

SILENT LEGIONS



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A NIGHTMARE BENEATH THE SKIN

The world is broken in hidden ways. The truth is concealed for the sake of mortal minds. The unendurable reality that boils behind the stars is veiled by the pleasant blindness that human sanity requires. Yet every comforting shroud must fall in time, and for these investigators, that time is now.

Human survival is lit by the flame of combusting minds. Someone must go forth into the dark, to pry up the secrets and expunge the hidden things, to sacrifice their own lives and sanity that humanity's safety might endure another hour. To deal with these horrors for long is to embrace a fate worse than any common death, but there are always a few, always so very few, that are willing to pay this price. Some act out of love, others out of courage, some for the sake of unquenchable curiosity, and a few cannot even name their own cause. But they act and they suffer and they die, and by their blood is purchased a little more time for those who remain.

Silent Legions is a game of modern-day Lovecraftian horror, one designed to allow courageous investigators and luckless would-be victims to strike back against the horrors of an encroaching darkness. Where the ineffable abominations of foreign realities bleed into our world, these heroes are ready to do what they must to drive them back. When terrible truths and forbidden sorcery boil up from hidden places, they break the cults and stifle the black revelations that madmen would force on an unwilling world. Most of these heroes die in the process; some suffer worse fates. A very few live to be examples to those who will come after.

Silent Legions is different from many existing Lovecraftian games in that it is designed as a sandbox toolkit for the Game Master. Entirely new gods, aliens, entities, and other components of a new Mythos can be created, plunging the perhaps-too-familiar denizens of the conventional Cthulhu Mythos into a fresh and satisfying mystery. Many of the tools within these pages are designed to be used with any role-playing game of enigmatic horror, and you should feel free to pick and pluck from them to serve your own purposes.

In **Creating a Character** you'll learn how to make a suitable investigator for the dark days to come. These brave men and women may have come from ordinary circumstances and commonplace lives, but they are soon to be plunged into the darkness of a new world. Choose their skills and particular aptitudes and arm your hero as best you can against the nightmares they are soon to encounter.

The Rules of the Game relate the basic mechanics for playing **Silent Legions**. While the framework of the system is drawn from certain classic role-playing games of the seventies and early eighties, you'll find these systems compatible with **Stars Without Number**, **Other Dust**, and **Spears of the Dawn**, all Sine Nomine games that provide additional options for your evening's gaming.

Sorcery speaks of magic both black and gray, enchantments that can be used without hopelessly damning the sorcerers soul and those for wizards with fewer compunctions. Daring investigators might unearth the secret grimoires and hidden teachers of these arts and enlist them for their own ends. Game Masters might find equal use in this chapter

in building fresh sorcerous evils for the heroes to confront. Those who favor other gaming systems can use the tools in this chapter to build horrific spells for their evil high priests and malevolent lichs.

Creating Your Mythos is half of the heart of **Silent Legions**, the tools you need to build an entirely new Lovecraftian Mythos for your own campaign. Conjure fresh powers, new aliens, and unheard-of cults to baffle and blight the heroes, presenting them with horrors that have not been cataloged in countless other works.

Building Your World is the second half of the game's true focus. The location tags and adventure templates here are designed to allow for fast sandbox content creation, setting up a framework before play that will allow a Game Master to quickly and easily create investigative adventures when the heroes decide to leave the beaten track of a preexisting plot. By fabricating a campaign region with the guidelines given here, a reader can smoothly slot a rough adventure outline into the specifics of a particular place and create a night's adventure with no more than a few strokes of polish and detail.

Cults are part of any Lovecraftian world, but all too often they lie dormant and unmoving until the PCs impinge on their plans. The guidelines here are adapted from the Faction rules of **Stars Without Number** and help the GM to create background activity among the nefarious powers of their setting. Malevolent cults do not play nicely with each other, and the vigorous interplay of violence, sorcery, betrayal, and grasping acquisition between them can leave many cracks in their concealment. The outcomes of cult squabbling can make for easy hooks for PC adventures, and the framework can also be used to support PC-led organizations dedicated to better ends.

The Bestiary is written to support GMs who want something fresh for their nameless abominations. While a few classic monstrous examples are provided, much of the text is devoted toward building new horrific creatures and providing them with appropriately terrifying traits. Given the classic gaming system used in **Silent Legions**, vast numbers of old-school fantasy monsters can be smoothly imported into your own game, with a few little tweaks to provide extra squamosity in play.

Finally, the Game Master Resources are provided to give a few generally-useful tools, such as guidelines for converting material from other systems, a Lovecraftian name generator, and the creative organizations, frameworks, and tweaks offered by the ingenuity of ten heroic Kickstart backers who nobly supported this game's creation.

Silent Legions is built to be a solid, smooth, fast-running game of supernatural horror. You'll find everything you need to unleash the monstrous evils of the outer dark on an unwitting world within these pages. For extra prospects of atrocity, you can import material from other Sine Nomine games, with classes, foes, and adventure tags compatible with everything given in this book.

The world is in darkness, but you will fashion what lies behind the veil. The heroes fashioned here may not live long and their deeds may be forgotten beneath a shroud of secrets, but the truth of their heroism will remain. Turn the page, then, and see what awaits you...



CREATING A CHARACTER

HEROES FOR A DESPERATE HOUR

There is a darkness beneath the skin of the world. Outside the thinning walls of common reality lurk things that hunger, things that thrill to strange urges and alien thoughts. The borders between sanity and mad enlightenment crumble under the red rites of their worshipers and the reckless explorers of their forgotten cities. They raise their hidden hands in this waking world, and madmen and outcasts are stirred by their will.

Yet not all are inclined to obedience. Not every man and woman forced to acknowledge the cruel madness of the cosmos is willing to submit to these unknowable powers. Some simply fail to understand the true depth of the horror, seeing only strange beasts and violent lunatics in need of control. Others refuse to accept creation's cold indifference, and fight on for their belief in a higher and kinder power. And a few have no hope at all, and struggle against the outer powers simply because they can do nothing else.

THE NATURE OF THE GAME

Silent Legions is a game of modern-day Lovecraftian horror in which the players take on the role of heroes willing to confront the outer darkness. Whether struggling against bloodthirsty cults, demented scientists, ravening sorcerers, or monsters birthed from deepest night, they fight and die to defend their world against the horrors that even now hammer against its gates.

Heroes in *Silent Legions* are acutely mortal. It is all too easy to perish under the fangs of some unspeakable abomination or be slashed to pieces by the knives of cult assassins. There is no special protection for player characters and many of them are likely to pay the final price for their defiance of the outer powers. Even a veteran of a dozen successful investigations is always at risk of a sudden, savage end.

Such a fate can be delayed by good sense and keen judgment. Heroes who defer their heroism too long and dare too little will let the servants of the outer dark run rampant over their communities and infest their home with cysts of evil, while those who are too brash will find an early grave. A clear eye for danger, a measured acceptance of risk, and a determination to make every conflict as one-sided as possible are all vital tools for your heroes.

If your hero does fall prey to poor choices or bitter luck, it's no crushing blow. Creating a fresh warrior for humanity takes no more than five or six minutes, and you'll soon be back in the thick of the adventure. Even in the heart of evil there can be found those willing and able to fight for humanity. Who knows what new allies your former comrades will find close at hand?

A HANDFUL OF SAND

Silent Legions works with several different styles of gaming, but it has been built to specifically support *sandbox gaming*. Rather than design particular story arcs for the players, *Silent Legions* gives the game master, or "GM", the tools they need to build a world of mystery and terror for the players to explore. The players will choose what matters they wish to investigate, what threats they wish to answer, and what enemies they must eventually face. The world around them will change in response to their choices as foiled plots crumble with their masterminds and successful cult schemes bring forth new horrors.

Many games encourage the creation of particular story arcs, in which several adventures are strung together and the player characters are expected to go through each sequentially. While they may make unexpected choices in the adventure and direct its ultimate outcome, it is expected that they will stick to the general plot and not go haring off in a random direction. This style of play can be excellent fun and allows a GM a great deal of control over creating just the right atmosphere and plot for their group.

Sandbox gaming has a different set of virtues. The stories it produces are all in retrospect— the tale of the choices the PCs made and the consequences that came of them. It is a story of the plots uncovered, the schemes they missed, the disasters they averted and the catastrophes they were forced to accept. Even the GM of such a campaign can never be entirely sure what's going to happen in the next session, and this sense of surprise, this freshness, can be very exciting for both the GM and their players.

Later chapters will discuss the tools that the GM can use to create their campaigns and guidelines for running horror adventures within a modern-day sandbox. For now, it's only necessary that you understand that the campaign world your characters are about to enter is not one predestined to a particular outcome. There is no grand story which your heroes must enact and there is no authorial protection for them or their hopes.

If your heroes are to drive back the powers of darkness, they must fight with cunning, valor, and prudence. There will be no *deus ex machina* to save their cause, no benevolent architect to put wayward investigators back on the right trail to their goal. If you succeed in your chosen aims it will be because you had the wisdom, daring, and luck to pull it off in the face of an uncaring fate. And if your heroes should be crushed under the weight of night that opposes them... that, too, was the fruit of their choices.

CHARACTER CREATION

CREATING CHARACTERS THAT WORK

Heroes need to be functional participants in the game, and that means a few points should be kept in mind when creating your characters. It's easy to let these details slip in the grip of creative inspiration, but a care for practicalities will help ensure a fun game for all the participants.

First, make sure your character is capable of working with the other PCs. Lone wolves invariably come to horrific ends in the world of *Silent Legions*, and you need your allies if your hero is ever to stand against the outer powers. Characters who refuse to cooperate with others or who prove treacherous or unreliable are likely to result in a quick trip back to this chapter.

This is not to say that a group's characters should always be in perfect harmony or unfailing fellowship, but any arguments or disputes should take into account the fact that an entire global plague of psychotic doom-cultists wants to kill you all. Avoiding that fate is going to require a certain shared focus on the job.

Your character may be from an aggressively mundane background and initially ignorant of the truths of the campaign, but try to avoid an obstinate refusal to learn. Particularly when introducing new characters into a running campaign, it should not take long at all to bring "the new guy" up to speed on the cosmic truths of the world. Spending half the session convincing him is rarely fun.

Second, understand that this game strongly encourages a sandbox style of play. The only things that are going to happen without your ambition are going to be *extremely bad* things. Every hero needs a goal, whether it be as general as "oppose the eldritch evils of the world" or as specific as "decapitate the Luminous Order's leadership". Heroes who simply sit and wait for the adventure to come to them will not be pleased with the results.

These goals need not be overriding obsessions, but they do need to serve as self-generated hooks and goads to your group. There should always be at least one thing you and your companions want to accomplish at any one time. These goals also help the GM plan out their world, warning them ahead of time that certain activities and certain ambitions are likely to be important to you. This doesn't necessarily guarantee that your goals will be successful, but it does allow the GM to brew up the hooks you need to at least have a chance of success.

A successful game relies on both the GM and the players. It is the GM's obligation to craft an engaging and exciting campaign world with plenty of hooks to catch the interest of the players. A world that is seemingly devoid of anything eldritch, mysterious, or compelling is unlikely to spark the interest of the players. It is the GM's job to make sure that there are enough hooks in the world to catch a group's attention from the very first session.

But it is the players' responsibility to respond to those hooks. It is your job to drive toward your goals and to engage with the world around you. Adventures will sometimes drop on your hero's head, but most of the time it will be up to you to move the campaign in the direction of your own best fun.

CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

To generate a fresh hero, just follow the steps below. While one may wish a long and glorious life for a player character, it may be useful to keep this summary close to hand for your future reference.

ROLL YOUR ATTRIBUTES

Roll 3d6 in order six times to determine your character's Strength, Intelligence, Wisdom, Dexterity, Constitution, and Charisma. Record the modifier for each score. If your GM is allowing you to choose your attributes, set each one to a score of 14, 11, or 7, provided that there are no more scores of 14 than there are of 7.

CHOOSE A PAST AND CONNECTION

Choose or roll from the list of backgrounds to determine your character's current station in life. Record each background skill at a level-0 skill rating. Talk with the player seated to your left and establish one connection of trust with their PC.

CHOOSE YOUR CLASS

As a hero, your character is marked out from the common run of humanity by their *character class*. Choose from Investigator, Scholar, Socialite, or Tough. Your class represents natural gifts and personal focus. It need not match your background if your character's gifts are directed elsewhere. For example, a character with a law enforcement background may well be an erudite and gifted Scholar thanks to their own history or special job role.

ASSIGN CLASS SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTE

Each class has a list of bonus skills. Add those skills to your sheet at a level-0 rating. If you add a skill that already exists in your background, it becomes a level-1 skill. Each class also has two *prime attributes*. On your sheet, you may replace one of these attributes with a score of 14, ensuring that your hero is talented in at least one aspect of their class.

RECORD FINAL STATISTICS

Roll your class' hit die to determine your starting hit points. Don't worry about low rolls— you'll reroll your entire hit die pool every time you advance in experience, taking the higher of the two totals.

Record any bonus languages from the Languages skill and note down a starting Madness score of 0. Write down your character's starting saving throws and attack bonus.

Your character begins at an Average level of wealth, with the trappings appropriate to their profession and the ability to buy goods of Average price or less. You may optionally choose to be Struggling, gaining a bonus skill pick of your choice, or choose to be Affluent, at a cost of gaining 10 starting Madness points to reflect a mind unaccustomed to the harsher truths of the world.

Take a final moment to note down the details of any weaponry or other specially useful items your character may possess, and you're done. Your hero is now ready to go forth and bravely face the powers of the outer darkness.