalysis (01)	Shotgun (30)
Conceal (15)	Law (05)	Psychology (05)	
Chemistry (01)	Library Use (25)	Ride (05)	Forbidden
Craft (05)	Listen (25)	Sneak (10)	Knowledge (0)
Disguise (01)	Occult (05)	Track (10)	
Dodge (DEXx2)			

**CHANGES FROM THE BOOKS:** To better fit the setting, Credit Rating is removed, Drive and Photography are dropped to 0, and Sub-Machine Gun is removed. If you ever come across an SMG, we'll worry about it then. And as mentioned earlier, "Cthulhu Mythos" has been changed to "Forbidden Knowledge".

## So We Know Each Other?

Before play, go by this guide...

- If you're anti-social, people probably don't know anything about you. Just tell us what you look like.
- If you're a liar, they know all sorts of wrong things. So if you've been around a while, tell us what you WANT us to know before the start of the game. "Background lies" don't come into play until we're actually in play and you reference your background. At that time, a player can call for a Psychology roll (I will roll it and tell you what you think about what they said).

The circus' grapevine is such that even if you've only been there a few days, you know all of the things that the other players have "let" everyone know.

This makes it sound like you're working against each other. You aren't. I just think that if a character has a secret, I should create an environment where you can keep (or try to keep) it. After all, not everyone should have the same personality or motivation.

## NPCs

There are plenty of these. I will provide a few of the better known NPCs to fill out places not covered by the player characters.

## Families and Children

It's not common to have a family with you but not unheard of. Just as it's not uncommon for two circus roustabouts to marry. If you want to have a wife or child along, try not to make it a big family. It's also possible your wife or family were with you but left the circuit for some reason (Probably the endless travel).

## Money and Belongings

If you've been with the circus any amount of time it's likely you've spent most of your money on trying to keep everything going. While Shadwell and Myles have sunk a lot of money into keeping this troop going so that they might protect folks with magical abilities, they do not have bottomless coffers of cash. And Shadwell is not there, so if you needed money immediately, he's not around to offer it. While not many folks are related, you are like a big family and so often you've had to offer your own money to get grub, fix a broken down truck, or to pay off a local councilman to allow you to perform nearby.

With that said, using 1920s/30s prices, you have \$100 to spend. Spend most of it, unless you are purposely keeping the extra hidden from everyone, because they definitely would have needed it for gas, or food, or something. At this point you wouldn't have more than \$10 left unless you're hiding it from others.

When it comes to carny-on-carny, thievery happens, but it doesn't go on among people who've been with the circus for more than a month. It seems that carny justice is swifter than regular justice. Carny-on-rube crime seems to be overlooked unless it causes problems for everyone. Rube-on-Carny crime may involve the law, but not if the Carnies can help it.

## Equipment Prices

I'm using 1920s prices. For items in the book, ask about availability!

Tailored silk suit	\$75.00	Binoculars	\$28.00
Worsted Wool suit	\$29.50	Searchlight	\$5.95
Cashmere Dress Suit	\$18.50	Compass	\$2.00
Corduroy Norfolk Suit	\$9.95	Hunting Knife	\$2.65
Cheap fur coat	\$37.50	Hand Axe	\$1.59
Average overcoat	\$19.95	Fishing Tackle	\$16.00
Dress Shoes	\$6.95	Hemp Twine (2 rolls)	\$.27
Work Shoes	\$4.95	Canteen	\$1.69
Broadcloth Dress Shirt	\$1.95	Tent (7x7)	\$11.25
Sweater	\$7.69	Tent (12x16)	\$24.85
Felt Fedora	\$8.95	Tent (16x24)	\$55.45
Wool Golf Cap	\$1.95	Tent (24x36)	\$39.35
Silk Tie	\$3.69	Rope (50')	\$8.60
Bow Tie	\$.55	Crowbar	\$2.25
Cotton Work Uniform	\$1.50	Handsaw	\$2.80
Designer Dress	\$90.00	Norton Motorcycle	\$95.00
Silk Frock	\$16.50	Crowbar	\$2.25
Satin Dress	\$10.95	Handsaw	\$2.80
Wool Sweater	\$9.48	Norton Motorcycle	\$95.00
Spiked Heels	\$4.45	Rapier	\$12.50
Leather one-strap Slippers	\$3.69	Bayonet	\$3.75
"Nice" hat	\$4.44	Dagger	\$2.50
"Cheap" hat	\$3.69	Straight Razor	\$0.35
Silk Nylons (3 pairs)	\$2.25	Brass Knuckles	\$1.00
Coat with fur trim	\$39.75	Horse Whip	\$3.00
Silk Handbag	\$4.98	.22 Pistol	\$25.00
Dress Hair Comb	\$.77	.25 Derringer	\$12.00
Medical Case	\$10.45	.32 Revolver	\$15.00
(assorted contents)	\$20.00	.32 Auto	\$20.00
Handle Bag (8 lb.)	\$7.45	.38 Revolver	\$25.00
Suitcase (15 lb.)	\$9.95	.22 Bolt Action Rifle	\$13.00
Steamer Trunk (55 lb.)	\$13.95	.30-06 Bolt Action Rifle	\$75.00
Wardrobe (95 lb.)	\$41.95	12-Gauge Shotgun	\$40.00
		12-Gauge Pump Shotgun	\$45.00