

## SWITCHING CREATURES.

HERE is the most powerful trick of all. Use a Lovecraft plot, but switch the creature. With simple changes, you'll have a new story.

This is because Lovecraft's creatures are mostly interchangeable. For example, here is the plot of *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, redone as a Mi-Go scenario:

A once-prosperous mining town, even. Lots of open shafts into the hills, and under them.

The Investigators drive to a strange mountain town, which the locals avoid.

As they wander around the crumbling town, they see closed-up buildings and hear buzzing voices.

Everywhere in the town, there is an oppressive rhythm or vibration, half-imagined and half-real.

From a rambling drunk, the Investigators hear about rituals in the wood, where inhabitants worship Shub-Niggurath with hideous black winged creatures.

When the Investigators return to their car, the engine is broken. They must stay in the mountain town.

In the dead of the night, the winged creatures swarm on the Investigators, who must flee.

Only the details have changed. The seaside town becomes a mountain town. Guttural voices become buzzing ones. The fishy smell becomes an alien vibration. Mating becomes a ritual in the woods. The plot, however, is the same.

Conversely, here is the plot of *The Whisperer in Darkness*, redone as a Deep One scenario:

The Investigators read reports of corpses, half-human and half-fish, washed up on remote beaches.

Locals tell folktales of mermaid-like creatures and strangers speaking in unnatural, guttural voices.

The Investigators receive a letter from a correspondent, who believes the fish-creatures are watching him.

In a museum near the coast, the Investigators find an engraved monolith, depicting the creatures.

When the Investigators visit their correspondent, in his seafront house, they find him sitting in the dark. A fishy odour pervades. His features are strange, with bulbous, unclosing eyes.

He tells them of beautiful undersea cities in exquisite detail, seeming friendly and benevolent as he does so.

In the night, the Investigators hear Deep Ones in the house below them. They flee.

And so the changes work in reverse. Mountains become seaside, buzzing voices become guttural and vibration becomes odour. The plot is identical: only the descriptions change.

Naturally, not all creatures are interchangeable. You can't run *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* with Cthulhu bursting into the hotel to capture the Investigators. And some creatures require greater changes: for example, the Shan would fit into either of the plots above, but should possess someone.

But this switch will create many new plots. For example, try:

*The Shadow Out of Time*, but with Investigators possessed by the Shan.

*At the Mountains of Madness*, but with Investigators discovering a Great Race city.

*The Dreams in the Witch House*, but with Investigators dreaming of Cthulhu.

*Nyarlahotep*, but with the prophetic stranger being an avatar of Shub-Niggurath, giving a demonstration of natural wonder.

*The Call of Cthulhu*, replacing Cthulhu with any other buried Old One.

*The Colour Out of Space*, replacing the Colour with a Lloigor and the gradual decay with intermittent destruction.

These won't all be straight swaps. Often, you'll need to add things specific to the creature: for example, in the Great Race version of *At the Mountains of Madness*, the Investigators should discover a possessed, not a dissected, explorer.

But, with few changes, you have a wealth of new scenarios. If you cannot use a whole plot, use parts. For example, start a Hastur scenario with the show from *Nyarlahotep*, even if you then take the scenario elsewhere.

Generally, if creatures are similar in some way, you can swap them between stories. Here are some similarities:

The **Mi-Go**, **Shan** and **Deep Ones** are all malevolent races, rather than single creatures.

— So are Ghouls.

**Nyarlathept**, **Hastur** and **Shub-Niggurath** are all nebulous and ill-defined. Their stories are largely interchangeable.

**Lloigor** and **Colours** are both intangible, subterranean and sap energy.

The **Great Race**, **Hounds of Tindalos** and **Lloigor** all manipulate time.

The **Great Race** and **Shan** can both possess a human being.

The **Great Race**, **Cthonians** and **Mi-Go** can, in different ways, take a human's mind out of its body.

The **Elder Things** and **Shoggoths** form a pair, as do the **Great Race** and **Flying Polyps**. In both cases, the second race exterminated the first.

**Cthulhu** can be interchanged with any underground Old One.

There are subtler connections, too: both the **Lloigor** and **Cthulhu** want to enslave humanity; both **Cthonians** and **Lloigor** cause flu-like symptoms; both **Cthonians** and **Colours** cause buildings to collapse.

— Humans can turn into both Deep Ones and Ghouls.

So try using **Cthonians** in *The Colour Out of Space*: they swarm beneath farmland, draining the energy from the humans above. Or try the **Colour** in place of **Cthonians**: when a meteorite is taken by scientists, a **Colour** pursues it and destroys the laboratory where it is kept.

Switching creatures is your most powerful tool. That simple change lets you recycle Lovecraft's plots endlessly.