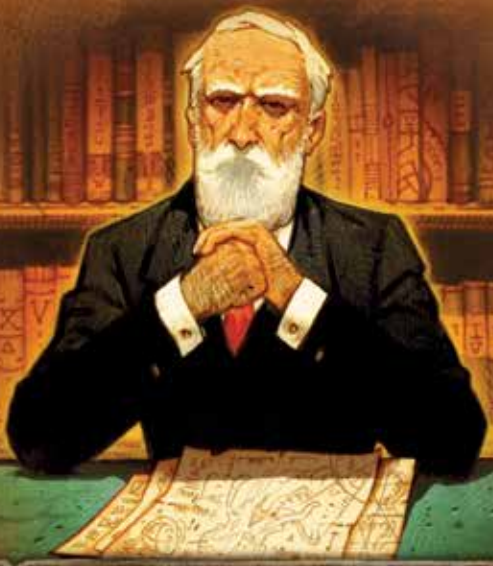
Seiji Kanai



LOVECRAFT LETTER™



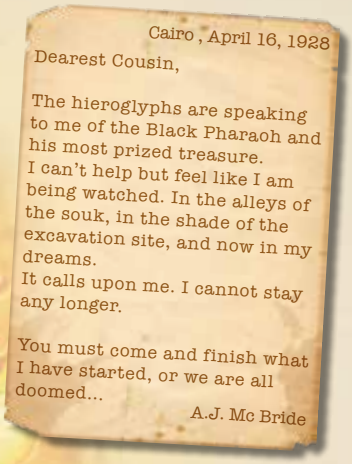
Rulebook

LOVECRAFT LETTER™

A Game by Seiji Kanai
For 2 To 6 Players, Ages 14 And Up

In the 1920s, the world is still in the chaos of the First World War. In the middle of all this, one of your relatives has encountered something mysterious in Egypt. Strange shadows that come to life … Letters with undecipherable texts and strange symbols…

Upon arriving you find out he is missing and decide to investigate. Never would you have expected the horror that awaits you…


Cairo , April 16, 1928

Dearest Cousin,

The hieroglyphs are speaking to me of the Black Pharaoh and his most prized treasure.
I can't help but feel like I am being watched. In the alleys of the souk, in the shade of the excavation site, and now in my dreams.
It calls upon me. I cannot stay any longer.

You must come and finish what I have started, or we are all doomed...

A.J. Mc Bride

Contents

Goal 3
How to Win 3
Components 4
Setup 5
How to Play 6
  Taking a Turn 6
  End of a Round 8
  Game End 8
  Honesty 8
Cthulhu Mythos 9
Credits 16

Goal

In *Lovecraft Letter*, you are a person who has arrived in Egypt to help your cousin, only to discover they are missing. You follow a series of clues apparently left behind for you to find, but beware, as some of them contain forbidden secrets or are protected by supernatural beings that could threaten your well-being.

During the game, you hold one secret card in your hand. It represents the clue that you have chosen to follow at that moment. However: some clues are more dangerous than others and could get you—and not your competition—eliminated.

The player who has the highest value card in his hand at the end of the round has found the most useful clue in the search for your cousin!

How to Win

Unlike other games using the *Love Letter* engine, *Lovecraft Letter* features the Insanity mechanic which adds a new dimension to the game. All Insane effects are very powerful but come at a high risk (see **Insanity**, page 7), as well as make it more difficult to win the game (see **Game End**, page 8).

Players are advised to use these effects wisely and observe how others are trying to win.

Sometimes risky play will be the best course of action.

Other times conservative play will be the easiest path to victory.

Finally, there are times when a single knock out of the game effect will mean victory as other players knocked themselves out of the game.





Components

- 25 game cards
- 40 sleeves
- 1 rulebook
- 6 reference cards
- 18 Sanity tokens

Game Cards

The game has 25 total game cards: 16 with only a Sane effect, and 9 with an Insane effect as well (referred to as Insanity cards in the game and this rulebook).

1. **Name**: This is the name of the card.
2. **Number**: This is the number of the card, used at the end of the game to determine the winner.



1. Name 2. Number 3. Card Count 4. Art
5a. Sane Card Effect 5b. Insane Card Effect

3. **Card Count**: This is the number of copies of the card in the game. It is also used to indicate whether a card can be used for its Sane effect, or for its Insane effect, when possible (see **Insanity**, page 7).
4. **Art**: A visual depiction of the card
5. **Card Effect**: What the card does. Insanity cards have both a Sane (**5a**) and an Insane (**5b**) effect. Others only have a Sane (**5a**) effect.

Reference Cards

These list the various cards in the game, as well as summarize their effects and remind players how many copies are in the deck. They are not used in the game itself, but are provided as a memory aid for players. One side of each reference card summarizes the Sane effects of the cards, while the other side summarizes the Insane effects.

Sanity Tokens



These dual-sided poker chips are used to keep track of the number of round victories you have scored while being Sane or Insane (see **Game End**, page 8).

Setup

Set aside the Mi-Go Braincase card, face up, then shuffle the remaining 24 cards to form a face-down deck.

Remove the top card of the deck from the game without looking at it and set it aside, face down. If you are playing a 2-player game, remove another 5 cards from the top of the deck and set them to the side, face up. They will not be used during this round, but are available to help you deduce what other players might be holding in their hand.

Each player draws 1 card from the top of the deck. This is the player's hand, and is kept secret from the other players (unless a card effect asks you to reveal it).

Determine a starting player in any suitable fashion.

How to Play

Lovecraft Letter is played in a series of rounds. At the end of each round, a winner is determined thanks to the clue they are holding in their hand (its number), as well as their state of mind (Sane or Insane) (see **End of a Round**, page 8). Win a certain number of rounds in a certain state of mind and you win the game! (see **Game End**, page 8).

Taking a Turn

On your turn, draw the top card from the deck and add it to your hand. Then, choose one of the two cards now in your hand and discard it face up in front of you (it will be considered in your discard pile after its effects have been applied). Apply any effect on the card you discarded. You must apply its effect, even if it is bad for you (see **Discarding**, below)!

The effects of each individual card are detailed starting on page 9. If you have any questions about special cases regarding the card's effects, you'll find the answer there.

All discarded cards remain in front of the player who discarded them (in a discard pile). Overlap the cards so that it's clear in which order they were discarded. This helps players to figure out which cards other players might be holding.

Once you finish applying the card's effect and the card is in your discard pile, the turn passes to the player to your left.

Discarding

Several effects in the game ask a player to discard a card. Unless it is due to a Sanity Check (see **Insanity**, page 7), discarding means adding a card from your hand to your discard pile, face up.

Unless otherwise specified (the Sane effect of Mi-Go or of Professor Henry Armitage; being knocked out of the round; a Sanity Check), you must apply the effect of the card you discarded, even if it's bad for you.

If you discard a card with an effect that requires you to choose a player that cannot be chosen due to another card effect (Elder Sign, Liber Ivonis), your card is discarded without effect.

Hand

Several effects in the game refer to the "hand" of a player. It is a shortcut for "the card in the hand" of a player.

Insanity

If an Insanity card is ever in a player's discard pile (no matter how or why it happened), they have been in contact with forbidden knowledge and are now Insane. Remember, A card only goes into the discard pile after its effects have been applied!

An Insane player may, when playing an Insanity card on future turns, choose to use the Insane effect instead of the Sane effect. They cannot apply both effects, they must choose which they want to.

An Insane player may also break down mentally at any moment: At the start of each of their future turns (before they add a new card to their hand) an Insane player must make a Sanity Check.
A Sanity Check is made by revealing as many cards from the top of the deck as the player has Insanity cards in their discard pile, one at a time. If they ever reveal an Insanity card, they are immediately knocked out of the round. If they pass the Sanity Check, all cards revealed this way are discarded (without applying their effect).

If you cannot do a Sanity Check (i.e. the deck is empty), then the round ends immediately.

Out of the Round

If a player is knocked out of the round (either by a card effect or by a Sanity Check), that player discards their hand (without applying its effect) and takes no more turns until the next round.

They also cannot be chosen by other player's card effects.

End of a Round

A round ends if the deck is empty at the end of a player's turn.

All players still in the round reveal their hands. If multiple players have the same number in their hand, they are knocked out of the round. The player with the highest number in their hand wins the round.

A round also ends if all players but one have been knocked out of the round, in which case the remaining player wins.

After the end of the round, check the winner's state of mind. A player is Insane if an Insanity card ever is in their discard pile, otherwise they are Sane.

Give the player a Sanity token and have them place it with the face corresponding to their state of mind up (i.e. showing if they are Sane, or if they are Insane).

Then a new round begins following all the setup rules, with the winner of the previous round as the starting player.

Game End

A player wins the game after any of the following conditions have been met:

- If they have 2 Sanity tokens face up.
- If they have 3 Sanity tokens face up.
- If they have won the previous round thanks to the Insane effect of Cthulhu.

Honesty

There are various ways a player could cheat. For example, he or she could lie when confronted with Investigators, or fail to discard The Silver Key when that player also has a card with a number higher than 4 in their hand. We recommend that you don't play with people who cheat at fun, light games.

Cthulhu Mythos

In this section, you will find a brief overview of the effects of the cards present in the game and what those cards represent.

Investigators



These investigators are looking to decipher mysteries tied to the Necronomicon. They are willing to interrogate anyone who has been in contact with incomprehensible beings and stop those who have made a connection with it that is … too deep.

When you discard Investigators during your turn, choose another player and name a number (other than 1). If that player has that number in their hand, they are knocked out of the round.

If all other players still in the round cannot be chosen (e.g due to Elder Sign or Liber Ivonis), this card is discarded without effect.

Deep Ones



Amphibian creatures that serve Father Dagon and Cthulhu. They mate with human females to increase their numbers. The children that are born gradually get fish-like features, and will eventually return to the sea.

Same effect as Investigators.

When you discard Deep Ones during your turn, choose another player. If they have a 1 in their hand, they are knocked out of the round. If they do not, you name a number (other than 1). If they have that number in their hand, they are knocked out of the round.

If all other players still in the round cannot be chosen (e.g due to Elder Sign or Liber Ivonis), this card is discarded without effect.

Cats of Ulthar



Due to a strange event in the town of Ulthar, on the other side of the River Skai in the Dreamlands, the cats there have become an object of fear. Ever since, Ulthar has become a haven for cats. The cats speak human language, and might give hints.

When you discard Cats of Ulthar during your turn, choose another player and look at their hand. Do not reveal it to any other players.

If all other players still in the round cannot be chosen (e.g due to Elder Sign or Liber Ivonis), this card is discarded without effect.

Golden Mead



A drink used to heighten senses and see the unseen. It helps greatly in performing magic rituals. It is also said to be a means to reach the Great Library at Celeano.

Same effect as Cats of Ulthar.

When you discard Golden Mead during your turn, choose another player and look at their hand. Do not reveal it to any other players. Then draw a card (you have 2 cards in your hand now) and discard one.

If all other players still in the round cannot be chosen (e.g due to Elder Sign or Liber Ivonis), this card is discarded without effect.

Great Race of Yith



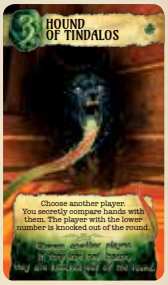
A psychic entity that, ages ago, fled to Earth as its home planet had been destroyed. On Earth, they inhabit great conical beings. In order to learn everything there is to know, they project themselves on beings of the past and the future, in return imprisoning these psyches into their conical bodies.

When you discard Great Race of Yith during your turn, choose another player. You and that player secretly compare your hands.

The player with the lower number is knocked out of the round. In case of a tie, nothing happens.

If all other players still in the round cannot be chosen (e.g due to Elder Sign or Liber Ivonis), this card is discarded without effect.

Hound of Tindalos



These hounds hunt their target through time and space and will pass through angles, appearing out of thin air to attack their prey. Time travelers beware: once a hound has your scent, it will hunt you down until your demise!

Same effect as Great Race of Yith.

When you discard Hound of Tindalos during your turn, choose another player. If they are not Insane, they are knocked out of the round.

If all other players still in the round cannot be chosen (e.g due to Elder Sign or Liber Ivonis), this card is discarded without effect.

Elder Sign



The most plausible theory is that this is a weapon made to fight the Great Old Ones. It is a symbol carved into stone, and can be used as a repellent against their servitors.

When you discard Elder Sign during your turn, you are immune to card effects of other players until the start of your next turn.

If all players still in the round other than the player whose turn it is are immune, that player must choose themselves for their card's effects, if possible.

Liber Ivonis

This famous book of magic, originally written by Eibon, the great wizard of Hyperborea, has been translated in many languages over time. This is its Latin edition. As both books contain overlapping information, and are full of hateful, forbidden knowledge, it is often compared to the Necronomicon.

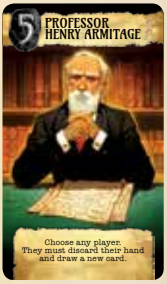
Same effect as Elder Sign.



When you discard Liber Ivonis during your turn, you cannot be knocked out by effects until the end of the round. This includes:

- Sanity checks (you must still do them every turn).
- Someone discarding Investigators or Deep Ones and correctly guessing the number in your hand (just reply yes).
- Having a lower number when chosen by someone discarding Great Race of Yith or Hound of Tindalos (Sane effect).
- Discarding The Necronomicon, or Cthulhu during your turn (Sane effect).
- Discarding Mi-Go Braincase during your turn (Sane and Insane effect).

Professor Henry Armitage



A professor at Miskatonic University. He has researched the unknown, learned magic and can give valuable information to those who dare ask.

When you discard Professor Henry Armitage during your turn, choose a player (including yourself). That player discards their hand (but doesn't apply its effects, unless it is the The Necronomicon or Cthulhu) and draws a new card. If the player cannot draw a card due to the deck being empty, they draw the card that was removed at the start of the round.

If all other players still in the round are immune, you must choose yourself.

Mi-Go



A being from Yuggoth. Highly intelligent and knowledgeable, they sometimes steal human brains, carrying them away in laboratory tubes, and are able to travel to far distances in space.

Same effect as Professor Henry Armitage.

When you discard Mi-Go during your turn, choose another player. You add their hand in yours (you have 2 cards in your hand now). They must take Mi-Go Braincase in their hand (they now have one card). Since you have 2 cards in hand, you discard a card.

If all other players still in the round cannot be chosen (e.g due to Elder Sign or Liber Ivonis), this card is discarded without effect.

Randolph Carter



Also known as "The Dreamer", he can see hidden illusions and speak to cats. He used the Silver Key to disappear through the Silver Door, and hasn't been seen since. To meet him, one needs to step down the seventy steps of shallow sleep and enter the Dreamlands. This, however, is extremely dangerous.

When you discard Randolph Carter during your turn, choose another player and trade your hand with them.

You cannot trade with a player who has been knocked out of the round.

Nyarlathotep



The Crawling Chaos. It is also named "The God of a Thousand Forms", here in its human one which he favors. Its final motive is to fill the world with chaos and destruction.

Same effect as Randolph Carter.

When you discard Nyarlathotep during your turn, collect the hands of all the other players still in the round. You may look at them. Then redistribute one card of your choice to each player.

This effect does not put their cards in your hand, thus you cannot give the card you have in hand away.

The Silver Key



This key, decorated with strange arabesques, has been handed down through generations in the Carter family, a family that has long has been connected to forbidden spells. According to Etienne-Laurent de Marigny, it opens the door to the Other Side. This key, said to be forged in Hyperborea, will appear of its own accord, once the magical conditions are met.

Unlike other cards, whose effects are applied when they are discarded, the text of The Silver Key only applies when it is in your hand.

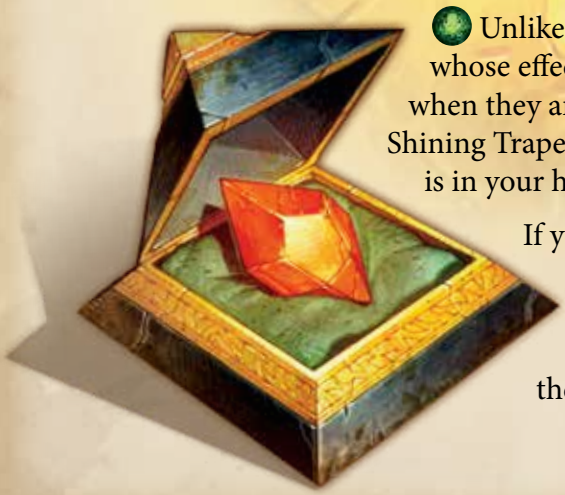
If you ever have The Silver Key and another card that has a number higher than 4 in your hand, you must discard The Silver Key. Of course, you can always decide to discard The Silver Key when that is not the case, to play mind games with the other players…

The Shining Trapezohedron



A multi-sided object kept in a metal box. It is said that with it, one can summon Nyarlathotep itself.

Same effect as The Silver Key. It is ignored if you are Insane.



Unlike other cards, whose effects are applied when they are discarded, the text of The Shining Trapezohedron only applies when it is in your hand.

If you ever have The Shining Trapezohedron and another card that has a number higher than 4 in your hand, you win the round.

The Necronomicon



The book "Kitab Al Azif", written by the "Mad Arab" Abdul Alhazred, was translated and later named "The Necronomicon". Due to its exceedingly dangerous content, most copies have been destroyed and those that are left are mostly incomplete. It is the relic that your cousin A.J. Mc Bride was after. Finding it would likely mean finding him.

If you ever discard The Necronomicon—no matter how or why (so even during a Sanity Check)—you lose the track of your cousin. You are immediately knocked out of the round.

If The Necronomicon was discarded due to a card effect, any remaining effects of that card do not apply (you do not draw a card from Professor Henry Armitage, for example).

Cthulhu



In his house at R'lyeh, Cthulhu awaits dreaming. The followers of Cthulhu believe that, when the stars are right, the sunken city of R'lyeh will rise again from the depths of the Pacific Ocean, and with it Cthulhu will awaken. When it happens, the world will be filled with fear, horror and destruction, and eventually perish.

Same effect as The Necronomicon.

When you discard Cthulhu during your turn, if you already have 2 or more Insanity cards in your discard pile, you win the game. If you do not, you lose the round.

Mi-Go Braincase



When you discard this card during your turn, you lose the round.

When you discard this card during your turn, you lose the round.

Credits

Design: Seiji Kanai

Project Lead: Nicolas Bongiu **Graphic Design:** Vincent Dutrait

Rulebook Graphic Design: Hal Mangold **Art:** Vincent Dutrait

Writing: Nicolas Bongiu, Seiji Kanai **Proofing:** Nicolas Bongiu, Mark Wootton

Production: David Lepore

Z-MAN® games
1995 County Road B2 West
Roseville, MN 55113 USA
(651)-639-1905
info@ZManGames.com

© 2018 Z-Man Games. Z-Man Games is a ® of Z-Man Games. Love Letter and the Z-Man Games logo are TMs of Z-Man Games. Actual components may vary from those shown. Made in China. NOT INTENDED FOR USE BY PERSONS 13 YEARS OF AGE OR YOUNGER.

A special thanks to Kenneth Hite, Seiji Kanai and Vincent Dutrait for letting us use their likeness as Investigators.