



SHADOW OF CTHULHU

This encounter can be as deadly and as terrifying as you would like. If you have a lower level group, this encounter doesn't have to be deadly if you don't want it to be. After all, maybe Cthulhu doesn't want them dead. Maybe it only wants to feed on their fear and insanity. Or maybe there is a bigger goal that this giant of nightmares will get distracted with. This way all the players would have to do is survive the first few rounds to be able to get away. Sure enough they may have some disturbing visions along the way though, maybe some of them may even be true? Additionally, this encounter should probably not be with Cthulhu itself (it is certainly doubtful any mortal creature can survive such an encounter), but Cthulhu's avatar, Shadow of Cthulhu.

PHASED ENCOUNTER

PHASE 1

It is a beautiful sunny day on the sea. The weather is perfect and the water is calm, sparkling with shiny reflections of the afternoon sun. This day would just be ideal, if not for the gnawing, strange feeling in the back of the adventurers' minds.





PHASE 2

A small creature attack! Too bad that only the adventurers with the most keen senses can notice a large shadow approaching them from the depths of this ocean.

Encounter: it is possible to throw some smaller enemies at your players to throw them off this deadly encounter. Depending on the level of your party, it could be sharks, or mermaids, or an aboleth. Perhaps a player with the highest passive perception can eventually notice the looming shadow.



PHASE 3

It seems that everyone on board of this vessel is hearing strange whispers. First mate just saw his dead mother jump off the vessel and into the water below. Will the adventurers be able to keep their senses?

Encounter: This is when Cthulhu starts to really mess with the player's minds. If they fail their Wisdom checks, perhaps they see a loved one call out to them and ask them to follow into the deadly depths below. Or maybe instead of the horrifying shadow below, they can see a beautiful, warm light that is calling out to them. Will they fall for it? Or will their still sane friends be able to prevent them from a certain death if insanity took them over?



PHASE 4

Are those giant EYES in the water???? What is this? Perhaps those adventurers that were able to keep their wits about them are now able to make out a giant creature beneath them. Too bad their vessel is not able to move faster than 10 ft. Is it because of all the tentacles?

Encounter: It is becoming more and more difficult to stay sane, but those that do are able to now freely see the gigantic creature looming in the water. Perhaps the Wisdom check DC goes up by quite a bit... how many more of the adventurers are still standing?



PHASE 5

OH GOD YES IT IS INDEED BECAUSE OF THE TENTACLES! They are attacking the adventurers now! OH MY GOD, WHAT IS THAT? Is that giant hand that is trying to break the ship in half???

Encounter: In Addition to sanity checks, the adventurer's now have to deal with physical attacks of the tentacles (every tentacle you decide to use should have its own initiative), as well as try and keep their vessel afloat, navigating around the giant hand attacks.

RESOLUTION

Once all the tentacles and hand are defeated, the old god can choose to go back into the depths of the ocean... or it can proceed to swallow every single one of the adventurers, including the vessel!



SHADOW OF CTHULHU'S HAND

Gargantuan aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 297 (18d20 + 108)

Speed swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	12 (+1)	23 (+6)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Str +14, Dex +5, Con +10

Skills Acrobatics +9, Athletics +18

Damage Immunities psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, incapacitated, stunned

Senses passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Multiattack. Shadow of Cthulhu's hand makes one Smash attack and one Create a Wave attack.

ACTIONS

Smash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* (3d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or become feared.

Create a Wave. The hand creates a huge wave that targets the closest vessel. If vessel is not available, it deals damage to everyone in 30ft square in front of it. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 3d10 Bludgeoning damage. On success, the target takes half the damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Shadow of Cthulhu's hand can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The hand regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Disappear. The hand disappears / reappears under the water.

Destroy. The hand makes a Smash attack

Enthralling Nightmare (Costs 2 Actions). The Shade targets one creature it can see within 30 ft. of it. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be enthralled by the shade. The charmed target believes all creatures around it are nightmare monstrosities. The Creature can make another saving throw at the end of its turn, or when it takes damage. If the creature succeeds, the effect ends.



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SHADOW OF CTHULHU'S TENTACLE

Huge aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 207 (18d12 + 90)

Speed swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Str +9, Dex +6, Con +9

Skills Acrobatics +10, Athletics +13

Damage Immunities psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, incapacitated, stunned

Senses passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Multiattack. Shadow of Cthulhu makes two tentacle attacks and one Gaze attack.

ACTIONS

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become diseased. The disease has no effect for 1 minute and can be removed by any magic that cures disease. After 1 minute, the diseased creature's skin becomes translucent and slimy, the creature can't regain hit points unless it is underwater, and the disease can be removed only by heal or another disease-curing spell of 6th level or higher. When the creature is outside a body of water, it takes 6 (1d12) acid damage every 10 minutes unless moisture is applied to the skin before 10 minutes have passed.

Shadow's Gaze. The tentacle targets one creature. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take 3d10 Psychic damage and have disadvantage on the next attack. On success, the target takes half the damage. The gaze can be recharged on 5 or 6 of 1d6.