

CANDELA OBSCURA

CORE RULEBOOK



Property of Lightkeeper Ezra Ashford :



Sample file



CANDELA OBSCURA

CANDELA OBSCURA

LEAD GAME DESIGN:

Spenser Starke and Rowan Hall

WRITTEN BY:

Rowan Hall and Spenser Starke

EDITOR:

Karen Twelves

MANAGING EDITOR:

Matthew Key

PRODUCTION:

Ivan Van Norman and Alex Uboldi

PROOFREADING:

Jacky Leung

ADDITIONAL GAME DESIGN:

Christopher Grey, Tracey Harrison,
and Taliesin Jaffe

LAYOUT:

De La Rosa Design

CULTURAL CONSULTANTS:

Basheer Ghouse, Pam Punzalan, Erin
Roberts, Christine Sandquist, Liam Stevens

MILITARY & POLITICAL CONSULTANT:

Anthony Joyce-Rivera

PLAYTESTERS:

Trevor Adams, Kat Alysha, Leon Barillaro, Emerson Boatwright, Kailey Bray, Luis Carazo,
Sarah Chaffee, Kenton Chen, Carlos Cisco, Noshir Dalal, Gina DeVivo, Zehra Fazal,
Dani Gage, Omaira Galarza, Janina Gavankar, Christopher Grey, Madigan Hunt,
Dayeanne Hutton, Erika Ishii, Aabria Iyengar, Taliesin Jaffe, JP Karliak, Erica Lindbeck,
Chris Locky, Surena Marie, Xu Mason, Whitney Moore, Anais Morgan, Omar Najam,
Christian Navarro, Zackary Ogle, Carolina Ravassa, Eden Riegel, Saige Ryan, Rachel Seeley,
Kyle Shire, Sarah Sommers, Erin Steeby, Alex Ward

GAME DEVELOPMENT

CONSULTANT: Mike Underwood

ADDITIONAL EDITING:

Darcy Ross

ADDITIONAL WRITING:

Carlos Cisco, Tracey Harrison, Anthony
Joyce-Rivera, Sam Maggs, Mike Underwood

GRAPHIC DESIGN:

Aaron Monroy, Bryan Weiss

ARTISTS:

Shaun Ellis, Jamie Harrison, Allie Irwin,
Amelia Leonards, Lily McDonnell,
Justin O'Neal, Sunga Park,
Gustavo Rodrigues Pelissari, Doug Telford

MAP DESIGN:

Marc Moureau

COVER ARTIST:

John Harper (Deluxe)
De La Rosa Design (Standard)

ARTIST / ANCIENT LANGUAGES /

SPELL DESIGN: Stevie Morley

ORIGINAL CONCEPT CREATED BY:

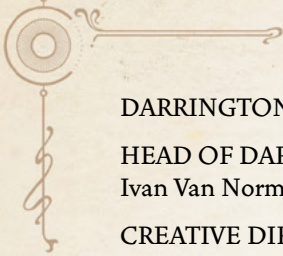
Taliesin Jaffe and Chris Locky

ILLUMINATED WORLDS

SYSTEM DESIGN: Strasz Acimovic and Layla Adelman

PRELIMINARY DESIGN: Daniel Kwan, Eloy Lasanta, Matthew Mercer

*The document within contains depictions of abuse of power, body horror, death, gore, and other sensitive topics.
Reader discretion is advised.*



DARRINGTON PRESS TEAM

HEAD OF DARRINGTON PRESS:

Ivan Van Norman

CREATIVE DIRECTOR:

Travis Willingham

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER:

Ed Lopez

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT - MARKETING:

Rachel Romero

MARKETING MANAGER:

Darcy Ross

GAME DESIGNER:

Spenser Starke

DIRECTOR OF RETAIL PARTNERSHIP:

Katie Lowther

PROCUREMENT DIRECTOR:

Ally De Simone

CRITICAL ROLE EMPLOYEES:

Efrain Alvarez, Sauol Ambriz, Brittney Austin, Leo Baltierrez, Taylor Burke, Diana Jeanne Calalo, Sarah Marie Campbell, Dani Carr, Niki Chi, Adrienne Cho, Ally De Simone, Jared Deiro, Shaunette DeTie, Nadia Dilbert, Steve Failows, Maria Flores, Christian Fox, Lana Gotlinskaya, Kyle Hafkey, Alex Hill, Bryn Hubbard, Maxwell James, Megan Karnish, Annie Krueger, Will Lamborn, Tal Levitas, Chris Lott, Jonathan Lott, Katie Lowther, Britton McGrath, Ashley Middlebrook, Aaron Monroy, Khoa Nguyen, Eddie Ochoa, Elia Palacios, Athena Rendon, Jerry Rivas, Rich Romasanta, Max Schapiro, Eli Schiff, Vinnie Singh, Gustin Smith, Dylan Steppeler, Gary Thomas, Jordyn Torrence, Ben Van Der Fluit, Jen Veloso, Brittany Walloch-Key, Kirby Winslow, Nicole Yonan

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Laura Bailey, Anjali Bhimani, Luis Carazo, Robbie Daymond, Steve Failows, Zehra Fazel, Maxwell James, Ashley Johnson, Matthew Mercer, Brennan Lee Mulligan, Marisha Ray, Vinnie Singh, Travis Willingham

Thank you, fine reader. Enjoy your adventures in the Fairelands.

Candela Obscura Core Rulebook

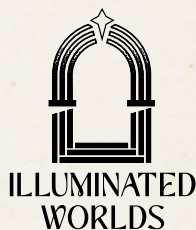
First Printing 2023

Standard Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-7373725-4-7

Deluxe Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-7373725-5-4

Copyright 2023 Darrington Press LLC. All Rights Reserved. Except for personal use, no portion of this work may be used or reproduced in any form without the prior, written, express permission of Darrington Press. This book contains Adaptive Content as per the Darrington Press Community Gaming License (DPGL).

Printed in China.



Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1	THE SUPERNATURAL WORLD	65
What is a Roleplaying Game?	1	Introduction	65
Overview of Gameplay	2	Phenomena	65
The Rules	2	Alchemy	70
Setting Overview	4	CANDELA OBSCURA & BEYOND... 73	
Roles & Specialties	4	Candela Obscura	73
Safety Tools	5	Exoteric Order of New Sciences (EONS)	78
Touchstones	5	Office of Unexplained Phenomena (OUP)	79
THE CORE SYSTEM.....	7	Pyre	80
A Conversation at the Table	7	The Red Hand	82
Drives & Actions	8	Unabridged	83
Gilded Dice	8	THE FAIRELANDS.....	87
Setting the Stakes & Expectations	9	Setting Introduction	87
Making an Action Roll	10	The Time Period	89
Consequences	12	Timeline of the Fairelands	90
Resistances	13	Hale & The Fairelands	92
Gear	14	Language	96
Marks & Scars	14	Technology	97
The Legacy of Harm in Horror	16	Economy	97
MAKING A CHARACTER.....	19	Transportation	98
Step 1: Choose a Role & Specialty	19	The Triumvirate	98
Step 2: Determine Action Ratings	25	Life in the Fairelands	103
Step 3: Determine Drives	26	Newfaire Districts	107
Step 4: Determine Resistances	26	Oldfaire Sites	127
Step 5: Gild Actions	26	Fairelands Landmarks	145
Step 6: Choose Abilities	27	RUNNING THE GAME.....	159
Step 7: Add Character Details	33	GM Principles	159
Step 8: Form Relationships	33	Making Moves	160
CREATING YOUR CIRCLE.....	39	Session Zero	162
Step 1: Answer Circle Questions	39	Preparing for Play	163
Step 2: Name Your Circle	40	Creating a Lightkeeper	164
Step 3: Choose a Chapter House Location	40	Combat & Marks	165
Step 4: Choose Circle Abilities	41	Countdown Dice	166
Step 5: Assign Resource Points	41	Adjudicating Stakes & Expectations	167
HOW TO PLAY.....	43	Assignment Structure	168
Assignments	43	Example Assignments	169
Play Structure	44	Additional Assignments	187
Play Guidance	46	GM Resources	188
Character vs. Character Adjudication	47	Additional Inspiration	197
Drives & Resistances	48	Rules & Rolls Reference	198
Actions	50	INDEX.....	203
Gear	52		
Character & Circle Advancement	54		
Full Example of Play	56		



INTRODUCTION

You have entered a gilded world of terrifying magick.

This is the moment when we could say, we ought to say, “Only you can save us.” That would be empowering, but it wouldn’t be true. That’s not the way the world works, and that’s not how real heroes are born. Instead, we invite you to fight, explore, investigate—dare we say, play?—in this place where arcane forces and human corruption come together like alchemy.

Candela Obscura is a horror tabletop roleplaying game (TTRPG), built on the Illuminated Worlds System, about occult investigators hunting down the dangerous supernatural forces making incursions into a world very much like your own.

Candela Obscura is also the name of the paranormal secret society charged with protecting the world from deadly magickal phenomena. Though we’ve worked to collect knowledge of this magick and its creatures over the centuries, our understanding is still limited. We know they come from a realm beyond our own, but what they want and why they’re here is still a mystery to us.

As a member of this organization, you will traverse the wide landscape of the Fairelands, the capital of which is the sprawling, turn-of-the-century city of Newfaire—a metropolis built atop the ruins of an ancient, fallen civilization still teeming with the remnants of powerful magick. You will face unfathomable horrors within the crowded downtown streets of the Varnish, investigate strange disappearances in the cornfields of Tottergrass, and even delve into the writhing underground ruins of Oldfaire, to help us stop these powerful supernatural beings from tearing apart our world.

WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

If you’ve never played a TTRPG before, don’t worry—we’ll teach you everything you need to know. You’re in for a series of sessions, each running anywhere between 2–5 hours, where you’ll be embodying a person in this strange and dangerous world. You will make choices about how this character acts, what they say, how they feel—all while interacting with your fellow players to help them tell their own stories. You’ll imagine, or invent, everything you do, and if you don’t know if something will succeed or fail, you’ll pick up your dice and roll to see what direction the story moves in next.

If you have participated in a TTRPG before, this style of play might work somewhat differently than what you’re used to. Our game’s primary focuses are investigation and social encounters, with instances of horror and violence interspersed. This means that all character types are useful throughout the course of an adventure and it’s not essential to consider the balance of your party when building a team of investigators.

The game also functions primarily as a conversation—ideas, information, action, and dialogue are exchanged between everyone until a situation arises where the outcome is unclear. When dice are rolled to determine that outcome, the result helps ascertain whether the player will miss, succeed, or get a mixed success—meaning they get what they want but it comes at a cost. We’ll talk more about this in detail soon.

In the meantime, know that on a miss or a mixed success, the scene should escalate—danger could make itself known, monsters can attack, gear may break, allies might be thrust into peril, or any number of complications will move the story forward in an exciting and dangerous way.

This back-and-forth—between players taking actions and the scene evolving based on those actions—is the language of play in this game.

OVERVIEW OF GAMEPLAY

Every table will have a group of players, known as player characters (PCs), as well as a gamemaster (GM) who facilitates the world, moves the plot forward, plays non-player characters (NPCs), and moderates the rules. GMs are not wholly responsible for the fiction but rather present the reality of the world so that players can make choices, and then they aid in determining the outcome of the results that come from those decisions. Building the narrative of *Candela Obscura* is a collaboration among equals empowered to take charge of different roles.

To begin, the table should have access to all of the game's character sheets, available as a download at darringtonpress.com/candela, and each player should have nine 6-sided dice, called *d6* for short. Three of these dice should be of a separate and distinct color from their counterparts. These will be referred to as *gilded dice*, and the remaining six will be known simply as *standard dice*.

Each character has a set of *actions*, which determine how many 6-sided dice the player rolls when attempting to do something in the narrative that has an uncertain outcome. The GM will set the stakes and expectations of the situation, and help the player select the action that best applies to the roll. When determining the outcome of the roll, the player will most often tell the GM their single highest result. Then, the GM will describe how the scene changes as a result of that roll.

Each character also has *drives*, expendable resources that represent their character's ability to push themselves in a given situation. They provide a means of grouping actions under three overarching themes: *Nerve*, *Cunning*, and *Intuition*. But, more importantly, this mechanic provides a way for players to improve their chances of success on any roll.

Additionally, every character has *abilities* that provide customized skills specific to each character type, and allow you to further customize your personal narrative.

This overview represents only a small, but important, fraction of the tools you'll use to successfully navigate an investigation. As you explore this book and play through the world, you may rest assured: things will become clearer.

THE RULES

There are only a few core rules within this world that should not change.

That is to say, when reading through the rest of this book, remember: this is your game. In nearly every case, you may pick and choose from the available rules and lore to provide the best possible experience for everyone at your table.

That said, there are some tenets to abide by in order to navigate this strange place. So long as the following rules remain intact, you are playing the truth of *Candela Obscura*.

NERVE Drives Max RESISTANCE

- ◇ Move run, dodge, navigate 3
- ◇ Strike punch, break, knock down 3
- ◇ Control drive, shoot, finesse 3

CUNNING Drives Max RESISTANCE

- ◇ Sway convince, command, consort 3
- ◇ Read interpret body language, spot lies, gather motives 3
- ◇ Hide sneak, distract, sleight of hand 3

INTUITION Drives Max RESISTANCE

- ◇ Survey search, track, spot 3
- ◇ Focus inspect, analyze, remember 3
- ◇ Sense attune, channel, reveal 3

Burn a resistance to reroll a number of dice equal to your action rating.

Rules of the World

- ◉ *Candela Obscura* takes place in a world that resembles your own. The average citizen neither knows about, nor would believe in, magick or its effects.
- ◉ There is a barrier, known as the Flare, between this realm and the beyond.
- ◉ There are places where the Flare is weakened—referred to as *thinings*. These thinings allow metaphysical energy, known as *magick*, to seep through the Flare.
- ◉ The myths, legends, and folktales of the Fairelands are stories created by average citizens to explain real magickal phenomena.

Rules of Magick

- ◉ Magick can become infused in mundane objects, places, or beings, permanently altering them. If a thinning is opened wide enough, creatures from beyond may also come through. Anything affected by magick or from another realm is known as a *phenomenon*.
- ◉ *Bleed* is the corruptive force left behind by powerful magick. This bleed also radiates from the phenomena that have made incursions into the world.
- ◉ When a person is exposed to too much bleed, they may be taken over by these supernatural forces, become corrupted, or die. The manifestation of bleed varies based on the phenomenon.
- ◉ People with inherent magick are rare in the mundane world. Many Candela Obscura members interact with magick by wielding powerful artifacts. These items may also reduce, contain, or eliminate bleed.

Rules of Candela Obscura

- ◉ Members of Candela Obscura are investigators of supernatural phenomena, attempting to protect the world from these dangers by securing and studying them.
- ◉ The organization has a hierarchy that includes a council of Lightkeepers who direct the resources of Candela Obscura. A small party sent out by a Lightkeeper to investigate a phenomenon is known as a *circle*. This mission is known as an *assignment*.
- ◉ There are Candela Obscura *chapters*, local enclaves of many members, throughout the world. Each has access, via a thinning, to the organization's transdimensional vault, known as the Fourth Pharos.
- ◉ The Fourth Pharos is the fourth iteration of a lighthouse stronghold that sits within the Flare. Inside, there are vaults where the most powerful books, artifacts, and phenomena are kept for safety. The security of these vaults is maintained by centuries-old, constantly turning magickal astrolabes.

SETTING OVERVIEW

In the northern country of Hale lies the fertile valley known as the Fairelands, a diverse and prosperous region currently in recovery from a brutal six-year war. On its western coast sits the central hub of politics and progress, the capital city of Newfaire.

Filled with technology that resembles your own during the turn of the twentieth century, this civilization stands upon the ruins of its ancient, alchemical predecessor known as Oldfaire. With a blend of ancient and modern architecture that resembles the integration found in such cities as Edinburgh, Lima, New York, Paris, and Istanbul, citizens are nestled within historical Brutalism and the recent evolution from Art Nouveau into Art Deco.

In the Fairelands, modern development consumes arcane history, and players grapple with both the horrors from beyond the Flare and the great forces that rule the mundane world. More about the Fairelands can be found on page 87.



ROLES & SPECIALTIES

As *Candela Obscura* is a horror game of investigation, we recommend prioritizing a journey of self-discovery and metamorphosis, rather than fully forming every detail of your character before the first roll of the dice.

Character creation is an opportunity to investigate the world of *Candela Obscura* on two fronts: What do you wish to explore within your character? What does your table wish to explore as a team? As long as we make empathetic choices and prioritize the needs and health of our friends at the table, we can use the game as an opportunity to explore the aspects of this world that both excite and scare us.

Characters are made up of a role, the position they fill within their circle, and a specialty, the unique set of skills and experiences they possess. You may choose from the following roles and specialties:

Face (*Journalist & Magician*) characters seek mastery of the people.

Muscle (*Explorer & Soldier*) characters seek mastery of the body.

Scholar (*Doctor & Professor*) characters seek mastery of the mind.

Slink (*Criminal & Detective*) characters seek mastery of the unknown.

Weird (*Medium & Occultist*) characters seek mastery of the arcane.

Candela Obscura is a world of monsters, both magickal and human. This provides a particularly keen opportunity to step into the skin of that which scares you. Consider playing someone unlike yourself, imagining a new world from a new perspective. Or play someone exactly like who you wish you could be, would never be, or are.