

SILENT LEGIONS



**A GAME OF SUPERNATURAL HORROR
BY KEVIN CRAWFORD**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CREATING A CHARACTER	3
HEROES FOR A DESPERATE HOUR	
THE RULES OF THE GAME	21
SOLDIERS IN A LOST CAUSE	
SORCERY	33
ARCANE RITUALS AND ELDRITCH ARTS	
CREATING YOUR MYTHOS	53
SUMMONING UP THE DAMNABLE POWERS	
BUILDING YOUR WORLD	89
CREATING DARK CIRCUMSTANCES	
CULTS	135
SICKNESSES THAT NEVER SLEEP	
THE BESTIARY	147
CREATURES OF BLEAK DREAMS	
GAME MASTER RESOURCES	166
RED RAGS AND SHARDS OF BONE	
INDEX	182

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.

ROLLING YOUR ATTRIBUTES

The first step in creating your hero is to roll your six *attributes*. Your character's attributes reflect their native capacities and physical gifts, and are measured in a range from 3 to 18. Low scores indicate that your character is particularly challenged in that sphere, but even very low scores shouldn't be taken as outright incapacity. A character with an Intelligence score of 3 may have a very hard time remembering things or reasoning out complex logic, but they still have enough native wit to function in the game. Those with genuine mental incapacity or crippling physical weakness would never take up the grim burden of eldritch investigation in the first place.

To determine your character's natural scores, roll 3d6 once for each of the attributes listed to the right, going in order from Strength to Charisma. Then compare each score to the table above to determine its attribute modifier. Many rolls are modified by a particular attribute; whenever you see such instructions, only add the attribute modifier to the roll, not the entire attribute. If your attributes change during the course of your character's career, their modifiers may also change.

You may find your character's scores somewhat unheroic if the dice were unkind to you. Despite this, your character's survival is much more likely to hinge on your own good judgment and prudence than a point or two of attribute modifier. Good choices and a clear head will save you when no dice bonus ever could.

Even so, your GM may optionally allow you to reroll your attributes if the total sum of their modifiers is less than zero. Later on in character creation, you'll also be able to swap in a score of 14 for an attribute important to your future role. As such, your PC will always be good at one characteristic trait of their chosen class.

OPTIONAL RULE: CHOOSING ATTRIBUTES

Some players just do not like randomly rolling for their attributes. For these players, the GM may allow them to simply place scores as they see fit, filling each attribute with a score of 14, 11, or 7. The player may assign any mix of attributes they wish so long as there are no more scores of 14 than there are scores of 7.

ATTRIBUTE SCORE	ATTRIBUTE MODIFIER
18	+2
14-17	+1
8-13	NO MODIFIER
4-7	-1
3	-2

THE SIX ATTRIBUTES

Strength is the measure of your character's brawn and physical power. Strength is important in hand-to-hand combat and affects the maximum amount a character can carry.

Intelligence reflects your character's ability to reason out puzzles, remember facts, and learn new things. Intelligence is important for characters who wish to be capable scholars or researchers, and is often rolled with knowledge-based skills.

Wisdom measures your character's powers of observation, foresight, and judgment. Wisdom is important for investigators who wish to catch every clue and unravel the tangles of deceit.

Dexterity is your character's nimbleness, hand-eye coordination, and reaction speed. Marksmen, fencers and stealthy infiltrators profit by a good Dexterity.

Constitution determines your character's toughness and native determination. Constitution is useful to every hero, as it helps keep them up and fighting where others would succumb to their grievous wounds.

Charisma measures your hero's personal magnetism, talent for leadership, and ability to convince others to believe and feel as they desire. Characters with high Charisma may or may not be beautiful or handsome, but they are always impressive.





CHOOSING A BACKGROUND

Once you’ve determined the basic outline of your character’s abilities, you can now think about the kind of life your character led before they became involved with the eldritch powers of the night. Your character’s background is the particular life situation they found themselves in just before embarking on their heroic career.

Forty different backgrounds are listed on the next page. You may pick one that suits your ideas for the character, or roll a 1d8 and 1d10 together to find out what manner of life they’ve led until now.

Each background provides a list of skills. Record each skill on your character sheet at level-0, reflecting basic competence and an ordinary level of training. In the case of Culture, Combat or Vehicle skills, you may need to pick a specific specialization. Thus, if you rolled up a brand-new New York Police Department rookie, you might start with Athletics-0, Combat/Projectile-0, Culture/New York-0, and Law-0.

If you have your own ideas about your character’s past, you can optionally create your own background by choosing three appropriate skills and the Culture skill for their native society. The GM is the final judge as to which backgrounds are acceptable for a character.

FORMING CONNECTIONS

Given the usual habits of adventuring groups, it’s normal for the players to come up with a highly heterogeneous lot of player characters. To help streamline things for the GM, after everyone has rolled their characters each player should establish one connection with the PC belonging to the player seated to their left.

The table below offers some suggestions as to possible connections between PCs, but whatever is chosen should be something mutually acceptable to both players. The point is to provide some beginning level of trust and familiarity between members of the group, even those that might be from wildly different backgrounds. As new PCs are recruited to fill out casualties in the original group, new connections can be established as needed.

1D12	THE OTHER CHARACTER IS...
1	A childhood companion
2	A cousin or other relative
3	A fellow conspirator in a crime
4	A former co-worker or military buddy
5	A former lover or spouse
6	A former teacher or student
7	A friend from a shared church, hobby, or ideology
8	A friend from a social organization or club
9	A friend from college or high school
10	Someone who provided a life-altering favor
11	Someone who helped them out of a crisis
12	Someone who saved their life

1D8	1D10	BACKGROUND	STARTING SKILLS
1-2	1	Adventurer	Culture/Home, Any Three Skills
	2	Antiquarian	Business, Culture/Home, History, Language
	3	Artist	Art, Culture/Home, Perception, Any One Skill
	4	Athlete	Athletics, Combat/Unarmed, Culture/Home, Stealth
	5	Backwoodsman	Combat/Any, Culture/Home, Stealth, Survival
	6	Bodyguard	Combat/Any, Culture/Home, Perception, Security
	7	Bum	Culture/Home, Culture/Criminal, Stealth, Survival
	8	Bureaucrat	Culture/Home, Law, Leadership, Persuasion
	9	Business Owner	Business, Culture/Home, Profession/Any, Any One Skill
	10	Clergy	Culture/Home, Religion, Leadership, Persuade
3-4	1	Con Man	Culture/Home, Culture/Criminal, Language, Persuade
	2	Drifter	Culture/Home, Culture/Traveller, Navigation, Survival
	3	Engineer	Culture/Home, Engineering, Perception, Vehicle/Any
	4	Entertainer	Art, Culture/Home, Persuade, Any One Skill
	5	Explorer	Culture/Home, Culture/Traveller, Navigation, Survival
	6	Farmer	Business, Culture/Home, Profession/Farmer, Survival
	7	Gambler	Culture/Criminal, Culture/Home, Gambling, Perception
	8	Gangster	Combat/Any, Culture/Criminal, Culture/Home, Persuade
	9	Laborer	Athletics, Culture/Home, Profession/Any, Any One Skill
	10	Lawyer	Business, Culture/Home, Law, Persuade
5-6	1	Musician	Artist, Culture/Home, Perception, Any One Skill
	2	Occultist	Culture/Home, Language, Occult, Religion
	3	Office Clerk	Business, Culture/Home, Profession/Any, Any One Skill
	4	Physician	Culture/Home, Medicine, Science, Perception
	5	Pilot	Culture/Home, Engineering, Navigation, Vehicle/Air
	6	Police	Athletics, Combat/Any, Culture/Home, Law
	7	Private Eye	Culture/Home, Perception, Stealth, Law
	8	Professor	Culture/Home, History, Language, Research
	9	Programmer	Computer, Culture/Home, Science, Any One Skill
	10	Prostitute	Culture/Home, Culture/Criminal, Persuade, Any One Skill
7-8	1	Psychiatrist	Culture/Home, Medicine, Perception, Persuade
	2	Reporter	Culture/Home, Perception, Persuade, Research
	3	Sailor	Combat/Any, Culture/Home, Navigation, Vehicle/Water
	4	Scientist	Culture/Home, Engineering, Research, Science
	5	Soldier	Athletics, Combat/Any, Leadership, Tactics
	6	Stay-At-Home Spouse	Culture/Home, Any Three Skills
	7	Student	Athletics, Culture/Home, Any Two Skills
	8	Thief	Culture/Home, Culture/Criminal, Security, Stealth
	9	Trust Fund Kid	Culture/Home, Any Three Skills
	10	Writer	Artist, Culture/Home, Perception, Any One Skill

CHARACTER CREATION

SKILLS

Skills are measures of specific talents possessed by a character, ranging from level-0 for basic professional competence to level-4 for near-supernatural mastery. To accomplish exceptionally difficult feats, a character rolls 2d6 and adds the skill's level and their most appropriate attribute's modifier. If the total is equal or greater than a difficulty chosen by the GM, the attempt is a success. If the character has no expertise at all in the skill, they suffer a minimum penalty of -1 to the check and may not be able to accomplish it at all if the task is particularly complex.

A few skills are marked as requiring a specialization. You should choose a relevant specialty in such cases, such as a type of vehicle, a particular form of art, or a specific variety of weaponry. The same skill may be taken multiple times if different specialties are desired.

Some skills have a degree of overlap. Repairing a car might conceivably be covered by both the Vehicle/Land skill and the Engineering skill, for example. In such cases a PC can use the best of their available skills to overcome the challenge.

ART (SPECIALIZATION)

The character is gifted in a particular form of art. Such adepts include singers, dancers, musicians, sculptors, painters, writers, and other creative souls.

ATHLETICS

The hero excels at physical exertions such as running, climbing, swimming, acrobatics, and other feats of strength and coordination. Even a character with mediocre physical attributes may become a skilled athlete by honing their limited gifts with skill and careful training.

BUSINESS

This skill includes all facets of running a business, managing accounts, and effectively using large sums of money. A hero skilled in business affairs can identify a company's weaknesses and real sources of income and recognize important financiers.

COMBAT (SPECIALIZATION)

The character excels at a particular form of combat and can maintain and repair weapons relevant to their skills. A specialization must be chosen when this skill is selected.

Eldritch weapons include energy weapons, alien devices, magic implements, and other tools not covered under other headings.

Gunnery includes all weapons too heavy for a single person to fire without a rest, along with shoulder-fired rockets and munitions.

Primitive combat includes knives, clubs, bows, thrown weapons, and all other simple melee and archery implements.

Projectile combat covers all forms of small firearms combat, from pistols to shotguns to rifles.

Unarmed combat includes brawling and unarmed martial arts.

COMPUTER

Programming, repairing, and building computing devices all fall under the heading of this skill.

CULTURE

(SPECIALIZATION)

The character is familiar with the mores, language, and traditions of a particular culture. They also know people in that culture and can make contact with officials or local help within that context. The more narrow the cultural scope, the more intimately they know the details of it and the more likely their contacts are to be helpful.

Criminal culture teaches the possessor how to deal with gangs, thugs, thieves, dealers, and other inhabitants of the demimonde. They can usually find a fence or other shady supplier with minimal effort, and can try to set up meetings with local bosses. Someone with a local Culture skill might also be able to find criminal contacts in their area, but the Criminal specialization applies anywhere in the world.

Nations may be chosen as culture specializations, and grant a comfortable familiarity with their laws, history, rulers and most common language. Specific cities within a nation may also be chosen, giving very detailed knowledge of their streets, significant citizens, and contacts with local officials. City specializations are worth one level less in the nation beyond the city, however, with level-0 becoming effectively untrained.

Organizations can be selected as culture specializations, such as particular military forces or government bureaus. Such skill also implies contacts within the organization and the ability to predict or learn of their impending actions.

Traveller specialization is for a wanderer or vagabond skilled in navigating new cultures. Culture/Traveller cannot be raised above level-0, but may substitute for level-0 skill in any location-based Culture test. It provides no local linguistic expertise, however.

ENGINEERING

The character is talented at building and repairing devices created with human technology. Alien devices may be beyond the PC's expertise.

GAMBLING

The character is skilled at a wide variety of games of chance or skill. They can recognize cheats, find profitable games, and calculate mathematical odds with instinctive ease.

HISTORY

The hero is versed in historical understanding, though their knowledge is limited to what human records provide.

LANGUAGE

For each level of Language skill, the character gains fluency in a number of new languages equal to the skills level plus one. Language skill can also be used to translate unknown texts, provided sufficient research materials and time.

LAW

The character is a trained lawyer. While Culture skill grants a basic understanding of an area's legal regime, Law makes a hero competent to master any legal code with a little effort.

LEADERSHIP

The hero inspires others to obey, whether through personal magnetism or calculated terror. Where Persuade is used to convince others to agree, Leadership gets others to follow.

MEDICINE

From first aid to brain surgery, Medicine covers all matters related to healing, pharmaceuticals, and human biology.

NAVIGATION

This skill covers all efforts to get from one point to another without getting lost or dead along the way. A skilled navigator can use everything from stars and sun sights to advanced GPS.

OCCULT

Scholars of the occult are familiar with the human traditions of magic and eldritch knowledge. Of course, so much of it is nothing more than deluded raving that only the most zealous imagine it to be anything but a topic of idle socio-historical research. Heroes have a habit of finding out in detail about the parts that are all too true.

PERCEPTION

The hero has unusually keen senses or a habit of attention. Perception aids them whenever they try to discern things that are hidden or subtle.

PERSUADE

The character is highly persuasive, and has a much easier time convincing others of things that are not obviously false or painful for them to believe.

PROFESSION (SPECIALIZATION)

The character is skilled in a particular trade or profession not covered by one of the other skills on this list.

RESEARCH

The hero is skilled at library use, net searches, questioning locals, and other efforts at interrogating their available sources.

RELIGION

The hero is familiar with a wide range of contemporary and historical religions, and may have heard of the more esoteric or well-concealed sects as well.

SCIENCE

This skill includes all the common human scientific fields, and can be used to attempt to puzzle out more inhuman spheres.

SECURITY

Whether lockpicking, shorting electronic locks, decrypting codes, or tracking the patrol patterns at a guarded cult installation, the Security skill covers such topics.



STEALTH

The hero is skilled at concealment, disguise, pickpocketing, infiltration, and other pastimes that require avoiding notice.

SURVIVAL

The character knows how to survive off available resources, whether they might be in an icy northern forest or a disease-raddled slum. Characters skilled in survival can find food, shelter, and tools from the materials at hand.

TACTICS

The character is familiar with the principles of small unit combat and can plan or detect ambushes, place defenses, and direct troops effectively in a fight.

VEHICLE (SPECIALIZATION)

The character knows how to operate, maintain, and repair a particular class of vehicles. Most characters can drive a car or ride a horse if their culture expects such education, but this skill implies real expertise under difficult conditions.

Air vehicles include planes, helicopters, and gliders.

Land vehicles include not only cars and bikes, but also hovercraft and riding animals.

Space vehicles are exceedingly rare but are used by some alien races or secretive human organizations.

Water vehicles cover ships, boats, and submersible craft.

CHOOSING YOUR CHARACTER CLASS

With your character's basic aptitudes and prior background established, the next thing to do is to choose your character's **class**. Your class reflects the special gifts or unusual aptitudes that separate your hero from the ordinary run of men and women. Most detectives are just policemen; your character is an Investigator. The ordinary professor is just an academic; your character is a Scholar.

- **Investigators** seek out and discover the hidden, either by conversation, stealthy infiltration, or careful analysis of clues.
- **Scholars** are masters of human knowledge, able to conjure up vital information on demand.
- **Socialites** are engineers of human feeling, persuading and manipulating those around them.
- **Toughs** are hard-edged survivors and brawlers, able to take the kind of punishment that would kill a different hero.

Classes do not need to match neatly with backgrounds. A particularly studious policeman might actually have the gifts of a Scholar, while a daring field archaeologist might have more of a knack as an Investigator. You should choose a class that fits the feel of your character and their own essential nature.

If your character seems to fit well into multiple classes, just pick the one that seems most appropriate. As they develop in experience and training, they'll be able to develop the skills of other classes.

RAISING A PRIME ATTRIBUTE

Every class lists two Prime Attributes that are important in exercising their abilities. You may replace one of these two attributes with a score of 14, if your original roll in that score was less. In this way you ensure that your hero is gifted in at least one aspect of their chosen class.

ADDING BONUS SKILLS

Each class lists several bonus skills for a new character. Add these to your sheet at level-0. If you already have the skill at level-0, such as from your background or from an earlier pick, the skill advances to level-1. A new character's skills cannot start higher than level-1.

RECORDING EXPERTISE AND ABILITIES

Your character starts with a maximum of two points of **Expertise**. These points represent their natural talent and their ability to call on their class' special abilities. Expertise is spent to trigger these abilities and recovers at the rate of one point per night's sleep. Each class also has a special ability granted at 1st level. Record this ability on your sheet.

In addition, every class has the ability of **Reliable Skill**. At any time your character fails a skill roll for a skill belonging to their class, they may spend an Expertise point to reroll the check. They may only trigger this ability once on any given roll, and if the second check is also a failure then no further attempts can be made. Characters of the Tough class may also use this ability to reroll a failed attack roll.

ROLLING HIT POINTS

Hit points measure your character's closeness to death or mortal injury. They reflect your character's stamina, resilience, luck, and state of injury. Each successful enemy attack or physical peril will erode these hit points. If they hit zero, your character will either die or suffer a mortal wound. Each night's rest restores hit points equal to your character's level— one point, for a new PC.

To determine your maximum hit points, roll the hit dice for your class. For Toughs, this is 1d8, for Scholars it is 1d4, and for Investigators and Socialites it is 1d6. Add your Constitution modifier to this score, but your hero can't have fewer than 1 hit point regardless of Constitution penalties. Your character's current hit points may go up or down, but they cannot exceed this number. Don't worry if your roll was low. Direct confrontation with the unearthly powers of the night is rarely a good idea for any PC, and two or three hit points are unlikely to make a difference. You'll also reroll this total as you gain in experience.

ATTACK BONUS, ARMOR CLASS AND SAVES

Your character has an **attack bonus** which adds to their chances of hurting a foe in combat. At first level, every class except Scholar has a +1 attack bonus. Scholars have a +0 bonus.

Your **armor class** reflects how hard it is to hurt you with a blow. Unarmored characters have an AC of 9, while body armor will lower this score and make your character more difficult to harm. Your Dexterity modifier is also subtracted from your AC, but even a Dexterity penalty can't make it worse than AC 9.

Saving throws are rolled to avoid the worst of some negative effect, whether it's a suddenly-collapsing bridge under the character's feet or the insinuating tendrils of some dark sorcery. The player rolls 1d20, compares the roll to the appropriate saving throw, and if it's equal or higher then the harm is avoided or minimized. Record the saving throw for each category on your sheet.

RECORDING MADNESS

Madness reflects your character's gradual accumulation of mental traumas and unendurable insights into the true nature of the cosmos. Unlike conventional mental illness, Madness is not strictly a matter of brain biochemistry or unresolved mental traumas— it is a mental infection, a toxic enlightenment as to the true nature of the cosmos. PCs that suffer from high Madness are not simply suffering from post-traumatic stress, they are understanding things that human minds were never meant to comprehend.

Madness can also be incurred from more mundane sources, such as giving or receiving terrible violence or pain, or from witnessing the aftermath of a horrific slaughter. Characters who murder other humans carelessly will erode their own mental stability.

Most new characters begin with a Madness score of 0, blissfully unaware of the darkness outside the world. If this total ever reaches 100, the character will become hopelessly and irrevocably insane.

THE INVESTIGATOR

PRIME ATTRIBUTES
Wisdom and Charisma
CLASS SKILLS
Computer, Culture, Language, Law, Navigation, Perception, Persuade, Profession, Research, Security, Stealth, and Vehicle
BONUS SKILLS FOR NEW CHARACTERS
Perception, Research, Any One Class Skill, Any One Skill

The investigator discovers what others want to hide. They are the men and women with an eerie talent for prying open secrets and unearthing the things that others desperately desire to conceal. Such pastimes are not calculated to lead to a peaceful retirement, but most investigators have little choice in the matter. The compulsion to *know* drives them on where caution might tell them to turn away.

Many investigators emerge from naturally inquisitive professions, such as reporters, private eyes, and cops, but others discover their natural talents only in the press of a crisis. A small-town waitress, an elderly gossip, or a barkeep who keeps his eyes open might all find that they have the natural aptitude this class requires.

CLASS ABILITIES

The investigator is gifted with an uncanny knack for discovering hidden information and concealed objects. As they gain in experience, they learn additional tricks for sifting out the truth.

- **Leading Whispers:** At 1st level, the investigator is never entirely at a loss on a case. Use of this ability gives them an intuitive insight or a contact who can lead to further information about a chosen topic or person. Such insights are not necessarily clear, and contacts may require favors or be hard to reach.
- **Patterns of Madness:** At 3rd level, the investigator can intuitively filter out red herrings and coincidence in an investigation. By focusing on a person, object or event when using this ability they can discern whether or not it has significant importance to their current investigation.
- **Black Tongues:** At 7th level, the investigator may detect attempted deception during a conversation after using this ability, and will gain a general idea of which statements were made with intent to deceive. Supernatural entities and magically-tainted humans may make a Mental Effect saving throw to resist.
- **Unblinking Eye:** At 10th level, given at least fifteen minutes to examine a location or object, the investigator will automatically discover any hidden features, concealed objects or subtle clues that are present provided it is physically possible for them to do so. One use of this ability is enough to cover a single-family home or similar area of space.

Each ability requires one Expertise point to trigger and lasts for no more than one inquiry, one conversation, or one search.



LEVEL	HIT DICE	ATTACK BONUS	SAVING THROWS				
			PHYSICAL EFFECT	MENTAL EFFECT	EVASION	MAGIC	LUCK
1	1d6	+1	15	14	12	16	13
2	2d6	+0	14	13	11	15	12
3	3d6	+1	14	13	11	15	12
4	4d6	+1	13	12	10	14	11
5	5d6	+0	13	12	10	14	11
6	6d6	+1	12	11	9	13	10
7	7d6	+1	12	11	9	13	10
8	8d6	+0	11	10	8	12	9
9	9d6	+1	11	10	8	12	9
10+	10d6	+1	9	8	6	10	7

THE SCHOLAR

PRIME ATTRIBUTES
Intelligence and Wisdom
CLASS SKILLS
Art, Computer, Culture, Engineering, History, Language, Law, Medicine, Occult, Profession, Research, and Science
BONUS SKILLS FOR NEW CHARACTERS
Research, History or Science, Any One Class Skill, Any One Skill

Some scholars are of the sort that the common world can recognize—historians, academics, researchers, technicians, and others who make their living by the contents of their heads. Other scholars lead a less visible life of the mind, in love with knowledge and understanding but obliged to shepherd their own studies in the hours not given over to a mundane job.

The skills of a trained scholar are particularly useful in mastering occult secrets and weaving the powers of eldritch sorcery. Such learning comes at a price, however, and the sanity of a scholar who learns too much can be drawn so thin as to vanish entirely.

CLASS ABILITIES

The scholar’s gift is to know, and this knowledge can often spell the difference between triumph and a hideous doom for a band of heroes.

- Deep Gnosis:** At 1st level, the scholar may spend an Expertise point to gain an automatic success at any skill check related to a knowledge-based skill they possess. Thus, a professor with Science-1 skill could use this ability to automatically succeed at a check to identify a particular chemical or analyze a mathematical formula. This ability does not apply to the Occult skill or other spheres of alien or magical knowledge, and it may be used only once per day.
- Resilient Mind:** At 3rd level, the scholar can protect his or her sanity by rationalizing a horrific truth into some intellectual model. When gaining Madness from a Horror source, the scholar can trigger this gift to negate the Madness gain. Only one use of this gift is possible per day, but it may be used after the Madness is rolled.
- Know the Line and Form:** At 7th level, the scholar may gain a sense of the purpose of an occult object or perceptible enchantment. A scholar may not be able to discern the exact rituals or operating methods of an occult object, but can distinguish true artifacts from fakes and identify the general purpose of an object or spell.
- Abominable Codex:** At 10th level, the scholar can identify the type, powers, behavior, and special weaknesses of a supernatural or unearthly monster on sight, provided the monster is wearing its true shape and is not masquerading as some other creature. Unique or utterly unknown entities are not susceptible to this ability, though the scholar can often guess at weaknesses.

Each ability requires one Expertise point to trigger and lasts for no more than one question or one event, depending on the gift.



LEVEL	HIT DICE	ATTACK BONUS	SAVING THROWS				
			PHYSICAL EFFECT	MENTAL EFFECT	EVASION	MAGIC	LUCK
1	1d4	+0	16	14	15	12	13
2	2d4	+1	15	13	14	11	12
3	3d4	+0	15	13	14	11	12
4	4d4	+1	14	12	13	10	11
5	5d4	+0	14	12	13	10	11
6	6d4	+1	13	11	12	9	10
7	7d4	+0	13	11	12	9	10
8	8d4	+1	12	10	11	8	9
9	9d4	+0	12	10	11	8	9
10+	10d4	+1	10	8	9	6	7

THE SOCIALITE

PRIME ATTRIBUTES
Intelligence and Charisma
CLASS SKILLS
Art, Business, Culture, Gambling, Language, Law, Leadership, Perception, Persuade, Profession, and Vehicle
BONUS SKILLS FOR NEW CHARACTERS
Culture, Persuade, Any One Class Skill, Any One Skill

Whether a hard-edged rent boy or a glittering society matron, the socialite knows how to get people thinking, saying, and feeling the right things. They have an intuitive talent for manipulating the social context around them.

Socialites can often wield far more influence than their own personal resources might suggest, thanks to the help of numerous cooperative allies. One person can't do everything, but a sufficient supply of friends can bury almost any problem.

CLASS ABILITIES

The socialite has an instinctive grasp of human psychology, and can manipulate those around her with uncanny ease. While versatile, their special gifts work only on human minds.

- **Folie a Deux:** At 1st level, the socialite may compel a friendly or intimidated reaction in a human, if either are remotely plausible under the circumstances. Humans tainted by the supernatural may make a Mental Effect saving throw to resist this ability for an hour, though they may pretend to go along to avoid suspicion.
- **The Blood-Read Book:** At 3rd level, the socialite may intuitively sense the current emotional state and perceive the general train of thought of another person. Specific thoughts are not revealed, but an intent of violence, treachery, fear of a topic, or other generalities can be observed. Humans tainted by the supernatural may make a Mental Effect saving throw to resist this ability for an hour.
- **Stranger's Skin:** At 7th level the socialite's mastery of social forms is sufficient to blend in perfectly with a social group or organization, convincing the group that they belong unless their highly-incongruous appearance or extreme behavior gives them away. This blending will not serve as a passport into restricted areas, but others will assume they belong anywhere where ordinary members are found.
- **Crawling Compulsion:** At 10th level the socialite's grasp of human psychology is sufficient to manipulate a person into performing any action not profoundly contrary to their self-image with no more than five minutes of conversation. Humans tainted by the supernatural may make a Mental Effect saving throw to resist this ability for an hour.

Each ability requires one Expertise point to trigger and lasts for no more than one request or interaction, an hour long at most.



LEVEL	HIT DICE	ATTACK BONUS	SAVING THROWS				
			PHYSICAL EFFECT	MENTAL EFFECT	EVASION	MAGIC	LUCK
1	1d6	+1	15	12	16	14	13
2	2d6	+0	14	11	15	13	12
3	3d6	+1	14	11	15	13	12
4	4d6	+0	13	10	14	12	11
5	5d6	+1	13	10	14	12	11
6	6d6	+0	12	9	13	11	10
7	7d6	+1	12	9	13	11	10
8	8d6	+0	11	8	12	10	9
9	9d6	+1	11	8	12	10	9
10+	10d6	+1	9	6	10	8	7

THE TOUGH

PRIME ATTRIBUTES
Strength and Dexterity
CLASS SKILLS
Athletics, Combat, Gambling, Leadership, Profession, Stealth, Survival, Tactics, and Vehicle
BONUS SKILLS FOR NEW CHARACTERS
Athletics, Combat, Any One Class Skill, Any One Skill

The tough is a hard case, a man or woman capable of taking and dealing punishment that would pulp a different breed of hero. Some toughs are given to violence by their profession or nature: gang members, prizefighters, soldiers, bullies, guards, and those with a wide natural streak of mean to them. Other toughs are simply souls with an enormous capacity to endure, those tested by hardship and suffering who emerge unbroken by their trials.

Toughs are talented at matters of maiming and killing, though actually performing such acts of violence can scar their minds and lead to creeping Madness. Aside from this insidious threat to their mental stability, the most hideous physical threats of the eldritch realms are often largely immune to material injury. When facing these foes, the tough's great virtue is not their red-handed violence, but their ability to hold the line while their friends flee.

CLASS ABILITIES

The tough excels at violence, both giving and receiving it. They are harder than other heroes, and more likely to overcome human enemies whom they might face. While their talents are valuable against cultists, criminals, and other mortal malefactors, many of the most horrible entities of the hidden world have little to fear from human threats of harm. Still, the most experienced toughs can learn to inflict savage violence even on these unearthly perils.

- **Ravenous for Life:** At 1st level, the tough is able to automatically stabilize when reduced to zero hit points, allowing them to survive an otherwise mortal wound even without medical attention.
- **Bloodless:** At 3rd level, the tough can spend Expertise to ignore the Slaughtering effects of a hit they have received, taking only the normal rolled damage.
- **Butcher of Men:** At 7th level, the tough's long history with violence allows him to turn a successful hit against a human or animal into a Slaughtering hit. This trick can only be used once in any given fight, but may be used after the Slaughter die is rolled.
- **Killing Frenzy:** At 10th level, the tough's capacity for bloodshed transcends ordinary human limits. They may trigger this gift to use the Slaughter die for every enemy in a particular fight, even monsters and entities normally immune to Slaughtering hits.

Each ability requires one Expertise point to trigger and lasts for no more than one hit or one fight as the gift might indicate.



LEVEL	HIT DICE	ATTACK BONUS	SAVING THROWS				
			PHYSICAL EFFECT	MENTAL EFFECT	EVASION	MAGIC	LUCK
1	1d8	+1	12	16	14	15	13
2	2d8	+1	11	15	13	14	12
3	3d8	+1	11	15	13	14	12
4	4d8	+1	10	14	12	13	11
5	5d8	+1	10	14	12	13	11
6	6d8	+1	9	13	11	12	10
7	7d8	+1	9	13	11	12	10
8	8d8	+1	8	12	10	11	9
9	9d8	+1	8	12	10	11	9
10+	10d8	+1	6	10	8	9	7

ADDING THE FINAL TOUCHES

Your character is almost ready to face the eldritch horrors that await them. Just a few final decisions are needed to put the last bit of polish on your hero.

RECORDING LANGUAGES

Your character fluently speaks their native language. They are also fluent in the primary language related to a nation or culture for which they have at least level-0 Culture skill. Culture/Brazil-0 would give a command of Portuguese, for example.

Characters with at least level-0 in the Language skill can pick additional known tongues. Each level of the Language skill grants new languages equal to the skill level plus one. Thus, a character with Language-1 skill would know three additional languages— one for level-0 and two more for level-1.

Most language picks must be taken from known human languages. Alien tongues, long-lost human speech, and other occult codes are available only at the discretion of the GM.

CHOOSING STARTING WEALTH

Wealth is an abstract measure of a hero's available resources. Rather than track every dollar in their bank accounts, Wealth simply describes the general type of goods and services that a hero can purchase without severely straining their resources. There are several levels of Wealth.

- **Struggling** characters can buy Cheap goods and services, such as might cost ten dollars or less. They may be homeless or housed in shabby tenements, and can afford only the most basic goods.
- **Average** wealth allows buying Common goods and services, such as those costing less than \$500. Such characters rent a decent apartment or may be paying the mortgage on a house. Most of them own their own cars.
- **Affluent** wealth allows buying Expensive goods and services that cost less than \$10,000. These heroes are comfortably appointed, owning at least one house and several cars.

There are other levels of wealth above affluence, but the three levels above may be chosen without special GM permission. Most heroes are assumed to have Average wealth.

Players that select Struggling wealth for their heroes gain an additional free skill pick to reflect the resourcefulness necessary for such an existence. If they choose a skill they already possess at level-0, that skill becomes level-1. Heroes of an Affluent background start with an additional 10 points of Madness, as their sheltered life leaves them much more vulnerable to the initial shock of horror that comes from confronting the occult.

Wealth levels may rise and fall in the course of a hero's adventures. Most characters are assumed to fit their adventures in among their usual job duties, but those who must abandon their old lives without a new source of income can find their wealth plummeting.

CHOOSING STARTING TRAPPINGS

It's assumed that a hero has all the possessions and belongings that might go along with their background. A charter helicopter pilot is going to have a helicopter, even if he may still be paying on it, and a policewoman is going to have her service weapon. Every character of at least Average income will have access to a vehicle and any other belonging that fits their available income. It is not necessary to itemize everything the character owns.

Only record those noteworthy belongings that the character normally carries with him or her. Recording the total attack bonus, damage, and Slaughter dice of any weapons they may own is also a time-saver.

Your character can carry their belongings as *readied* or *stowed*. Readied items are close to hand, specially holstered, or worn for quick release. They may be used as part of whatever action involves them. Stowed items are packed away carefully for easy haulage, and require an action to be spent getting them out for use.

Your character can carry a number of readied items equal to half their Strength score, rounded down, and an additional number of stowed items equal to their full Strength score. Ordinary clothing, jewelry, and pocket trifles don't count as items, but armor must be worn as a readied item. Particularly bulky or heavy objects may count as more than one item for encumbrance purposes.

The following pages of this chapter gives a list of potentially useful gear and their encumbrance and wealth costs. If a spot decision is needed on a particular item, just compare its real-life price to the wealth guidelines to determine whether or not a character can afford to purchase it.

KITTING OUT A CHARACTER

Tom's just rolled up Joshua Fairweather, a down-on-his-luck gambler with the kind of sharp wits and keen eye that make for a good Investigator. He's decided to set the card sharp at a Struggling wealth level to get an extra skill pick. Lady Luck may not have been any too kind to the gambler of late, but he still has the ordinary trappings to be expected of a man in his position.

Joshua wears a once-fashionable outfit and a pair of wire-rimmed eyeglasses he uses for certain card cheats. A few decks of cards and sets of dice are always on his person as well. None of these count against his encumbrance, as small personal effects don't count.

A small revolver is concealed in an ankle holster for those occasions when sweet reason won't suffice. It counts as a stowed item, and will take an action to unholster before he can start shooting. The straight razor he keeps in his pocket is readied, and can be whipped out as part of an attack. Tom writes down the statistics and total attack bonus for these weapons to save time later and then Joshua is ready to face the unfeeling world.

EQUIPMENT AND WEALTH

The following pages cover some of the more relevant equipment a hero might have cause to acquire. As *Silent Legions* is set in the modern day, most players and GMs don't need too much guidance on this count—if you need to know the price on a given good or service a quick web search will tell you all you need to know. Despite this, for certain pieces of equipment such as weapons or vehicles it can be helpful to have additional information provided.

WEALTH RATINGS

A character's resources are described by their Wealth rating. Rather than track every penny of a character's resources, this Wealth rating is meant to abstract the bookkeeping and give the GM and player a general idea of the sort of good and services they can afford to purchase.

- **Penniless** characters have nothing but the clothes on their back. They can afford no purchases, have no shelter beyond such squats as they can hide in, and have no reliable income.
- **Struggling** characters can buy Cheap goods and services, such as might cost ten dollars or less. They may be homeless or housed in shabby tenements, and can afford only the most basic goods.
- **Average** characters are able to buy Common goods and services, such as those costing less than \$500. Such characters might rent a decent apartment or may be paying the mortgage on a house. Most of them own their own cars.
- **Affluent** wealth allows buying Expensive goods and services that cost less than \$10,000. These heroes are comfortably appointed, owning at least one house and several cars.
- **Rich** characters can afford Extravagant goods and services, including anything worth \$100,000 or less. They have virtually anything they care to own in the way of personal possessions, and likely hold extensive real estate.
- **Plutocratic** characters can afford the Priceless, buying anything on the market. They command the wealth of major corporations, government bureaus, or centuries-old conspiracies. If a thing can be had for money, they can have it.

Characters of more than Penniless wealth can push their available resources to purchase something of the next highest category. After making such a purchase, their effective Wealth is lessened by one step for the next month. With GM approval, characters can also permanently burn a level of Wealth to buy something two steps higher on the scale.

Characters can purchase goods on behalf of their half-dozen immediate teammates without special restrictions, but they can only purchase larger amounts of goods one step lower on the scale.

Characters can permanently gain or lose levels of Wealth depending on the outcome of adventures and their own choices. Constant strain on a hero's pocketbook can prove hazardous to his financial health, while the plunder of dead cults can be sold for a pretty penny at times.

READING THE EQUIPMENT LISTS

Each piece of equipment is listed with a price code ranging from Cheap to Priceless, and assumes the item is legal in the jurisdiction where it is being purchased. Illegal goods will usually cost a minimum of one level more, and may not be available at all to heroes without the right skills and contacts.

Items without a listed Encumbrance count as a single item for purposes of a character's load. Two-handed weapons, such as rifles, bows, or spears count as two items and exceptionally burdensome ones such as halberds or rocket launchers may count as even more.

Weapons have one or more attributes listed for their use. When rolling hit or damage rolls for the weapon, use the best of the listed attributes. Each weapon also has a Slaughter die indicating its likelihood of doing triple damage to its target on a roll of 6 or more. As the Slaughter die is rolled at the same time as damage, it's usually best to use a different-colored die for it to keep things straight.

Weapon ranges are listed in meters, with normal and extreme ranges given. Firing at a target outside of normal range applies a -2 penalty to the attack. Magazine sizes indicate how many shots can be fired before an action is required to reload. An archer with a ready quiver can fire as long as his arrows hold out, but others must spend an action reloading assuming they have ready ammunition.

The appropriate Combat skill to use with a given weapon is usually obvious. Use Primitive for melee weapons, bows, thrown weapons, and grenades. Projectile applies to firearms of all conventional kinds and to crossbows. Gunnery skill applies only to vehicle-mounted weapons, emplaced heavy weaponry, and other heavy weapons.



WEAPONS

The legality and practicality of carrying weaponry in public will depend on the situation and location where the heroes find themselves. Given the natural propensities of PCs, however, it's very likely that most of them will want to pack a little something for a special occasion.

In the United States most characters with a clean criminal record can get a license to carry a concealed firearm in most locations. Individual businesses and venues may prohibit carrying, and most governmental and educational buildings forbid it as well. Knives and other melee weapons are more restricted than firearms in many jurisdictions.

Most firearms and other weapons can be holstered discreetly in any reasonably loose-fitting clothing. Such weapons count as being stowed for purposes of encumbrance. Special holsters or clothing modification can allow for a weapon to be readied, as can very small or handy weapons such as a knife or taser in a coat pocket.

Characters can conceal small weapons on their person. Against a pat down and light search, a character can contest their Int/Security skill check against the searcher's Wis/Perception. Careful searches will almost always find concealed weapons, barring extreme measures.

SPECIAL WEAPON NOTES

Unarmed attacks become more dangerous with the expertise of the combatant. Those with no Combat/Unarmed training get no Slaughter die. Those with level-0 get 1d6, level-1 gets 1d8, level-2 gets 1d10, and level-3 and greater get 1d12. Unarmed strikes also add their skill level to damage.

Great Weapon stats apply to any proper two-handed melee weapon.

Grenades always roll to attack AC 9. On a miss, they land 1d10 meters away from the target in a random direction. An exploding grenade does 2d6 damage to all targets within 5 meters, with a Luck save for half damage. Targets take 1 fewer point of damage for each point of AC below 6.

Sniper rifles require a steady rest and a full round of aiming at an unaware target to be used to full effect. If this careful preparation is done, a hit forces an immediate Physical Effect save at a penalty equal to the sniper's Combat/Projectile skill. Failure means instant death to any creature not immune to Slaughter dice.

Heavy machine guns use vast amounts of ammunition. The magazine count indicates the number of rounds it can fire on a full load of ammo, which counts as three items.

BURST FIRE AND SUPPRESSIVE FIRE

Some military firearms are capable of *burst fire*. These weapons can expend three rounds of ammunition in an attack to gain a +2 bonus to the hit roll, damage roll, and Slaughter die roll on the attack.

Some weapons are naturally capable of *suppressive fire*. Double the usual amount of ammunition is fired, but any target within normal range of the weapon's firing arc is automatically hit for half normal damage at normal chances of Slaughtering. Targets who succeed on the better of their Luck or Evasion saving throws avoid this damage, as do targets who are behind hard cover.

Burst-fire weapons with a full automatic setting can also be used for a less effective version of suppressive fire, assuming they have at least half of a full magazine of ammunition left. Such a "spray and pray" attack consumes all the ammunition left in the weapon and allows a single attack roll against every target in front of the shooter, up to a maximum equal to the bullets left in the magazine. Those hit by the spray can attempt the better of a Luck or Evasion saving throw to escape injury.

Only a handful of heirloom fully-automatic weapons are legal in the United States, for all that legality matters to most player characters.

WEAPONRY

WEAPON	DMG	SLAUGHTER	ATTRIB.	RANGE	MAG.	COST
Unarmed Attack	1d2+Skill	Special	Str/Dex	N/A		N/A
Knife	1d4	1d6	Str/Dex	6/9		Che
Club	1d4	None	Str	6/9		N/A
Sword or 1H Melee	1d8	1d6	Str/Dex	N/A		Com
Spear	1d6	1d6	Str	10/20		Che
Great Weapon	2d6	1d10	Str	N/A		Com
Bow	1d6	1d6	Dex	100/150	1	Com
Crossbow	1d8	1d6	Dex	100/150	1@	Com
Frag Grenade	2d6	1d8	Dex	10/30		Com
Taser	1d8§	1d6	Str/Dex	N/A	1	Com
Revolver	1d8	1d6	Dex	30/100	6	Com
Semi-auto Pistol	1d6+1	1d6	Dex	30/100	12	Com
Rifle	1d10+2	1d8	Dex	200/400	6	Com
Shotgun, Break	3d4	1d10	Dex	10/30	2	Com
Shotgun, Pump	3d4	1d10	Dex	10/30	6	Com
Submachine Gun	1d8*	1d6	Dex	30/100	20	Exp
Combat Rifle	1d12*	1d8	Dex	100/300	30	Exp
Combat Shotgun	3d4*	1d10	Dex	10/30	12	Exp
Sniper Rifle	2d8	1d12	Dex	1,000/2,000	1	Exp
Heavy Machine Gun	3d6#	1d12	Dex	500/2,000	10	Ext
Rocket Launcher	3d10	1d20	Dex	1,000/2,000	1@	Ext

§ indicates that the weapon does subdual damage. * means the weapon is capable of burst fire

weapons can fire to suppress. If a magazine is marked @ it takes an extra action to reload

ARMOR

Modern combat has a place for body armor but current weapon technology greatly outperforms the available protection. Body armor capable of standing up to modern munitions is so heavy and cumbersome that it is largely impractical for daily wear.

A character’s armor class equals their armor’s AC reduced by their Dexterity attribute modifier. An unarmored character has a base AC of 9, as does any character attacked by a weapon capable of overcoming their armor. Their Dexterity modifier still applies even if the weapon ignores their armor. A PC’s armor class is never worse than 9.

Armor counts as a readied item for encumbrance purposes, and weak characters may have difficulty wearing the heaviest and bulkiest protection. Body armor is legal for purchase and possession in the United States and most other countries, but wearing visible armor on the street is an excellent way to draw a great deal of police attention.

TYPES OF ARMOR

Leather, **Mail**, and **Plate** armor cover primitive and archaic forms of armor reliant on boiled leather, mail rings, or metal plates. Non-decorative mail and plate armor is available only from a limited number of artisans, while effective leather armor can be pieced together out of racing gear and other protective clothing. **Shields** can usually be purchased as riot shields on the open market. This type of armor and these shields are useless against modern firearms and explosive weaponry and do not improve the wearer’s Armor Class against such attacks. The wearer is treated as unarmored when facing them.

Armored Longcoats include long coats, dusters, or loose full clothing that has been reinforced by ballistic cloth and internal plates. While it appears to be normal clothing at a cursory glance, any close inspection will detect the armored components.

Armored Undersuits are tight ballistic-cloth suits worn as underclothing. While they provide very limited ballistic protection, they are useless against melee weapons or fists, and provide no AC benefit against them.

Ballistic Vests and **Military Body Armor** are unmistakably armor, including pads, ballistic plates, and joint protection. Wearing this openly on the street is likely to produce vigorous police interest.

ARMOR

ARMOR	AC	ENC	COST
Leather	7*	1	Com
Mail	5*	2	Exp
Plate	3*	3	Ext
Shield	-1 bonus*	1	Com
Armored Longcoat	7	1	Exp
Armored Undersuit	7@	1	Exp
Ballistic Vest	6	2	Exp
Military Body Armor	4	3	Ext

* armors are ineffective against firearms and explosives.
@ armors are ineffective against melee weapons.



GEAR

Most gear is self-explanatory, with prices matching real-life costs. The list to the right is simply a short summary of some of the most common equipment that inquisitive heroes might find useful on their expeditions. Other prices can be extrapolated from experience.

The tool kits and supplies given in the table are of standard quality and don't give any particular bonus to skill checks that use them. They do prevent any penalty from improvised equipment, however, and in some cases the check might not be possible at all without some kind of equipment to hand.

Most small items can be carried in coat pockets, ankle pouches, or other unobtrusive locations without drawing attention. Ordinary clothing can manage 3 or 4 of these items without showing unusual lumpiness, while carefully-tailored outfits can pack twice as many without showing to casual inspection.

A custom holster includes the cost of tailoring ordinary clothing to accommodate it, and allows the wearer to carry a pistol-sized weapon as a Readied item. Conventional concealed-carry holsters leave the weapon Stowed. Someone willing to carry openly can treat any pistol or melee weapon as Readied.

Objects with Encumbrance listed as an asterisk are too small to be worth tracking unless large numbers are carried. Those marked with an @ may be bundled together in packs of three counting as a single item for encumbrance purposes, and taking an extra turn's action to unpack.

VEHICLES

Speed is an abstract measure of the vehicle's speed and agility. When vehicles chase each other, the opposing vehicle's Speed should be applied as a penalty to Vehicle skill checks to close or escape. Speed may also be used as a modifier when attempting difficult maneuvers.

Armor is subtracted from all weapon damage done to the vehicle. Armor does not apply to damage done by weaponry that requires Combat/Gunnery to fire; heavy weaponry is often designed to take out vehicles. Actually hitting the vehicle is automatic if the vehicle is stationary and within 10 meters. Hitting a vehicle from beyond that range requires an attack against AC 9. If the vehicle is moving, subtract its Speed from the hit roll, and if the attacker is in a moving vehicle as well, also subtract that conveyance's Speed.

Hit Points indicate the amount of damage a vehicle can take before it is destroyed. Speed is reduced by half when the vehicle is at half hit points, and flying vehicles must land at the first opportunity. A vehicle reduced to zero hit points forces all crew and passengers to make Luck saving throws. Failure means that the passenger takes the vehicle's maximum hit points in damage, while success reduces the damage by half.

Crew gives the maximum number of vehicle occupants. For the listed vehicles, only one crew member is actually necessary to drive or pilot the vehicle, though additional crew members may be required to fire or load weapons.

GEAR

ITEM	ENC	COST
Ammunition, 20 rounds or 1 magazine	1@	Com
Backpack w/internal frame	1	Com
Body bag	1@	Che
Electronics kit	1	Com
Emergency first aid kit	1	Com
Fake ID, excellent	*	Exp
Fake ID, poor	*	Com
Gas mask	1	Com
Geiger counter	1	Com
Hazmat suit, Level A full	4	Exp
Holster, custom	1	Com
Laptop computer	1	Com
Mechanic's field kit	3	Com
Rations, 1 day	1@	Che
Rope, nylon, 20 meters	1	Che
Satellite phone	1	Exp
Smartphone	*	Com
Two-man tent	3	Com
Water bladder, 1 day	2	Che
Wilderness survival kit	1	Che

VEHICLE WEAPONRY

Any vehicle larger than a motorcycle can mount a single integral weapon. Cars and small helicopters can mount one such weapon, while larger vehicles can mount two, and military fighting vehicles can mount six. These may be any conventional projectile weapons.

Gunnery weapons take up twice the space as normal small arms, should the owner wish to mount a heavy machine gun or rocket launcher. All vehicle-mounted weapons use the Combat/Gunnery skill, regardless of their type. The statistics are not provided for a tank's main gun, because any normal living creature hit by it will be vaporized. Even unearthly abominations may be temporarily discomfited by such trauma.

VEHICLE	SPEED	ARMOR	HP	CREW	COST
Car	0	6	30	5	Exp
Motorcycle	1	4	10	2	Exp
Helicopter, Small	2	5	15	2	Exp
Helicopter, Large	3	6	20	6	Ext
Plane, Prop	2	5	20	6	Exp
Plane, Jet	4	8	25	20	Ext
Sailboat	0	6	30	6	Exp
Powerboat	1	6	30	6	Ext
Tank	1	20	50	3	N/A



THE RULES OF THE GAME

SOLDIERS IN A LOST CAUSE

The following systems cover the most common necessities of a group of heroic investigators. They deal with feats of skill, resisting dark forces, red-handed combat, the corrosive loss of sanity and the gradual improvement of an aspiring hero's prowess.

Both players and GMs should read through this section at least once. A quick-reference sheet is available at the back of the section and should be all the reference a player will need during actual play. Special abilities or notes can be scribbled into the margins.

As with any old-school game, you are encouraged to tweak, replace, remix, and hack the rules to your own satisfaction. Still, you should likely give the original rules at least one session worth of play to make sure that the changes you have in mind are really necessary. The basic framework of this game has received a lot of hard use and proven sufficient for a wide variety of groups.

If you do decide to alter the rules, make sure that the players are aware of the changes. Few things irritate players quite as much as discovering that the mechanics they thought they were relying on aren't actually the rules that are in play. Making things clear from the start gives them a chance to deal with the game world as it is rather than as they imagine it to be.

Many of the rules will seem familiar to those conversant with old-school gaming, but such cognoscenti are encouraged to read through this section at least once to pick out differences specific to the engine used by the game. In particular, they will want to read the character advancement section on gaining hit points, the combat section with its "target 20" hit system, the madness rules, and the injury and healing section on dealing with mortal wounds.

USING THESE RULES IN PLAY

The system used in *Silent Legions* is intended to be relatively light compared to many other games. The entire systems section fits on nine pages and covers the great majority of things that a group of characters will be interested in doing. If a GM sets things up properly at the start of a session, they probably won't have any need for this book during actual play.

First, make sure you understand the four most important systems in the game— skill checks, saving throws, combat, and madness. If you understand these four systems, you'll instantly have a grasp on ninety percent of the mechanical content you need to understand.

Skill checks are used whenever a PC tries to accomplish something that requires exceptional skill or unusual expertise. Skill checks are not intended to be invoked for every little thing a PC tries to do or for tasks that are normal for their background and class. You should use skill checks when a PC tries to accomplish some feat that is difficult, not in their usual line of duties, and that doesn't allow for the leisure of multiple attempts to get it right. Don't bother with skill checks when the PC can simply keep trying— eventually, they're going to get it right.

Saving throws represent the hardiness, strength of will, and raw native luck of a character in resisting some dangerous effect. Dodging clear of a falling ceiling stone, resisting the allure of an abomination's sorcerous words, and throwing off the searing bite of a cult priest's arcane curse are all examples of the sort of thing that might call for a saving throw. If a PC is called upon to resist such a misfortune, you might choose an appropriate type of saving throw and call for them to roll for it. On a success, the danger is either evaded or substantially lessened.

Combat is a mainstay of adventure games, and comes into play whenever the PCs decide to solve their problems with a clenched fist or the business end of a gun. Combat in *Silent Legions* is extremely dangerous for novice adventurers and hardly less so for experienced heroes. While veteran characters may have a great edge over the rank and file of human cultists, the eldritch abominations they face are often immune to human-portable levels of violence. Even when the heroes overmatch their enemies, the wanton slaughter of other human beings can leave them haunted by the memory of their brutal actions.

Madness is a particular hazard of heroes in the world of *Silent Legions*. Constant exposure to unearthly horrors, savage violence and eldritch wisdom can eventually reduce a hero to complete insanity and leave them incapable of functioning in their former role. Heroes who make a point of slaughtering as many human cultists as possible or who regularly endure grievous injuries can also find themselves gradually losing a grip on their own sanity. Some characters may be forced to retire from their careers simply to preserve what sanity they have left.

Above all, remember that the GM and the player group are the ultimate arbiters of the rules. Any solution that's acceptable to everyone at the table is by definition a good solution. If you run into a peculiar situation that doesn't seem to have any mechanical guidance, just make a spot decision and keep playing. If you need a random outcome for an event, just roll a die and treat high rolls as better than low ones. Lengthy discussions are best saved for after the session.

SKILL CHECKS

When a character attempts to pull off some tricky feat of expertise, the GM may call for a skill check. These checks are not intended for ordinary actions or activities that a given character's concept should be able to perform normally. Instead, they're meant to be rolled when the outcome is uncertain and time-sensitive.

To roll a skill check, the player rolls 2d6 and adds their most relevant attribute modifier and their relevant skill level. If their total equals or exceeds a difficulty number chosen by the GM, the check is a success. Otherwise, something is botched, bad luck intervenes, or the result is somehow more complicated or less auspicious than desired.

Characters without even a level-0 rating in a skill suffer a -1 penalty to their roll, and may not even have any chance of successfully using complex or esoteric skills. It's up to the GM to decide whether an untrained character can hope to succeed at a given roll.

Bad or beneficial circumstances can also affect the roll. Attempting to perform a skill under extremely hostile conditions might apply as much as a -3 penalty to the skill check, while a situation where the PC has skilled assistants and excellent conditions might grant up to +3 on the roll. The GM determines any modifiers to be applied.

Some equipment or helpers may also grant bonuses on a skill check. As a general rule, multiple bonuses from the same type of aid do not stack. Using several useful pieces of gear or receiving several beneficial sorcerous aids gives only the best modifier.

OPPOSED SKILL CHECKS

Sometimes, two or more people try to perform mutually-contradictory actions. A hero might be trying to prowl close to a cult watchman, while the watchman might naturally be trying to notice any intruders. Two characters might be engaged in a footrace that only one can win, with the loser being eaten by the abomination that pursues them both. In these and other similar cases, the participants make an opposed skill check, rolling their skills against each other.

Everyone involved rolls their relevant skill checks, and the highest roll wins. Ties are rerolled if a tie doesn't make sense in context. Characters using Expertise to reroll failed checks can choose to reroll if their first attempt was not a winning one.

EXTENDED SKILL CHECKS

From time to time, it might be important to figure out how long it takes to accomplish some particularly involved task. If you want a ballpark answer, just set a difficulty and have the character roll a skill check; if they fail, the job takes longer than is convenient, with large failures meaning it takes much longer than they like.

Otherwise, you might just assign a particular amount of time to a given skill check and let them roll once for each such interval they spend working on the problem. Once they accumulate a set number of successful skill checks, the task is complete. This technique can also be used when two characters are competing at some extended task, like a foot race or political counter-scheming.

EXAMPLE SKILL DIFFICULTIES

NO CHECK	The task is something the character might be expected to accomplish regularly with their given background, or the character can accomplish the task eventually and time is not an issue.
6	Tasks that a trained person can usually expect to accomplish, and even untrained sorts have a chance of success.
8	Tasks that challenge a trained character, and even an expert runs a small risk of failure.
9	Tasks that normally would require an expert to accomplish consistently.
11	Tasks that only an expert has any real chance of accomplishing.
13	Tasks that push the limit of what a master of the skill can plausibly accomplish.
15	A GM assigns this difficulty when a master tries something that sounds barely possible in a strictly theoretical sense, it being more entertaining than a flat denial.

CONCEPT SUCCESSES

PCs are competent, skilled men and women who have shown unusual capability in their roles. Novice heroes may not be pulp-novel protagonists, but they are rarely bunglers. Those that fail to demonstrate even minimal aptitude soon suffer final disposition at the hands, talons, or tentacles of the powers of the night.

As such, a GM should simply give a PC success at any moderately difficult task related to their concept. If the character is a pickpocket, she shouldn't have to check her Stealth skill just to dip the pockets of some clueless tourist. She might well need to make skill checks to accomplish taxing feats of difficulty 9+, such as rifling the pockets of a suspicious security officer, but those activities which are normal and expected for her concept should be automatically successful under ordinary conditions.

OPTIONAL RULE: PARTIAL SUCCESS

Some GMs and players like a less binary result to their skill checks than complete failure or full success. While a GM can always interpret a near-missed roll as something almost successful, this optional rule allows the group to be more specific about it.

If this rule is used, a skill check that misses by three points or less is a partial success. The PC may get what they want, but a new complication or problem is introduced by their success. Alternately, the PC may not get all of what they wanted, but they get something without additional trouble. The GM decides the exact contours of a partial success, though the player can always suggest plausible outcomes.

SAVING THROWS AND NATURAL PERILS

When a character is confronted by some environmental hazard, lethal toxin, tragic accident, sorcerous curse, alien miasma, or other common peril of the occult investigator, they are sometimes permitted a saving throw to avoid the worst of the effects. Individual spells and powers will list whether or not a saving throw is allowed, and the GM may grant them as they see fit.

To make a saving throw, the character rolls 1d20 and compares it to the appropriate saving throw number for their class and level. If the roll is equal or greater than the number, the save is a success and the peril is either avoided or lessened in effect. NPCs and monsters always have a saving throw target of 15 minus half their hit dice, rounded up.

FALLING

Characters take 1d6 points of damage for every ten feet that they fall. A successful Luck saving throw halves the damage taken.

SUFFOCATION

A character can go without air for a number of minutes equal to four plus the character's Constitution modifier. This time is halved if the character is performing strenuous activity. A character that runs out of air begins suffocating, and each round they must make a successful Physical Effect saving throw or fall unconscious. An unconscious character will die after five minutes without air.

EXPERTISE

Every player character is gifted with a certain amount of talent for their chosen class, a talent measured as **Expertise**. No hero can rely upon this aptitude to carry them through every challenge, but at important moments a character can call upon this skill to gain a vital edge.

A character's maximum number of Expertise points starts at two at first level and rises by one for each additional level they achieve. Thus, at tenth level a hero will have a maximum of 11 Expertise to spend in using their special abilities.

Spent Expertise points recover at the rate of one point per night's rest. Heroes who have no opportunity to relax and recover during the night cannot regain Expertise.

Expertise points are meant to trigger special abilities and gifts. While the GM may choose to let the PCs use them to accomplish other special feats in line with their concepts and classes, they should be careful not to make Expertise use a prerequisite of accomplishing anything unusual. If a character has a good idea and wants to try it, they should be allowed to attempt it without a tax on their available Expertise.

The pace of the game ensures a steady bleed of Expertise from the heroes, and without regular opportunities to rest and recover the PCs will soon be forced to shepherd their available resources. Most adventures don't allow for recovering more than one or two points. Any greater delay will almost certainly give the party's enemies a chance to complete whatever malevolence the PCs were trying to prevent, or else pin down the heroes for bloody and terrible reprisal.

SAVING THROWS

PHYSICAL EFFECT

This saving throw applies to resisting diseases, poisons, privation, and other tests of personal hardihood.

MENTAL EFFECT

Mental effect saves are made to resist most magical powers or persuasive gifts that directly influence a mind.

EVASION

Evasion saves apply in situations that test an character's ability to dodge or dive out of the way of peril,

MAGIC

Magic saves are made when a character is threatened by a magical effect that does not come under one of the other categories.

LUCK

When a character's wellbeing depends purely on dumb luck rather than any effort they might make, a Luck saving throw is in order for the hero.

USES FOR EXPERTISE

Characters can spend Expertise in several ways, along with any additional opportunities granted by the GM.

Reroll a class skill. The hero may spend an Expertise point to reroll any skill check for a skill that belongs to their class. Attack rolls may also be rerolled by Toughs. If the character has levels in more than one class, then all skills from each class count for this purpose. The hero may choose to use this ability after learning whether or not the check was successful. A given check or roll can only be rerolled once, however.

Activate a class ability. Each class has a number of unique abilities, with the first of them gained at 1st level and the rest earned as the character advances. An ability can be triggered by spending an Expertise point. As with class skills, characters with levels in more than one class can spend their Expertise freely among their available abilities. Expertise points earned from advancing as a Tough can be spent to activate Scholar abilities, for example.

Cast a spell or activate an occult discipline. Some heroes may learn sorcerous rituals or esoteric arts. Many of these disciplines are hopelessly toxic to the human mind, but the grayer arts among them can be used by sane men and women without the certainty of permanent mental damage. The focus and discipline necessary to trigger these abilities costs an Expertise point to activate. Those who are unwilling to spend this point can instead suffer an amount of Madness that varies with the strength of the ability.

COMBAT

While combat is a staple of heroic adventuring, it is also an excellent way to die young. The monstrous foes of human heroes are often far more than they can hope to best in direct conflict, and even strictly human cultists present a lethal peril with their knives and guns. Despite this, even the most cautious and clever band of heroes must sometimes find themselves forced to turn to violent ends. Some of them even survive to regret the cost.

INITIATIVE

When combat breaks out every participant rolls 1d8 and adds their Dexterity attribute modifier, if they have one. This is their initiative score, and the sequence of action goes from highest to lowest. In case of ties, the PC wins, and if two PCs tie, the closest player to the GM's right acts first. Initiative is only rolled once, as when everyone has had their turn to act it loops back around to the top. One full turn by all participants is called a round, and usually represents five or six seconds of frenzied action.

Optionally, the GM may prefer to roll initiative by sides, instead, with the PC with the best Dexterity bonus rolling for the entire group of heroes and the GM rolling for all the villains as a group.

There are times when PCs or their enemies are surprised and unable to respond effectively. In the case of such ambushes, the defender with the best Wisdom/Perception skill total should roll an opposed check against the average Dexterity/Stealth skill check of the attackers. If the defenders win, they may respond normally. If the attackers succeed, they get a free round of actions before everyone rolls initiative.

Sometimes a character may wish to delay his or her action, waiting for a comrade to act or holding ready for some enemy. The character states specifically what they are waiting for, and when the circumstances arrive, they act immediately. If the event never happens, they lose their action for the round in waiting. It's up to the GM to decide what actions can be held.

COMBAT ACTIONS

Once a character's turn comes up, he or she can perform an action: stab an enemy, cut a rope, shoot a gun, tend a downed comrade, trigger an occult discipline, or drag an alien relic out of their pack. Anything that could plausibly be accomplished in five or six seconds can be done as an action.

Some actions are so easy that they can be accomplished at the same time as an attack or other significant deed. Speaking a few words, drawing a readied piece of equipment, or dropping prone might all qualify as these "free actions". Conversely, some actions may require more than one round to complete, such as operating a complex piece of equipment.

In addition to whatever action a character takes on his or her turn, they may also move up to 20 meters, or 40 meters if they do nothing but move. This movement cannot be split up; all of it must be taken either before or after the character's action for the round. Crossing rough terrain, climbing, or swimming halves a character's movement.

MAKING AN ATTACK

Assuming a character has a weapon to hand and a desire to kill, they may make an attack as their action for a round. To do so, they roll 1d20 and add their relevant attribute modifier, combat skill, attack bonus, and the target's armor class. Weapons listing two attributes use the better of the two. If the total is equal or greater than 20, the attack hits, and the target will be hurt or killed. A roll of natural 1 always misses, and a natural 20 on the die always hits.

Some situations may grant bonuses or penalties to the hit roll. As a rule of thumb, some beneficial circumstance might grant a +2 bonus on the roll, like having leisure to aim carefully with a gun, or swinging an axe at a prone opponent.

Disadvantages such as trying to swing an axe in a narrow tunnel, firing a gun at a character in knife-fighting range, or throwing a knife at a foe who is half-hidden by the corner of a crumbling building might apply a -2 penalty. Characters who lack even level-0 skill ratings in the type of weapon they wield also suffer a -2 penalty to hit.

If a blow strikes home, the attacker rolls the damage dice for the weapon and adds their relevant attribute modifier. Unarmed attacks usually do only 1d2 damage, but also add the attacker's Combat/Unarmed skill to the damage, unlike other weapons.

Along with the damage dice, the attacker rolls the weapon's listed **Slaughter die**, which is usually a d6 but might be as much as a d12 for particularly horrific weapons. If this die comes up 6 or greater, the weapon's damage is *tripled* as it delivers an exceptionally murderous hit. Many alien entities and monstrous abominations are immune to Slaughtering hits and ignore this die.

These damage dice are then subtracted from the target's hit points. If the victim is reduced to zero hit points, they are either struck dead or are left mortally wounded, doomed to die swiftly if unaided.

Some heroes may not wish to kill a victim but merely subdue them. Unarmed combat may be used to deal **subdual damage**. Victims reduced to 0 hit points by such attacks are incapacitated or unconscious, but will recover all such lost hit points with an hour's rest. Blunt weapons may also be used to deal subdual damage, but in such case they do only half damage, rounded down, and never Slaughter.

A human character can make only one attack per round, even if they hold multiple weapons. Certain wild beasts or hideous abominations can launch multiple attacks in a round, however. These savage foes can rend their prey to pieces in mere moments.

MOVEMENT IN COMBAT

It's difficult to get clear of a swirling melee without catching a knife in the back. Any character who tries to move away from a melee engagement must spend their action evading before they can move for the round. Characters who simply turn and flee or who attempt to do something else with their action grant all foes within melee range a free immediate melee attack on them as they turn their attention away.



ENCUMBRANCE

Even the burliest heroes can only carry so much gear before the weight of their kit becomes prohibitive. Some equipment can be kept close to hand on a hero's belt or arm sheath, but other items must be stowed in a pack that may not be easily accessible in the roil of mortal combat.

A character can have ready a number of items equal to half their Strength score, rounded down. Ready items include those that the character is using or wearing at all times, or that they have conveniently to hand in sheaths or belt pouches. Suits of armor count as readied items, but the normal clothing and jewelry that a character might wear does not. A character can draw or produce a readied item as part of any action they may take.

A character may have a number of stowed items equal to their full Strength score. Stowed items are carried in backpacks, in carefully balanced leg or arm pockets, or otherwise packed away where they will least encumber the character. If a character needs to get out a stowed item in a hurry, it will take one round to dig it out of the packing, pocket, or backpack it is in.

Very small items carried in small numbers do not count against encumbrance limits. Other small items can be packed together into bundles of three items to simplify their carriage, though getting at them then takes an additional round of fumbling with the packaging. A packed box of twenty bullets also counts as one item, as does a quiver of 20 arrows for those heroes reliant on more traditional tools of war. It's ultimately up to the GM to decide what items can be bundled together in a single pack.

Characters can burden themselves with more gear if they're willing to sacrifice some fleetness of foot to do so. Up to two additional items can be carried ready or four additional ones stowed at the cost of becoming Lightly Encumbered, and having their base movement slowed to 15 meters per round. A further two items can be carried ready or four stowed at the cost of becoming Heavily Encumbered, with base movement reduced to 10 meters.

On the equipment lists, some items are given an encumbrance value higher than 1. These items count as multiple objects for encumbrance purposes, being heavy, clumsy, or unwieldy to carry.

GEAR AND CIRCUMSTANCES

In most cases, encumbrance won't be all that important to a hero. Very few PCs are going to be performing their investigations and interviews while wearing full tactical armor and packing an infantry grunt's allotment of combat gear. Most characters will have little more on their person than what they might normally carry as a day-to-day matter.

With that in mind, the player might wish to keep two different sets of equipment— one for street use, and the other for when he or she is packing for an assault on a cult stronghold or an expedition into an unknown wilderness. In the former case they might have little more than a concealed pistol for emergency use and perhaps a trauma kit slid into a coat pocket. In the latter, they could be carrying a well-stuffed pack and an urban SWAT team's loadout of weaponry.

MADNESS

Madness in *Silent Legions* bears only a notional resemblance to conventional mental illness. Such afflictions in the real world are the product of biochemical imbalances, traumatic experiences, or damage to the brain itself. The madness of the outer darkness is something incomparably worse. It is the intrusion of a fundamentally incomprehensible reality into human awareness.

This is not to say that the two kinds of affliction can't exist in the same person. A hero who wades hip-deep through the blood of slaughtered children and is forced to murder a half-dozen cultists with his teeth is going to be scarred by that experience in ways that any human can understand. Yet it can be harder to understand why the simple sight of an eldritch abomination could be as traumatic to a hero as the butchery of half their dearest friends.

The truth is that exposure to the occult leaves a human vulnerable to stimuli, sense perceptions, and revelations that human minds were never meant to perceive. The knowledge is like an infection. It burrows, it burns, and it consumes. Recognizing the strange angles of a damnable creature's wings reveals to the hero a whole new panorama of inhuman shapes and horrific vistas, such that she might suffer uncontrollable fits of panic when confronted with some mundane object that just happens to echo those hideous arcs. A human mind is forced open and compelled to receive impressions that more blessedly ignorant souls need never confront.

Most people infected with this knowledge try to blot it out with drugs, drink, or dissipation. Any distraction is sought in hopes that the knowledge can be ignored under the torrent of different stimuli. Such attempts are always unsuccessful; nothing can hold back the awareness forever, but struggling against its harbingers can provide comfort of a kind.

Others try to force this understanding into a more tolerable framework of reality, confecting new theologies, new occult disciplines, and new religious rituals in an attempt to make their perceptions saner and more endurable. The horrible insights are less intolerable if they become part of a schema which a human mind can understand. Most of these cults and dark sorceries quickly become toxic to the sanity of their practitioners, fresh awareness forcing the construction of new rationales and new delusions to protect their remaining kernel of sanity from the killing light of understanding.

The best that most sufferers can do is to create a firebreak around the idea, a zone of scorched reason to serve as a buffer against the awareness. This takes the shape of a Delirium, a focused insanity that allows them to rationalize or reject an insight. This lessens the grip of Madness and gives them some respite from its pains.

While the Delirium can be burdensome, it shelters them from the worst of their suffering. Too many Deliria can prove ruinous, however, as each additional Delirium increases the risk of a cascade of failing defenses and exposure to unendurable realizations. The higher the edifice of madness is built, the more likely it is to fall.

GAINING MADNESS

Madness starts at a score of 0 for most heroes. If it ever reaches a total of 100, the character is hopelessly lost in their own tormented perceptions and can no longer function as a player character. Madness is gained from traumatic events, unearthly insights, and dabbling with eldritch powers. These events come in three categories—Bloodshed, Horror, and Occult. Some special traits may lessen the Madness suffered from a particular category.

A human mind has a limit to the amount of insanity it can incur in a single event. After a certain point the senses numb and no further horror can be experienced. In a single situation or event, a character can incur no more Madness than the maximum result of the worst shock they confront. In addition, a particular breed of monster can terrorize a human only so much. A PC can never take more Madness from encountering a type of creature than the maximum Madness the creature's presence can inflict.

For example, if a PC finds himself surrounded by a flock of black-winged abominations that inflict 1d8 Horror Madness to behold, the most Madness he can suffer is 8 points, no matter how many of them he sees. Once he suffers 8 points of Madness from encountering them, he will no longer be further demented by them. If some titanic shape of outer darkness then rears up behind them with a 1d20 Horror Madness infliction, however, his maximum gain for the event becomes 20 points.

The following table gives general guidelines on Madness gains for different stimuli. The GM can always add to this chart or adjust it as the situation and PCs recommend.

MADNESS COSTS	
BLOODSHED EVENTS	COST
Being reduced to zero hit points by injury	1d8
Intentionally killing a human being for the first time	1d20
Killing additional humans not in immediate self-defense	1d6
Willingly Inflicting intentional, severe but non-fatal violence	1
Witnessing a scene of gruesome human slaughter	1d6
Suffering mutilation or torture	1d8
Indirectly killing many people by action or omission	1d10
First time that week that the PC is reduced to half hit points	1d4
Witnessing the violent death of a friend or close ally	1d8
HORROR EVENTS	
Being affected by a hostile magical effect.	1d6
Witnessing a rationally impossible event or object	1d6
Abandoning living allies to cultists or otherworldly entities	1d8
Beholding an eldritch abomination or alien entity	Varies
Failing in efforts to stop a large-scale cult plan	Varies
Witnessing a magical cult ritual	1d6
Learning of a horrible fate for a friend or close ally	1d8
OCCULT EVENTS	
Casting a spell or using a discipline without Expertise	Varies

REDUCING MADNESS

Every time a hero advances an experience level, their Madness total decreases by 10 points. Their newfound self-confidence and experience has allowed them to cope with their understanding to some extent. As always, Madness cannot go below a score of zero.

The only other conventional way of reducing Madness is to accept a Delirium. After gaining a Delirium the PC must advance a level before accruing any more; the human mind's flexibility is limited. The player may choose when to gain a Delirium but the GM may insist that it have something to do with a recent trauma.

After taking the Delirium the player rolls 1d20; if the roll is equal or greater than their total number of Deliria then the newfound structure and rationalization soothes their mind, subtracting 10 points of Madness from their total. If the roll is *less* than their total number of Deliria, then the fresh insanity just makes everything worse, and 10 points are *added* to the character's Madness.

Deliria come with phobias and compulsions. A character can resist the phobia or compulsion by making a successful Mental Effect saving throw. On a failure, he or she must obey the Delirium unless they are willing to gain 1d6 Madness points for defying the structure they have fashioned to protect their sanity.

Once accrued, Deliria can never be lost. Conventional human psychotherapy can never efface such defensive madness.

SAMPLE DELIRIA

The player may choose from the following list or may suggest a custom Delirium to fit a particular situation. Whatever they suggest should have a phobia or compulsion attached that is at least occasionally troublesome but not liable to derail an entire session in placating their personal madness.

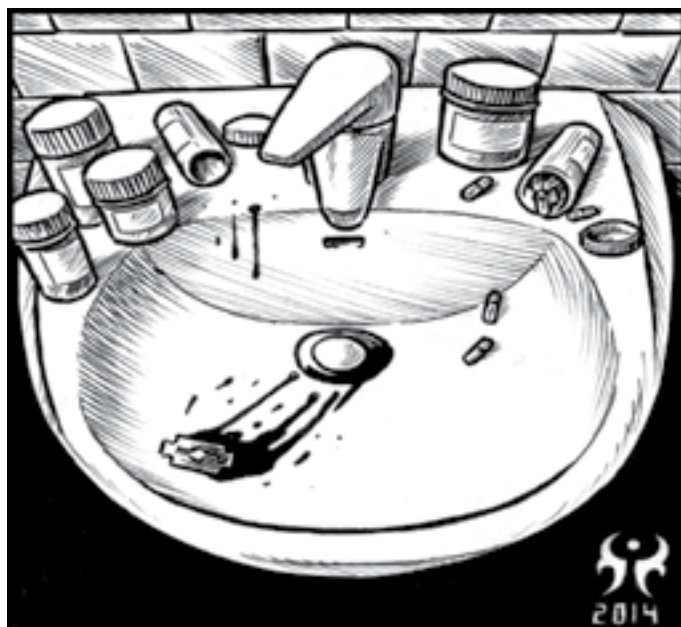
1) *Beast Phobia:* The PC has a horror of natural animals and insects of all varieties, and will flee if confrontation is forced. Eldritch horrors do not trigger this phobia.

2) *Compelled Identity:* The hero suffers a horror of appearing as someone he is not, for fear of his identity slipping away. He cannot adopt disguises or pretend to be something he isn't, and must answer truthfully when asked his name or identity.

3) *Eavesdropper's Dread:* The PC cannot bear to communicate over phone, Internet, or postal service, aware that something awful must be listening. They can talk only face-to-face, though they can bear to ask someone to meet them if they must.

4) *Forced Cooperation:* A particular class of person is able to ask anything of the hero that would require less than a day to perform, short of actions that would force additional Madness. A particular job role, ethnicity, religion, or even gender may trigger this cooperation.

5) *Invincible Truth:* The character reflexively believes everything he is told, unless it is in direct conflict with his senses. While he may be



willing to subordinate his judgment to friends, he is utterly unable to sift spoken truth from lies. In conflict between two statements, he believes the most recently-spoken words.

6) *Personal Ritual:* The PC must spend two hours each day in undisturbed calm to meditate, pray, or propitiate their gods.

7) *Protective Anarchist:* The character is unable to cooperate with governmental authority figures in any way, as they subconsciously associate them with the outer powers. They need not assault such persons, but they will categorically refuse their requests.

8) *Protective Lies:* The character is utterly unable to tell the truth to anyone but a close ally. She cannot bear to reveal any truths about herself or her knowledge for fear of the consequences.

9) *Protective Talisman:* A specific object or clothing no smaller than a fist must always be kept within arm's reach at all times. If the object is lost or destroyed the PC suffers 1d10 Madness and must choose a new talisman to obsess over.

10) *Rigorous Belief:* The character adopts at least three obligations from their faith, such as Judaic kosher laws, the Muslim prayer schedule, or Christian evangelical work. Breaking these laws or omitting their regular performance is traumatic for them.

11) *Treacherous Artifact:* The PC is convinced that a particular class of things— guns, cars, computers or other implement widely important to heroes— is tainted by the outer powers and will not use them under any circumstances. They will allow other teammates to use them on them or drive for them if they must.

12) *Type Phobia:* The PC subconsciously associates a particular type of person with the outer darkness. Policemen, retail clerks, a particular ethnicity, speakers of a particular language, or other large class might qualify. They cannot bear to interact with these people and reflexively flee if forcibly confronted by them.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

Heroes who manage to survive the perils of their investigations can expect to improve in their skills and abilities. Most PCs demonstrate a striking capacity for picking up new skills and improving old ones... possibly since the less gifted among them don't survive long enough to demonstrate their lack of aptitude.

Characters are awarded experience points by the GM for pursuing meaningful goals. Groups that seek to accomplish something important to at least one of their members receive a certain amount of experience points each session whether or not their efforts are actually successful. Even failure can be educational, provided the PCs are able to survive. Once a character has earned enough experience points to gain the next character level, they immediately gain the benefits of the new level, including additional hit points and skill points.

ADJUSTING STATISTICS

When a character advances a level, they gain an additional hit die of hit points. The player rolls both it and their existing hit dice to determine their new total. Their Constitution modifier is applied once for each level of the character. Thus, a 4th level Tough with a +1 Constitution modifier who has just attained 5th level rolls 5d8+5 to determine his new hit point total. If the new total is less than the old, the character retains the old hit point total. A character's hit points never go down when they rise in level.

Characters also automatically lower their Madness total by 10 points to reflect their newfound self-confidence. Madness cannot be lowered below zero. Characters also modify their attack bonus when they advance, adding the bonus given for their class and level— either a +1 bonus or a +0 indicating no change in the score.

Finally, characters add one more point to their maximum Expertise and add any new special abilities for their class and level.



LEVEL ADVANCEMENT

LEVEL	XP NEEDED
1	0
2	2,000
3	4,000
4	8,000
5	16,000
6	32,000
7	64,000
8	128,000
9	256,000
10+	+256,000/level

GAINING SKILL POINTS

When a character rises in level, they gain 4 additional skill points. These points may be saved for later use or spent in learning new skill levels. A skill must be learned from the beginning, so a character who wanted to buy level 2 in a skill belonging to their class would need to spend 1 + 2 + 3 = 6 skill points, and train each level in order. A class' skills are listed on the page describing that class.

A character's skill level is limited by their character level; a PC's maximum level in a skill is equal to 1, plus their level divided by 3, rounded down. A level 4 character can thus have a skill at a maximum of level 2 (1 + 4/3, rounded down).

A character must have a trainer to improve a skill. The trainer must have the desired level of expertise in the skill to be taught. Finding these trainers is relatively simple for common skills, but more esoteric ones might require lengthy searches. Finding a true master of an art may involve extensive adventuring simply to locate a teacher, let alone convince them to instruct a PC.

Once found, the necessary secrets of the art may be taught in one week per level of the skill to be gained. Once those crucial points are mastered, the PC can fill in any other necessary practice on their own.

SKILL LIMITS AND COSTS

SKILL LEVEL	MIN. CHAR. LEVEL	SKILL POINT COST	
		CLASS SKILL	OTHER SKILL
0	1	1	2
1	1	2	3
2	3	3	4
3	6	4	5
4	9	5	6

ADDING A NEW CLASS

Some heroes prefer to expand their range of talents rather than focus on a particular role. A PC can always choose to raise their level in a different class than their original choice, provided they have the first two skills from the class' Bonus Skills list at level-0 competence or better.

These two skills reflect the basic talents expected of any member of the class. An investigator with no aptitude for Research or Perception, for instance, is unlikely to make much of their new ambitions. Other than this skill requirement, there is no special need for a trainer to introduce the character to the new class.

A character who takes a level in a new class adjusts their statistics accordingly. A 4th level Scholar who decides to take a level of Tough becomes a level 4/1 Scholar/Tough, adding +1 to their attack bonus, 1d8 to the hit dice they roll, and gaining the special ability and class skills of a first level Tough. Such a polymath uses the best class saving throw for each category and has a class skill list comprised of the preferred aptitudes of both classes. For example, the character above takes the Physical Effect saving throw of a 1st level Tough, because it is better than what he already has as a 4th level Scholar.

Such a character still counts as a 5th level character for purposes of advancement, XP earning, and any other purpose. A character who spreads their focus widely gains a greater variety of abilities and skills, but usually lacks the superior saving throws and higher-level abilities of a more focused hero.

LEGENDARY HEROES

The experience charts for each class only go up to tenth level. Beyond this point, the PCs are almost more than human, having become remarkable paragons of heroism. Few campaigns ever reach such lofty heights of power— and few heroes survive so long against their eldritch enemies— but if further advancement does seem relevant to your game you may use the following guidelines.

Each level beyond 10th requires an additional 256,000 experience points. When a new level is gained, the PC gains no new hit points but may reroll his existing pool. New skill points and Expertise are earned and Madness totals decrease, but the character's attack bonus, saving throws, and class abilities do not improve.

Instead, at 11th and each odd-numbered level thereafter the PC should gain a new ability tuned to their particular concept and background, one scaled to be roughly as useful as a 10th level power for one of the existing classes. The player may recommend ideas for this new ability, but the GM has the final choice.

For example, a Tough who has led a particularly bloody career of executing cultists from ambush might gain a "Sniper" special ability allowing him to instantly kill an unsuspecting human he shoots from a prepared position. An Investigator with a history of making friends in the local government might instead get a "Friends In High Places" ability that allows him to automatically call in the governmental files on any particular person or event. The GM and player should work together to pick something appropriate for the hero.



INJURY AND HEALING

Despite the best efforts of heroes, no one lives forever. Even the canniest investigator will find herself scored by inhuman claws or riddled by cultist gunfire sooner or later. If she's lucky, she might yet live to flaunt the scars.

Most characters reduced to zero hit points are either dead or mortally wounded. Most such victims are doomed, and they are unable to do more than utter a few poignant last words before messily expiring. For PCs and other remarkably hardy souls, there may yet be a chance to save them.

An ally must be adjacent to the downed ally and spend an action binding their wounds and stopping their bleeding. They must succeed on an Int/Medicine skill check at difficulty 8, plus the number of rounds since the character was felled. Only one character can attempt this check per round on a downed ally, but the attempt can be repeated until the victim either stabilizes or dies six rounds after falling to zero hit points. Use of some medical equipment and pharmaceuticals can assist in this process, but a medic can attempt this desperate battlefield medicine even with improvised tools. Those with no Medicine skill at all may make the attempt at a -1 penalty to their skill check.

Those with access to artifacts of healing or other supernatural sources of aid can heal much more readily. Provided the character has not already bled out, any magical healing will restore them to full capability. For example, a scholar might hurl an ounce of the *Safe-Kept Quintessence of Flesh* at a downed companion, healing 5 points of damage. The hero immediately regains consciousness with 5 hit points and may spend his next round standing up and returning to the fray.

Patients restored without the benefit of magical healing are fragile and barely conscious. Until they come out of their crippled condition they cannot regain hit points through normal rest and recovery. A newly-stabilized character is helpless for 1d6 x 10 minutes. At the end of this period, they may make a Physical Effect saving throw to regain one hit point and return to normal activity.

A failed save leaves them incapacitated for 2d6 days before another attempt at a save can be made, and if this is failed as well, it's 2d6 weeks of bed rest before they can make a third attempt to recover. If this third saving throw is failed, the character will die of his wounds in the next few days unless treated with magical aid.

Physicians can aid characters recuperating from grievous wounds. A successful Int/Medicine skill check against difficulty 9 allows the patient to reroll a failed Physical Effect saving throw. Optionally, the character may accept a permanent scar or mutilation to automatically succeed at a saving throw before it is rolled. The player may pick some appropriate maiming if the GM considers it suitable. Every third such scar permanently reduces an attribute modifier of the character's choice by one point.

NATURAL HEALING

A character able to recuperate in reasonably restful surroundings will slowly regain lost hit points. A well-nourished character who has at least eight hours of rest regains their level in hit points every morning when they wake. If they spend the day doing nothing but resting, they regain additional hit points equal to their level, plus 2 more for every level of Medicine skill possessed by any attending physician they may have.



SILENT LEGIONS QUICK REFERENCE

SKILL CHECKS

When the GM calls for a skill check, roll 2d6 and add your relevant skill level and the modifier of the most appropriate attribute. If you lack even level-0 skill in the activity, take a -1 penalty on the roll. If your total equals or exceeds the check's difficulty, it is a success. If the skill is on the skill list for your class you may attempt one reroll of a failed skill check by spending a point of Expertise.

SAVING THROWS

When the GM calls for a particular type of saving throw to resist a peril, roll 1d20 and compare it to the saving throw number for your class and character level. If equal or greater, you make the saving throw and either resist the threat or lessen its effects. NPCs use the same saving throw target for all rolls, 15 minus half their hit dice, rounded up.

COMBAT

Combats begin with rolling initiative, which is 1d8 plus your Dexterity modifier. The actor with the highest initiative acts first, followed in order by the others. PCs win ties with NPCs. Initiative is only rolled once; after everyone has acted, it cycles back to the top.

On your turn, you may move up to 20 meters and perform an action. If you do nothing but move, you can move up to 40 meters. You can't split your movement. You must take it all before or all after your action. Possible actions include attacking with a readied weapon, using an occult discipline, digging a stowed item out of your pack, tending a downed comrade, or anything else that could plausibly be accomplished in five or six seconds.

To hit a target, roll 1d20 and add the target's armor class, your attack bonus, your Combat skill in the weapon you're using, and your relevant attribute modifier. If you lack even level-0 skill in the weapon, take a -2 penalty to the roll. If your total is 20 or more, you hit the target.

Roll your weapon's damage dice and add your relevant attribute modifier to it to determine how many hit points your target will lose from the blow. At the same time, roll your weapon's Slaughter die. If the die comes up 6 or greater, *triple* the damage done as the weapon strikes a horrific blow. Many supernatural creatures are immune to Slaughtering hits, and take only normal damage.

You cannot freely move away from an enemy engaged in melee with you. If you do not spend your action disengaging, all enemies within melee range get a free melee attack against you if you move away.

ENCUMBRANCE

Encumbrance is measured in items. You may carry as many readied items as half your strength, rounded down, and as many stowed items as your full strength score. Readied items may be used instantly as part of an action, while stowed items require a round to dig them out.

Some items count as more than one for encumbrance purposes, and some items can be bundled together to count as only a single one for purposes of their burden.

INJURY AND HEALING

Most targets die at zero hit points. PCs become mortally wounded, and will die in six rounds. If an ally reaches them in the same round they may attempt an Int/Medicine skill check to staunch the bleeding, rolling against difficulty 8. This difficulty increases by 1 each round after the first. Only one character can attempt to give aid each round. Success leaves the PC stable but unconscious. Sorcerous healing will instantly restore a downed PC if it brings their hit points above zero. PCs do not go into "negative hit points"; a 10 hit point blow against a PC with 4 hit points will reduce them to 0 hit points. PCs who are not recuperating from a mortal wound regain their level in hit points each morning when they wake.

MADNESS

Characters gain Madness when exposed to traumatic or eldritch events and entities. There are three categories for Madness—Bloodshed, Horror, and Occult. A character who accumulates 100 Madness points becomes permanently, hopelessly insane. A character can gain no more Madness in a single situation than the worst possible roll for the worst stimulus. Thus, killing a half-dozen cultists in a single event incurs no more than 6 Madness if the PC has already murdered someone. If this is her first kill, however, it can incur as much as 20, because the trauma of murdering their first human being creates a much greater potential shock. A hero becomes impervious to a specific type of monster's horrors after suffering the maximum possible Madness from encountering them—8 points for a 1d8 monster, for example.

MADNESS COSTS

BLOODSHED EVENTS	COST
Being reduced to zero hit points by injury	1d8
Intentionally killing a human being for the first time	1d20
Killing additional humans not in immediate self-defense	1d6
Willingly Inflicting intentional, severe but non-fatal violence	1
Witnessing a scene of gruesome human slaughter	1d6
Suffering mutilation or torture	1d8
Indirectly killing many people by action or omission	1d10
First time that week that the PC is reduced to half hit points	1d4
Witnessing the violent death of a friend or close ally	1d8
HORROR EVENTS	
Being affected by a hostile magical effect.	1d6
Witnessing a rationally impossible event or object	1d6
Abandoning living allies to cultists or otherworldly entities	1d8
Beholding an eldritch abomination or alien entity	Varies
Failing in efforts to stop a large-scale cult plan	Varies
Witnessing a magical cult ritual	1d6
Learning of a horrible fate for a friend or close ally	1d8
OCCULT EVENTS	
Casting a spell or using a discipline without Expertise	Varies



SORCERY

ARCANE RITUALS AND ELDRITCH ARTS

Behind the soothing rationality of comprehensible cause and effect, there is a different law. Beneath the familiar skin of the world there is the alien flesh and blood of a stranger creation. Sorcerous knowledge is not a science as humans understand the word, nor an art that responds to mortal sensibilities. It is a cold and inexplicable force that surges in ways only dimly understandable by human wizards.

Magic is not of this world. Tapping into its power and directing its effects are things that human minds were never intended to do. Exposure to the deranged laws of sorcery and the alien mental configurations necessary to channel its power is inevitably damaging to a sorcerer's sanity, and the most accomplished and capable of its users are invariably sunk into catastrophic madness.

Yet despite these dangers, a certain kind of hero will inevitably be drawn to its powers. Magic is a tool against the outer gods, a way to confront them on their own terms, with their own implements. Supernatural entities can be defeated, malicious sendings turned back, and unholy forces broken by the right spell at the right time. Yet this does not make the cost any less, or the use of these powers any safer for a sorcerer with noble motives.

In this chapter the details of magical spells and occult disciplines will be revealed for players and GMs. Not every GM will want to run a campaign where magic plays a significant role for PCs, but for those who wish to make sorcery a viable path for a character, the information in this chapter will allow for it.

THE NATURE OF SORCERY

What humans call "magic" is simply the way in which they approach interactions with the deeper, stranger powers that order the universe. Conventional science and rationality are human constructs, products of human perceptions and a very mortal understanding of the world. The sorcerer moves beyond these comforting delusions to deal with the true powers that boil beneath the surface of the waking world.

These powers are, by definition, incomprehensible to humans. Mortal minds were simply not made to understand the vast and titanic significance of these energies, or comprehend the way in which they might be efficiently controlled and directed. Human sorcerers fumble at the hem of God's robe, using fragmentary knowledge and imagined patterns to get results that have some perceptible significance in the mundane world. These adepts may be able to produce effects, but they do not really understand them.

This fundamental gap between magic and the human mind is one reason why so many rituals require horrific, inhuman actions as part of their employment. It is not that magic is intrinsically malevolent, or that there is some greater power that seeks the damnation of mortals in exchange for its favor. It is simply that in order to put one's mind in the correct frame for wielding these energies that mind must be effaced of its humanity. Only by the intentional violation of every concept of human conscience and morality can the correct frame of awareness be obtained.

Unsurprisingly, this means that most sorcerers are damned. Only those who restrict themselves to the weakest and most superficial magics can afford to go without the atrocities and inhuman self-destruction that greater powers require. PC wizards might come to have an impressive array of spells at their disposal if they are willing to suffer the Madness that comes from such knowledge, but they refuse to perform the kind of acts that would give them the key to true power.

Aside from magical rituals, there are also eldritch gifts of a more personal nature, powers and innate abilities that can be gained by practitioners versed in their secrets. As with conventional sorcery, these disciplines are mere tatters and shadows of the deeper forces of the world, but even their fragmentary understanding allows an adept to perform miracles of supernatural power.

PLAYER CHARACTERS AND MAGIC

In most campaigns that allow PC magicians and adepts of the occult disciplines, the only way to learn these arts is to find a teacher or capture an occult grimoire. Magical abilities are never available at character creation unless the GM specifically allows it, and some GMs may wish to disallow wizards entirely.

In the same fashion, not all of the spells or disciplines listed here might be available in any given campaign world. Discovering the truth about a particular power might require significant PC effort to track down a cooperative tutor or discover that the vaunted powers of some sage are nothing more than lies and chicanery. There is nothing in these pages that is promised to a character.

Still, GMs should be clear in the early days of a campaign as to whether or not such magic is a possibility for PCs. Given the open sandbox nature of *Silent Legions*, the players might choose to spend many sessions of effort in finding teachers for their desired arts. If such a cause is hopeless from the start, the players should learn as much after short investigation rather than ten sessions in.

SPELLS AND DISCIPLINES

Spells are specific rites and incantations which produce a useful effect. Spells are not suitable for being cast in the roil of combat or on short notice; even the most trivial spell requires at least ten minutes of chanting, meditation, or ritual performance before it can be invoked. Spells require great mental focus if they are not to erode the wielder's sanity, and even beneficial spells sometimes make demands on the minds of those they help.

Spells are divided into levels, with the simplest rituals being level one, and the most complicated and dreadful sorceries at level five. A student can master spells of any level, but casting ones beyond his degree of skill can have devastating consequences for his sanity.

Disciplines are particular occult techniques and abilities that are cultivated by a disciplined set of practices and meditations. While much more rigid and specific in effect than sorcery, disciplines can often be used on short notice and with little more than a moment's focus. As with sorcery, however, the wielder must have the presence of mind to maintain their focus, as careless use of these disciplines will inevitably add to their Madness.

Both spells and disciplines require a tutor for their mastery, but spells require only a gain of Madness to learn, while disciplines require the expenditure of skill points to master.

The spells and disciplines listed in this chapter are among the "grayest" of the occult arts, and represent only a small portion of the mass of occult enlightenment. Most sorcery and most disciplines are utterly and catastrophically corrosive to human sanity. Simply learning most of these "black" arts requires trespasses against human decency so profound and so hideous that the adept can hardly be called human after doing such things. Such arts are often more powerful and more effective than the spells and disciplines listed here, but no player character could function as a PC after doing the things they must do to master them.

All magic is tied to the outer darkness. There is no such thing as "white magic", no art that is harmless or pure or derived from some wholesome source. There is only the distinction between magic that is dangerous and magic that is damnable.

LEARNING SPELLS

Spells can be studied from occult grimoires containing detailed descriptions of the rites and propitiations necessary to invoke the magic, provided that the student is fluent in the language of the tome. A skilled sorcerer can also teach his comrades the necessary steps for casting the spell.

A student must possess at least level-0 Occult proficiency and spend one week per level of the spell in study or instruction. No special materials are necessary for this study, but the pupil must have calm and security in which to perform his labors. Only one student can learn from a given book or instructor at a time. A student can learn any spell for which they have a source of instruction, even if the incantation is too powerful for them to cast without repercussions.

Learning a spell requires an Int/Occult skill check against a difficulty equal to 6 plus the level of the spell. If learning from a teacher rather than a book, the teacher may add their own Occult skill as a bonus to the roll. On a failure, the student cannot learn that spell from that book or that instructor until one of them raises their Occult skill. A different volume or a different teacher may be able to instruct them where the first failed, however, and some magical tomes may be so comprehensive that they grant bonuses on the roll to learn the spell, or even impart it automatically to a student.

Even attempting to learn a spell is noxious to the student's sanity, and 1 point of Madness is always gained from any attempt to learn a spell. If the spell is mastered successfully, an additional number of points of Madness are gained equal to the level of the spell.

A student can learn as many spells as their circumstances and tolerance for Madness will allow.

LEARNING DISCIPLINES

Disciplines are studied and mastered just as if they were class skills. An acolyte must spend 1 skill point and one month of study to master the discipline at level-0 and gains 5 Madness points in the process due to the alien concepts that must be mastered. Learning a discipline is automatic with a source of instruction.

Once the discipline is learned to level-0, further levels may be mastered with time and additional skill point expenditure. Most disciplines contain within their first principles the seeds of further elaboration, so new tutors are not required for additional levels—just a further month of study for each additional level of mastery. The discipline is treated just as if it were a class skill, including maximum levels allowed for a character. Thus, to fully master a discipline at level-4 requires that the student be a 9th level character.

A character who has no free skill points available when a tutor is acquired may "spend ahead", and gain level-0 mastery at the cost of one skill point taken from his next level's allotment. A character can "spend ahead" on only one discipline at a time.

CASTING SPELLS

Unless the spell description states otherwise, invoking a spell requires ten minutes per spell level. The caster must have certain small tokens or implements to hand, such as candles, powders, or amulets. These items do not count for encumbrance purposes, and the caster is assumed to have them available unless he has been specifically stripped of his tools.

A caster requires focus for his invocations. Physical injury or the disruption of the ritual preparations will automatically cause the spell to fail, though any Expertise or Madness costs still apply.

When manifesting the eldritch powers of the sorcery, the caster must either spend one Expertise point or gain Madness equal to the spell's level. An invoker without the mental discipline and calm necessary to shut out the ravaging visions that sorcery brings must face the gradual erosion of his sanity.



If the caster is invoking a spell of a higher level than their own Occult skill, they must also make an Int/Occult skill check at a difficulty equal to 6 plus the level of the spell. If the check fails, they may either allow the spell to dissipate uselessly or gain additional Madness equal to the spell's level to force it into existence. They cannot spend Expertise in place of this price. Dabbling with powers beyond their skill to master is always a risk to their sanity.

RITUAL ITEMS AND ARCANES CONNECTIONS

Some spells create magical items, such as powders, seals, amulets, or other tokens which can later be used to sorcerous effects. Many of these tokens can be used by others, including allies trusted to wield them. Whatever the effect, a sorcerer can have no more of these lasting tokens active at once than the sum of their Scholar level, their Intelligence modifier, and their Occult skill. Thus, a 3rd level Scholar with an Intelligence modifier of +1 and the Occult-2 skill could have at most 6 such items available at any one time.

The sorcerer can “deactivate” a held item at any time to reclaim the invested energy. If they lose the item, they must undertake a much more laborious process of draining it remotely which will require a full month. These magical items have a portion of the sorcerer's own power imparted to them as part of the ritual, and can continue to function even after his death. Use of such found relics can be more than slightly hazardous, however, if their creator intended for them to be used by expendable minions.

Other spells require an *arcane connection* in order to function. Such an arcane connection might be a lock of hair, a drop of blood or other bodily fluid, or a close personal possession such as a wedding ring or a favorite weapon. Any ritual item also serves as an arcane connection with its creator, which leaves many sorcerers quite careful about where they leave their occult workings.

Arcane connections must be handled carefully if their potency is to be preserved; a sorcerer can possess only one arcane connection from a given person at a time. Thus, it is not possible to build up a “stockpile” of connections with a target. Any character can collect an arcane connection for a wizard, but they must be put in the wizard's hands soon after or they risk losing their potency— or worse, they might imprint on the ally who handled them too long.

USING DISCIPLINES

Disciplines are much quicker to use than spells, though they come with similar costs. In order to activate a discipline's abilities, a character must either spend one Expertise or gain Madness equal to their level of the discipline plus one. Thus, if a psychic wished to activate her Telepathy-3 ability, she would either have to spend one Expertise or gain 4 Madness from the strain. The more advanced their mastery, the more dangerous it becomes to use it carelessly.

Activating a discipline is a free action and can be done defensively as a response to an attack if the power is protective in nature. A discipline functions for fifteen minutes after activation, unless its description indicates otherwise. At the end of that time the user must pay to activate it again if she wishes to keep it functioning.

A character truly dedicated to a discipline may learn to keep it permanently available at a substantial cost in Expertise and Madness. With a month's effort, the level-0 ability of a discipline may be made permanently available by gaining 10 Madness and permanently expending an Expertise point. This expenditure permanently lowers the character's maximum pool of Expertise. Mastering each level after level-0 costs an additional 5 Madness, but no further Expertise. Such permanent abilities may be triggered at will by the adept, though she must continue to pay to activate levels above those which she has already mastered.

SPELLS OF THE GRAY PATH

	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
1	<i>Bending the Heart of the King</i>	<i>Converse With the Ancestors</i>	<i>Binding the Crimson Sword</i>	<i>Eyes of the Distant Mind</i>	<i>Band of Unhindered Escape</i>
2	<i>The Circle of Inward Eyes</i>	<i>Dust of Scouring False Seeming</i>	<i>Binding Shut the Way</i>	<i>Incantation of the Thrice-Shared Eye</i>	<i>The Little House Without Windows</i>
3	<i>Distant Seal of Alarm</i>	<i>Friendship of the Ones Behind</i>	<i>The Black Lamp</i>	<i>Kill the Weakness of the Soul</i>	<i>The Pandect of Light</i>
4	<i>The Red Expurgation of the Sword</i>	<i>The Merciful Rack of Ibn Baraka</i>	<i>Cleansing Light of the Dawn</i>	<i>The Mists of Unveiled Knowing</i>	<i>The Ravenous Worms of Hazai</i>
5	<i>Rite of Censing the Crooked Road</i>	<i>The Messengers of the Air</i>	<i>The Seal of the Yellowed Fang</i>	<i>The Scourging Seal of Solomon</i>	<i>Rite of the Wetted Knife</i>
6	<i>The Safe-Kept Quintessence of Flesh</i>	<i>The Seal of the Drowned Kings</i>	<i>The Sign of the King</i>	<i>The Vermilion Mark of Sanctity</i>	<i>Stealing the Road to Hell</i>
7	<i>Sigil of the Righteous Threshold</i>	<i>Truths Written in Red</i>	<i>The Staff of Turning Back the Way</i>		
8	<i>The Silvered Blade of Sacrifice</i>	<i>Unsealing the Vault of Wisdom</i>	<i>The Walker Beneath the Earth</i>		
9	<i>The Walker Beneath the Moon</i>				
10	<i>Whispers of the Scribe</i>				

BAND OF UNHINDERED ESCAPE

LEVEL 5

Though a series of sanity-taxing mental evolutions and the weaving of a circlet of some pliable material the sorcerer is capable of capturing a brief moment of timelessness within the palm-wide ring. When the ring is broken, the fragment of temporal stasis briefly expands to bubble the user and all their allies within ten meters. For 1d4+1 rounds they are outside the flow of time and may act unhindered.

Interacting with objects still immured in time is dangerous, however, as the dissonance of perception is damaging to human sanity. Manipulating a time-frozen object inflicts 1d8 Madness on the person who does so. Living creatures cannot be manipulated or harmed as their consciousness anchors them beyond the reach of the sorcery. When the spell ends, the ring's user and their allies all suffer 1d4 Madness as the tide of time rushes back in around them.

BENDING THE HEART OF THE KING

LEVEL 1

An arcane connection and a brief ritual of invocation combine to grant the sorcerer influence over the mind of a human target. When the spell is complete the arcane connection crumbles or turns to ash and the target suddenly conceives a feeling of affection and friendship toward a subject chosen by the sorcerer. If the target has not met the subject before, they will feel unusual benevolence at their first meeting.

This affection is not unreasoning or self-destructive, but the target will do anything for the subject that he might do for a friend. The spell will last until the subject does something to offend the target. This spell cannot kindle friendship toward a subject who is already despised by the target or who would be thoroughly unacceptable to them.

BINDING THE CRIMSON SWORD

LEVEL 3

This incantation ensorcells a weapon to mystically bind it to its owner. It requires the participation of the person who will eventually wield the weapon and 1d6 hit points worth of their blood. It functions only on melee or thrown weapon, and is of no use on bows or firearms.

A bound weapon will never break until its owner dies or the magic is undone, whereupon it will immediately shatter. The wielder always has an intuitive sense of the weapon's location and distance. Such bound weapons also count as magical for purposes of inflicting Slaughtering hits on unnatural creatures. Each Slaughtering hit against such unholy creatures saps some of the wielder's vital force, however, and inflicts 1d4 damage on the bearer.

Only the chosen wielder can use the bound weapon. Anyone else who attempts to use it will find that it invariably misses or goes dangerously astray in true, life-or-death combat, even if it appears to perform admirably when wielded in less mortal circumstances.

BINDING SHUT THE WAY

LEVEL 3

An intricate pattern of markings and anointments can be used to seal shut a Way that leads into an otherworldly Kelipah. Once sealed, only extensive rituals and painstaking sacrifices can pry open the gate once more, though a sorcerer can always undo his own Binding.

Cults often make use of Ways to gain aid from alien realms and jealously defend their left-hand roads. Those without access to skilled sorcerers are unlikely to be able to pry open a Way that has been sealed by a hero using this sorcery.

THE BLACK LAMP

LEVEL 3

A simple bowl of oil and a floating wick is sufficient to fabricate the Black Lamp, though any illuminating device can serve in necessity. The ritual requires the participation of all who are to benefit by the lamp's effect, though only the caster suffers any Madness gain the spell might produce.

Once created, the Black Lamp can be lit to illumine the area around the holder with an invisible radiance. The lamp gives no mundane light, but instead reveals the presence of sorcery or standing magical effects. Enchanted objects are made obvious, as are people under the influence of a sorcerer's spells.

Only those who participated in the lamp's creation can see this illumination, which appears as a pale fire limning ensorcelled subjects. No special information is given as to the nature of the spells it detects. The effects of the lamp's enchantment last from the first time it is lit until it is extinguished or runs out of fuel.

THE CIRCLE OF INWARD EYES

LEVEL 1

By the virtue of certain incantations, inked diagrams, and subtle perturbations of thought, the sorcerer is able to detect the presence or absence of enchantment on a particular item or place. If an associated Wis/Occult skill check beats a difficulty of 7, he can determine whether or not the magic was emplaced by a human. If the roll beats difficulty 8, he can also gain a crude idea of its relative power, and if the roll beats difficulty 10 the GM will provide a three-word description of the magic's general effect.

CLEANSING LIGHT OF THE DAWN

LEVEL 3

Lit candles, censings, and the dispersion of certain apotropaic amulets can drive out hostile sorcery from an area, lifting curses and banishing evil influences. A location affected by the *Cleansing Light of the Dawn* is useless for cult rituals for a duration of one month per level of Occult skill possessed by the practitioner. Malevolent magical effects are dispelled unless they are being actively sustained by a particular artifact or entity, and any curses on the place are broken unless they have been placed by an envoy of the outer gods or other malefactor of similar power. The entity who placed a curse or miasma on an area is always granted a brief glimpse of the sorcerer who casts this spell, however.

This spell is sufficient to cleanse a single house, monument, cromlech, hilltop, or other specific geographic location.

CONVERSE WITH THE ANCESTORS

LEVEL 2

This dubious incantation allows the sorcerer to ask certain questions of a skull and receive answers as if from its original owner. The older the skull, however, the more likely the answers will be subverted by dark and mischievous powers.

On the spell's completion, up to one question per level of Occult skill may be asked of the skull, which will answer each with no more than three words. For each question, the GM secretly rolls 1d10. If the roll

is equal or less than the number of years the skull's owner has been dead, sinister entities will twist the skull's answers to ones deceptive and troublesome to the sorcerer. Once evil spirits have taken control of the skull all further answers will be perverted, regardless of additional castings of the spell.

DISTANT SEAL OF ALARM

LEVEL 1

A palm-sized sketching of dust and blood opens a spiritual eye on a convenient surface. If any creature larger than a cat comes within 10 meters of the eye, a brief vision will overtake the sorcerer's senses and show him everything within the eye's field of view. The vision lasts a minimum of one round, but can be prolonged as much as five minutes per level of Occult skill. The sorcerer is unable to act while gripped by the vision, but may end it prematurely. The ritual marking dissipates into a fine tracery of ash once it has been triggered.

The eye cannot be moved once it has been inscribed without ending the spell. Creatures present during the eye's inscription will not trigger the eye, nor will intruders who are invisible to mundane senses or screened from it by obstacles.

DUST OF SCOURING FALSE SEEMING

LEVEL 2

A powder of herbs and mirror-glass can be prepared as a tool of revelation. When this dust is hurled at a target within three meters, the subject must immediately save versus Magic or show their true appearance, bereft of disguises and illusions. If the target has more than one natural form, the least human is revealed. The creature cannot conceal its true nature again for half an hour.

While potent, this dust is less effective the more deceived bystanders there are to doubt the initial transformation. For each witness who is certain the target really is a what they seem to be, the subject gets a +1 bonus to their saving throw. Thus, the target must usually be caught alone or in a very small group of misguided companions if the dust is to have any effect.



SORCERY

EYES OF THE DISTANT MIND

LEVEL 4

By means of a fist-sized lump of earth or fragment of a building, the sorcerer can cast her senses over far distances to scry remote locations. The scrying can focus on any location within two hundred meters of the place where the fragment or earth was taken. While locked in her distant observations the sorcerer is completely oblivious to her surroundings and may even die without realizing her peril.

Certain exotic substances and eldritch rites can ward a place from scrying, but such defenses are in place only in the oldest and most magic-cankered strongholds. A sorcerer can see and hear all within line of sight of their chosen scrying point, but lengthy use of this magic is dangerous. For each half-hour spent scrying in a week after the first thirty minutes, the sorcerer must save versus Magic or suffer 1d4 Madness from the dissociation of her senses.

FRIENDSHIP OF THE ONES BEHIND

LEVEL 2

This sorcery requires perfect darkness for its performance. If light intrudes at any time during the ritual or while waiting for its completion the spell will fail entirely and the sorcerer and all present will gain 1d8 Madness from shapes and sensory artifacts they briefly glimpse in the wake of its passing.

True summoning spells are the province of black sorcery and inevitably damnable to the human mind. This spell is less direct, invoking the aid of certain powers to bring the sorcerer any small object he might wish, provided that he knows its location and that it is not guarded by lock, ward, eye or hand. A coffer hurled into a lake could be retrieved if its general location was known, as could an artifact dropped down a pit or a rare tome carelessly tossed into a landfill. If the object is not being guarded or kept by its owner, it will invariably be brought to the sorcerer before the next sunrise. The spell can call forth any such object that the sorcerer can lift with his own hands.



INCANTATION OF THE THRICE-SHARED EYE

LEVEL 4

This incantation places a seal upon a band of companions, binding them together in a standing sorcery. So long as the sorcerer continues to tend the magic, up to seven allies can be woven together in a psychic bond. Those who participate in this bond can communicate telepathically at any distance and all have an intuitive subconscious sense of the location, health, and current emotional state of their comrades. Such a group cannot be surprised unless all its members are taken by surprise, and when rolling for initiative the best roll is applied to all its members.

The spell can be maintained indefinitely by a sorcerer, though it counts against her maximum number of standing enchantments.

KILL THE WEAKNESS OF THE SOUL

LEVEL 4

Fear, revulsion, and pity are extinguished by this grim rite. It can be performed only upon a willing recipient and cannot be placed upon the caster. While under its effects, the subject is incapable of feeling fear or mercy and suffers no Madness gain from Bloodshed causes. Horror and the Occult will still add Madness to their total as their reason twists and strains under the pressure of the spell.

Those under the influence of this spell are extremely pliant to the caster's wishes, and will obey any commands short of suicide. Their flat affect and subtle mental miasma unnerves other humans, and they will invariably fail any social skill checks and inspire negative reactions in those around them. The ritual ends with the dawn, whereupon the subject immediately forgets everything they have done and learned while under the effect of the spell.

THE LITTLE HOUSE WITHOUT WINDOWS

LEVEL 5

By careful manipulation of tones and colors, the sorcerer can imbue a fist-sized token with the ability to conjure up a portal into a strange demi-Kelipah. Expending its magic requires only a single round's action. The portal is imperceptible to all save sorcerously-augmented detection and can admit any number of guests until the sorcerer enters, after which it seals itself from all intrusion. The ritual lasts until the sorcerer leaves the Little House, whereupon the portal closes. Anything left within the Little House is doomed to be lost forever in its winding maze of passages.

The pocket dimension itself consists of an endless series of featureless gray chambers of varying shapes and dimensions, unlit save for whatever illumination may be brought into the place. Living creatures within the Kelipah do not grow hungry, thirsty, or weary, and any such afflictions brought into the house are eliminated. Those within the Little House continue to age, and wounds heal at their normal rate while within the house. Such healing comes in uncanny, unwholesome ways, with torn flesh slowly flowing back together as if it was a viscous fluid.

Time passes at a normal rate within the Little House, and those within can leave at any time through the portal, assuming they do not become lost within the realm's endless chambers. The constant exposure to the alien surroundings erodes human sanity, however, inflicting 1 point of Madness for every day it is occupied after the first.



THE MERCIFUL RACK OF IBN BARAKA LEVEL 2

This ritual must be performed on a tightly-restrained subject, as the excruciating spiritual torment of the rite would otherwise result in unacceptable disruption. The caster inflicts a sequence of unendurable words and psychic agonies upon the target, prying loose the effects of possession or magical mental compulsions.

Both victim and caster may make saving throws versus Mental Effect; if either succeed on their saving throw, the victim is freed of any possession or mind-affecting enchantment placed by anything less than a servant-entity of an outer god. The experience of the agony inflicts 1d8 Madness on the victim, however, and if the spell fails or proves useless, the caster also suffers 1d8 Madness in horror at their own futile actions.

THE MESSENGERS OF THE AIR LEVEL 2

By touching an arcane connection during the invocation of this spell, the sorcerer is able to open a brief window of two-way mental communication with the subject. A telepathic conversation can be maintained for up to ten minutes. The caster's words have no power to compel the target, but the subject cannot shut them out. Ordinarily, this spell does not expend an arcane connection, allowing for multiple uses of the ritual.

If the sorcerer is willing to use up the connection, a psychic compulsion can be implanted in the target to come to the location where the ritual was used. They may make a Mental Effect saving throw to resist the call, but if they fail, they find themselves inexorably drawn to the place by the fastest means they can safely employ. They do not know exactly where they are going, but only the direction and the wordless need to hurry. They may choose to bring companions, but will tolerate no delay in order to summon them.

THE MISTS OF UNVEILED KNOWING LEVEL 4

This divination requires substantial bloodshed. The area to be scryed must be dotted with flecks of the caster's own blood during the ritual, with the center most heavily anointed. The spell affects a circle when complete; each three meters of radius requires 1d4 hit points of blood to be spilt. Damage is rolled after the spell's circle is chosen, and may result in the caster's incapacitation or death.

Once the spell is cast the blood begins to sublimate into a thick red mist, coagulating into a recreation of the most emotionally-freighted events to have occurred in the area within the recent past. The mist is soundless, but the precision of the images created is perfect enough to distinguish individuals and fine details of objects. The caster can guide the event to be recreated if he knows what image he wishes to conjure, but otherwise the mist recreates the most recent emotionally-significant moment in the area.

The images begin at the start of the event and continue for as long as the caster can continue chanting. At the spell's completion the blood shed has evaporated completely, leaving no trace behind.

THE PANDECT OF LIGHT LEVEL 5

This mighty ward is very dangerous to the caster, but it is sovereign against all but the worst of eldritch abominations. It requires almost an hour to mark the patterns and angles necessary to evoke its power, but once the pandect is in place no supernatural entity can enter the area that has been so warded.

A single pandect can protect an entire building as large as a mansion or a circular zone as much as thirty meters in diameter. So long as the lines and diagrams at the center remain undisturbed, no occult entity can cross the barrier. Possessed entities are barred by the ward, and

SORCERY

hostile magic sent into the pandect allows the caster to roll a saving throw versus Magic to automatically disperse the sending. Humans are not blocked by the pandect unless they have been physically altered by alien influences.

While the pandect is relatively safe to raise, lowering it is extremely dangerous. The caster must vent the energy of the sorcery through his own flesh, resulting in 5d6 damage with a Magic saving throw for half damage. If the pandect is brought down suddenly by the defacement of its central sigils the caster takes the damage automatically with no possible saving throw.

THE RAVENOUS WORMS OF HAZAI LEVEL 5

Preparation for this ritual involves the creation of a small clay manikin etched with enigmatic sigils. The spell is activated when the manikin is broken, whether or not it is done intentionally.

The ground within three meters of the broken idol immediately boils with half-substantial worms, the creatures rising up even from solid stone to voraciously consume all flesh within the area. Corpses are completely devoured within a round, as are objects of leather or hair. Living creatures suffer 3d6 damage from the worms for each round they remain within the area, and humans gain 1d6 Madness from the sensation of the gnawing mouths during the first round of effect.

Such hunger comes at a price. The creator of the idol suffers 1d6 damage each round in order to contain the worms to the circle. They may end the spell at any time after the first round, but if they are killed or rendered incapacitated while the spell is in effect the circle of the spell will expand by 20 meters in radius each round for 1d4 rounds before fading away.

THE RED EXPURGATION OF THE SWORD LEVEL 1

There are times when a sorcerer's minions— or comrades, for those who make the distinction— are wounded and in need of quicker repair than nature allows. Wounds and injuries are driven out by the spell, with one subject affected for every ten minutes of incantation. The sorcerer can include himself in the effect.

The "gentler" version of the incantation speeds the subject's natural healing process, allowing them to regain 1d6+1 hit points for each of the subject's experience levels with a full night's rest. The flesh and mending produced by the spell feels "wrong" to the subject, however, as if it were someone else's tissue grafted upon their body, and someone else's blood whispering in their veins. The sensation inflicts 2 points of Madness whenever this rite is received.

The harsher, quicker use of the charm allows wounds to be forced closed and vitality restored with growths of scaly, unnatural tissue left behind and subtle tumors forming in the subject's flesh. These tumors whisper to the subject, reassuring them that everything is fine and that nothing is wrong with their body.

The process heals 2d6+2 hit points for every level of Occult possessed by the caster, and the tissue and tumors fade within a week, but the whispers and the trauma inflict 1d4+1 Madness on the target.

While this spell is potent for restoring physical injuries and the damage of wounds, it does nothing to drive out sicknesses, poisons, or other deleterious effects.

RITE OF CENSING THE CROOKED ROAD LEVEL 1

A wisp of delicate smoke is called up from a candle flame or other open fire, the smoke wending toward and shrouding any Kelipot gates or other dimensional anomalies within thirty meters of the flame. The rite can detect even invisible or quiescent portals, but gives no sign as to how they may be opened or closed.

RITE OF THE WETTED KNIFE LEVEL 5

This potent rite allows the sorcerer to warp a particular weapon to more perfectly harm a supernatural creature. A specific type or species of creature must be designated in the rite, and the weapon in question must have been used to strike such a monster before, even if it did no harm. The spell will work on any form of weapon, including firearms, bows, and hurled weaponry.

Once enchanted, the weapon will be able to harm and Slaughter that kind of creature even if usually ineffective against it. Furthermore, it may roll its Slaughter die twice, taking the higher for purposes of inflicting Slaughtering hits. The enchantment lasts until the sorcerer chooses to end it. A single weapon cannot be enchanted to harm more than one type of creature.

THE SAFE-KEPT QUINTESSENCE OF FLESH LEVEL 1

A forethoughtful sorcerer can sustain her allies with this ritual, which allows her to preserve a small portion of their blood against later need. Each use of this spell requires a cooperative subject and a small measure of blood. Assorted powders are mixed with the blood and dried into a hundred grams of rust-red dust. The entire process requires a full hour to complete.

When this powder is later cast over the original donor, their wounds and injuries are patched with a soft, pale tissue that has a vaguely fungal character. Exhaustion and bruises vanish and the subject is filled with a strange, otherworldly vigor. The dust heals 1d8 lost hit points plus two more for every level of Occult possessed by its creator. The sensations produced by the flesh and vitality are deeply disturbing, however, and the subject automatically gains 1 point of Madness. The flesh retains its pale, fungal appearance for several days afterwards.

Use of the powder requires only a single action, but only one dose can be applied each round. The powder keeps indefinitely, though dampness will return it to a fetid slick of decaying blood.

THE SCOURGING SEAL OF SOLOMON LEVEL 4

This rite involves the production of a clay disc no larger than a man's palm, the surface covered tightly with intricate patterns and sigils. When first fashioned, the seal is inert. To use it, a character must put it down and spill 1d4 hit points worth of their own blood on the uppermost surface.

If placed with one side uppermost, the seal creates a barrier against supernatural entities and monstrous abominations. Such creatures cannot come within ten meters of the seal without breaking the ward, which requires a successful saving throw versus Magic which may only be attempted once an hour. Even if the ward is successfully broken, the creature that breaks it will suffer 2d6 damage for every level of Occult its creator possesses. Creatures already within the seal's range when it is triggered are forced to flee to the edge of the area affected, and the seal is automatically broken if they cannot.

If the seal is placed with the obverse side uppermost, no ward is created—instead, the seal damage triggers automatically on the first supernatural being to enter the protected area. The seal's power lasts until the disc is moved or the ward breaks.

THE SEAL OF THE DROWNED KINGS LEVEL 2

This ritual requires certain marks to be painted upon the throats of those who are to be affected by the power. Up to five allies of the caster may be affected by this rite, which will persist for twenty-four hours if not renewed earlier.

While under the protection of the seal, a subject is capable of breathing and seeing normally while underwater. They and their possessions are impervious to aquatic temperature and pressure changes, and they may swim and act at their full normal rate of movement. If the marks on their throats are intentionally effaced, the spell will end instantly for them.

THE SEAL OF THE YELLOWED FANG LEVEL 3

A bestial claw or fang is required for this ritual, which involves the careful adornment of the object with certain forgotten sigils which are sovereign over the wild creatures of the world.

When the token is presented forcefully to a natural animal it will become docile and obedient, understanding commands as if it had human intelligence and performing any service not utterly contrary to its nature. This obedience will last for one hour per level of Occult skill possessed by the sorcerer.

The token functions only once before it crumbles away, though it will affect up to a half-dozen creatures of the same kind if it is presented to a pack or hunting flock.

SIGIL OF THE RIGHTEOUS THRESHOLD LEVEL 1

A small clay amulet may be imbued with a great power of binding with this simple incantation. When the amulet is later placed above a door, sealed container, window, or other physical portal the

entrance will become impassible for anyone save the caster and his chosen companions. The door or container may be broken down by conventional means, in which case the amulet collapses to dust, as it does when the sorcerer chooses to end the spell.

THE SIGN OF THE KING LEVEL 3

An arcane connection serves to open a path for the sorcerer's will with this spell, which can reach over any distance to influence the mind of its target. When the sorcerer burns or destroys the connection as part of the ritual she may compel its source to perform any one act not wholly contrary to their nature.

If the act is one that would be uncharacteristic for the target, they may make a saving throw versus Mental Effect to resist the compulsion.

THE SILVERED BLADE OF SACRIFICE LEVEL 1

A small ritual blade may be transformed by this spell, imbuing it with the power to exchange blood for strength. When used upon a willing or helpless living human subject the knife will draw 1d4 hit points of blood from the target to imbue the wielder with an unnatural vitality.

This vitality must be expended within the hour, and may be used to reroll any one unsuccessful hit roll, Physical Effect saving throw, or physical skill check. The recipient of this strength automatically gains 1 Madness point from the uncanny touch of the power. The knife's enchantment fades after the first time it is used.

THE STAFF OF TURNING BACK THE WAY LEVEL 3

A slim rod is imbued with potent apotropaic power by this ritual. The rod itself may be of wood, metal, or any other convenient substance, but must be at least a half-meter long in order to receive the necessary markings and sigils. Once enchanted, the rod remains charged until the first time it is used.

When the tip is drawn across a solid surface an invisible protective ward is left in its wake. Supernatural entities can neither cross the line nor perceive anything beyond it; it is a screen of silent darkness to them. An entity can break down the ward with 1d6+2 rounds of force; otherwise it persists until nightfall.

The rod can draw a ward up to 20 meters in length in whatever shape the caster desires. The wielder may lay the ward as part of their round's normal movement.

STEALING THE ROAD TO HELL LEVEL 5

This dangerous ritual allows the sorcerer to carve a temporary Way through a pocket Kelipah to a distant destination, either on Earth or in a distant Kelipah. Translocating to a site that has been studied and prepared is relatively safe, but journeying to a less secure location can be fatal to the sorcerer and his companions. The strain of this spell prevents it from being used more than once a week, so the sorcerer had best be prepared to spend time at their destination.

SORCERY

Upon completing the ritual, a temporary Way opens for the sorcerer and up to a dozen allies. The Way leads through a nightmarish Kelipah of alien form and terrible shapes, one barely tolerable to humanity. The journey is instantaneous in the real world, but lasts for subjective hours within the Kelipah. If all goes well the sorcerer steps from this place into the desired location.

If the target destination has been studied for at least a week and certain beacon-sigils inscribed upon carefully-placed pylons then the trip will probably be successful. If the sorcerer seeks to visit a place he has only briefly inspected then the journey is more dangerous, and if he wishes to travel to a place known only from reports then he courts a terrible end.

The sorcerer must make an Int/Occult skill check to travel safely. If the target destination has been prepared, the difficulty is 6. If he has only visited it, the difficulty is 10. If he has only heard about it or seen pictures, the difficulty is 14. Failing this check means that the sorcerer has come out in the wrong place, and given the nature of the Kelipah, this place is almost certain to be extremely dangerous for humans— and in fact, may not be on Earth at all.

TRUTHS WRITTEN IN RED

LEVEL 2

Blood sympathy reveals many truths. By drenching a written text with her own blood, a sorcerer can evoke sympathies of understanding and comprehend the meaning of languages otherwise unknown to her. While capable of comprehending even ciphers and codes, this spell functions only on texts created by human beings.

To read a short text, 1d4 hit points of blood must be shed over it. To read a lengthy tome or grimoire, half the caster's maximum hit points must be spent in keeping the tome blood-damp, and this damage cannot be restored until after the caster stops studying the book. A quick survey of a volume to get its general gist might take no more than a day, but studying spells or other occult details from a book may require weeks. The blood itself does no harm to the text, even those prone to the greatest fragility. It vanishes completely by the end of the spell.

UNSEALING THE VAULT OF WISDOM

LEVEL 2

This useful sorcery breaks arcane seals and bindings. Aside from breaking the *Sigil of the Righteous Threshold*, the incantation can sunder other wards, magical traps, and curses laid upon a particular door or container. The spell is of no use against free-standing protections not anchored to specific physical portals, and it does nothing to eliminate conventional locks. Some sorceries are too powerful to be sundered by this ritual, but the spell will then reveal the most practical way to undo their effects. Only divine forbiddances can deny even this insight.

THE VERMILION MARK OF SANCTITY

LEVEL 4

An amulet of vermilion silk and strangely-curved metal fragments can be used to anchor a potent protective enchantment on a recipient. So long as the subject never removes the amulet, they are immune to mental possession or telepathic interrogation. Those who attempt to scry the wearer's thoughts will sense only a strange, metallic chanting. While under the amulet's influence, the wearer is likewise unable to exert telepathic powers or use enchantments that affect another's mind. Removing the amulet, willingly or unwillingly, will instantly end the enchantment's power.

THE WALKER BENEATH THE EARTH

LEVEL 3

A spell of significant utility for those who wish to avoid conventional walls and doors, this ritual allows the caster and up to a half-dozen allies to pass through solid matter as if it were empty air. The caster and his companions may travel in any direction to the full extent of their normal movement rate— twenty meters a round for most characters. Occult barriers and wards can still impede the sorcerer, but such things are usually found only at the very heart of a dark cult's stronghold.

Those affected by the spell may move through any solid or liquid substance, though empty air is not firm enough to support them, and temperature extremes will still hurt them. They are fully visible to others while so intangible, and while they cannot be harmed by conventional weapons both magic and flame will still harm them. The spell ends only when the caster chooses to end it, but for each round that a character spends intangible, they gain 1d4 Madness from the hideously unnatural sensation. If the caster ends the spell while they or others are still within a solid object, the luckless traveler will die swiftly and terribly.

THE WALKER BENEATH THE MOON

LEVEL 1

This ritual imbues the caster and as many as a half-dozen allies with an arcane sympathy with the nocturnal powers. Until the next sunrise, all affected are capable of seeing normally even in perfect darkness. When moving stealthily as a group, each member may use the best Stealth skill check result of any of them. Direct sunlight will end this spell instantly for all affected by it.

WHISPERS OF THE SCRIBE

LEVEL 1

Great libraries of occult lore rarely have any sort of cataloging system comprehensible to human minds. This spell allows the sorcerer to gain an understanding of a text's language, age, magical potency, and a sentence's summary of its general topic. The ritual may be maintained for as long as the sorcerer has quiet and calm to concentrate, and one document may be divined per round of sorting. The spell can reveal whether or not a grimoire has spells in it, but cannot give details on their names or natures.

THE INCANTATIONS OF NIGHT

Aside from the “safer” sorceries of gray magic, there remains a vast corpus of occult knowledge that is not so limited in its damage to the human mind. These black magics require such horrific sacrifices of sanity, morality, and humanity that those who practice them can hardly be said to be human.

All the same, some sorcerers are willing to make this sacrifice in order to wield the terrible miracles these dark arts allow. Black magic is fundamentally stronger, more effective, and more easily mastered than gray magic. By abandoning any concern for humanity or sanity the sorcerer is able to touch on powers that a more cautious wizard would never dare to enlist.

There is no static list of black magic spells. To categorize the specifics of everlasting damnation and provide a rote list of abominable sorcery takes much of the mystery from it and can give the players an uncomfortably keen understanding of the goals and abilities of their wizardly foes. While fair-minded players would doubtless try to avoid using such knowledge in play, it's easier if they needn't deal with the temptation at all.

Instead, this section provides the tools for a GM to create their own unique set of accursed spells for their own campaign world. Spells can be created as necessary and given to cult hierarchs and lunatic wizards, and players can learn the secrets of their enemies' sorceries in the course of play. Every campaign's dark magic will be unique and new to its participants.

THE PROVISION OF DAMNABLE SORCERY

As such magic is only useful for non-player characters and inhuman villains, some GMs may wish to simply create it by fiat. If a particular group of cultists should have access to a particular spell, then the GM can simply give it to them. There's no need to worry about game balance or campaign repercussions if the sorcery is only ever going to be available to GM-run characters.

While this is a perfectly valid way of doing things, it can be more entertaining to add some randomness to the process. By randomly choosing spell effects and requirements the GM can set up adventure seeds that revolve around a cult's attempts to create the necessary circumstances for triggering their baleful magic. A random roll can inspire the GM into directions he or she may not have naturally considered, and provide a pleasant spice of surprise to the creation of their campaign's magic.

The following tables can be used whole or in part. If a specific effect is wanted a GM can simply choose it, and if the results of a random roll prove difficult to reconcile with the needs of the game, they should feel free to change it to something more workable.

Even so, it can be worthwhile to spend a moment's consideration on a seemingly-incompatible result. Things that are dissonant or mismatched can be useful tools for inculcating horror, and the right pairing of unlike things can make for a party of pleasantly horrified player characters.



CREATING DARK SORCERY

The following tables will give you a loose frame for creating new sorceries for your cults and malefactors. You should take them as inspiration rather than law, and feel free to alter anything that fails to serve your needs.

The first step is rolling for the spell's basic effect. There will be times when this is enough, but if further ideas are offered by the tables below and opposite, where each of the general effects are given eight specific results. A list of suitably ominous words fitting the category are also given for help in creating a sufficiently portentous name for the spell.

Once you have a basic idea what the spell is to do, you can roll to determine the originator of the enchantment. The answer may be obvious if the spell is meant for a particular cult or matches a specific entity in your campaign, but the origins can otherwise suggest the kind of evildoers who might be most likely to have access to the lore.

With origin and effect set, you can then determine what special conditions must be fulfilled before the spell can be cast. Black magic does not have spell levels or Expertise cost or the toll of Madness; by the time you're summoning the servants of the elder gods, you are far past paying such trifling prices. The least of these incantations is sufficient to damn a wizard everlastingly.

The tables that follow offer a number of different possibilities for special costs or circumstances that must be achieved before the ritual can be performed. These prices serve as convenient plot hooks for your campaign, and can alert attentive players to impending sorcery. While PCs are unable to use such foul magic, understanding its price can give warning when others would.

1D8	IT MAIMS OR KILLS	WORD	IT SUMMONS AN ENTITY	WORD
1	They are struck dead in a subtle way	Abnegation	Calls forth a human ally of the sorcerer	Invocation
2	They are cursed with fatal misfortune	Annihilation	Conjures a minor supernatural slave	Beckoning
3	They deliquesce into a pool of filth	Destruction	Summons a powerful supernatural ally	Calling Forth
4	They are eaten alive by conjured vermin	Excruaiation	Begs the manifestation of an alien master	Summoning
5	They commit suicide in maddened dread	Expurgation	Calls the nearest of a creature type	Adjuration
6	Their limbs slowly decay away	Infliction	Conjures a poorly-controlled abomination	Evocation
7	They evaporate into bloody mist	Obliteration	Forces the target to travel to the wizard	Howl
8	Their own limbs murder them by surprise	Torment	Bodily teleports a human target to the sorcerer	Beacon

1D8	IT COMMUNICATES WITH A THING	WORD	IT CREATES A DISASTER	WORD
1	Sends a telepathic message to all allies	Communing	Summons a hideous disease at the target site	Affliction
2	Allows oracular answers from a dark power	Congress	Creates a small earthquake	Blight
3	Gives perfect answers at a terrible price	Divination	Causes torrential, unnatural rain	Calamity
4	Allows a slave's mind to be merged with another	Dream	Beckons killing winds or lightning	Curse
5	Allows communication and command of aliens	Elocution	Invokes freezing cold or unendurable heat	Damnation
6	Persuades an eldritch power to smite a place	Oracle	Blights crops and kills cattle	Defilement
7	Leaves the target unable to speak of a thing	Sight	Causes birth defects or crippling misfortunes	Infliction
8	Provides divinations out of a living creature	Vision	Beckons swarms of tormenting vermin	Rebuke

1D12 THE SORCERY'S BASIC EFFECT

1	It maims or kills a target
2	It summons a desired entity
3	It communicates with an entity
4	It creates a disaster or calamity
5	It influences the target's mind
6	It enhances a living target's capabilities
7	It improves an inanimate object
8	It curses or debilitates a target
9	It conjures a desired thing
10	It destroys inanimate objects
11	It transports the target
12	It controls natural laws

It's usually not necessary to precisely quantify the effects of a spell. Exact dice of damage or specific spell areas of effect are rarely important—these spells work more like forces of savage nature than as formulaic tools. Some of its delusional wielders come to imagine that they understand the deep principles behind the sorcery they have mastered, but such conviction is more a product of lunacy than logic.

When a precise effect really is necessary, just pick something appropriate to the spell's power and purpose. A successful ritual of unholy sorcery should be largely impossible for ordinary humans to resist. Black magic is not something that grants a saving throw.



1D8	IT INFLUENCES THE TARGET'S MIND	WORD	IT IMPROVES A LIVING CREATURE	WORD
1	Provokes unreasoning love and devotion	Bewitchment	Gives physical strength to the target	Augmentation
2	Induces pliant terror	Enchantment	Adds useful limbs or body parts	Blessing
3	Produces murderous paranoia or hatred	Glamour	Grants unnatural luck	Favor
4	Leaves the victim unable to notice certain things	Binding	Augments toughness and resilience	Empowerment
5	Creates unshakable delusions	Dominion	It heals injuries or afflictions	Touch
6	Edits the subject's memories	Command	It grants a supernatural ability	Transformation
7	Leaves them unable to believe something	Reign	It transforms into another creature	Translation
8	Produces a consuming madness	Adjuration	It gives immunity to a thing	Imbuelement

1D8	IT IMPROVES AN OBJECT	WORD	IT CURSES A TARGET	WORD
1	Makes an item more effective	Absolution	Inflicts a gruesome disease	Abnegation
2	Transforms a substance to something else	Augment	Causes potentially fatal ill fortune	Affliction
3	Disguises it as another thing	Excellence	Causes the loss of a limb or organ	Blight
4	Mystically binds it to a person	Favor	Robs the victim of a sense	Curse
5	Makes an object indestructible	Perfection	Physically debilitates the victim	Damnation
6	Gives it power to command a type of entity	Purification	Causes loss of goods	Debilitation
7	Causes it to emanate alien influence	Quintessence	Destroys target's relationships	Ruination
8	Makes it irresistible to a victim	Strengthening	Transforms the target into a thing	Translation

1D8	IT CONJURES A THING	WORD	IT DESTROYS A THING	WORD
1	A mindless servitor-thing	Conjuration	The thing rots or decays away	Crushing
2	A precious substance	Evocation	The thing is consumed in flames	Desolation
3	A useful structure or building	Creation	The thing is melted as if by acid	Destruction
4	An eldritch object	Genesis	The thing simply vanishes	Devastation
5	A protective ward	Devisement	The thing transforms into vermin	Obliteration
6	A useful illusion	Making	The thing is destroyed by maddened people	Razing
7	An underground structure	Forging	The thing is accidentally destroyed	Ruin
8	A thing from a Kelipah	Fashioning	A monstrous creature destroys it	Ruination

1D8	IT TRANSPORTS THE TARGET	WORD	IT CONTROLS NATURAL LAWS	WORD
1	It opens a Way into a Kelipah	Abstraction	It freezes time within a zone	Derangement
2	It summons things that carry the target	Apportation	It produces freakish weather	Dissonance
3	The target simply teleports	Journey	It grants provisional immortality	Defilement
4	A tunnel opens to the target	Path	It connects distant locations	Warping
5	It creates an eldritch ship	Translation	It adjusts the target's age	Dislocation
6	The target gains wings	Translocation	It introduces an alien environment	Ascension
7	Wild coincidence brings the target	Transport	The target travels in time	Twisting
8	The target is carried through space	Wayfaring	It alters a past reality	Change

SORCERY

D10	IT WAS FIRST DEvised BY MEANS OF...
1	An ancient human sorcerer
2	A "gift" from an alien god
3	A vision of a cult priest
4	Retrieval from a Kelipah
5	Production by crazed inspiration
6	Gifting by an alien race
7	A demented human savant
8	Discovery in ancient ruins
9	A mistake by a dead wizard
10	An eruption of occult evil

D6	TO CAST IT, THE SORCERER NEEDS...
1	A particular type of location
2	A particular type of object
3	A particular type of sacrifice
4	A particular type of participant
5	A particular time
6	A recent kind of action

WORDS FOR CREATING A SPELL'S NAME			
D12	SPELL	ADJECTIVE	ENTITY
1	Angles	Cryptic	<Alien race>
2	Canon	Esoteric	<Creator>
3	Chant	Greater	<Human wizard>
4	Charm	Hidden	<Lost race>
5	Conjuration	Illuminated	Ancestors
6	Hex	Ineffable	Angels
7	Inscription	Inexorable	Asuras
8	Invocation	Invincible	Demons
9	Rubric	Lesser	Gods
10	Song	Puissant	Masters
11	Text	Ravening	Powers
12	Words	Secret	Spirits

D4	HOW POWERFUL IS THE SPELL?
1	Petty. No special needs, an hour to cast.
2	Minor. One needed thing, 1d6 hours to cast.
3	Major. 1d3+1 needed things, one day to cast.
4	Grand. 1d4+3 needed things, 2d6 days to cast.

D8	A TYPE OF LOCATION	A TYPE OF OBJECT	A TYPE OF SACRIFICE
1	A site of a terrible massacre	A specific occult grimoire	One or more children
2	A site of long-hidden atrocity	Relics of a great sorcerer's body	One or more adults
3	The ruin of a human habitation	A particular magical artifact	An enemy of the cult
4	A place sacred to a local faith	A very costly mundane substance	An exotic animal
5	An isolated elevation	An arcane connection to the target	Zealous, self-sacrificing cultists
6	The heart of a city	An intricately-crafted focal object	A type of monstrous creature
7	A subterranean cave	An entire sanctified building	A large amount of precious material
8	Fresh ruins of a human community	A relic of a historical figure	A family member or loved one

D8	A TYPE OF PARTICIPANT	A PARTICULAR TIME	A RECENT ACT
1	Several trained cultists	Vernal equinox	Mass ritual murder
2	An unwitting innocent	Autumnal equinox	Large-scale arson
3	A local ruler or authority	Summer solstice	Betrayal of a trusting friend
4	A member of a specific bloodline	Winter solstice	Murder of an important local
5	A type of monstrous creature	Night of a new moon	Lengthy "purification rites"
6	An exotic animal	Solar eclipse	Initiation of a new believer
7	An undead entity	Lunar eclipse	Death of a cult enemy
8	A relative or resident of the target	Astrological conjunction	Construction of an occult structure

OCCULT DISCIPLINES

Aside from ritual sorceries, there are certain talents or charms that can be used by those versed in their secrets. These “disciplines” are much quicker to employ than a full-fledged ritual, though they demand much from the student who would master them.

While many disciplines exist that are altogether too horrific for any sane character to practice, the following examples cover some of the more prevalent occult arts suitable for PCs. The availability of these arts often hinges on discovering tutors willing to teach the character such precious secrets— and such favors usually come at a very high price.

A few disciplines might be innate to the PC, some quality of their birth that they have yet to fully master. Such availability is at the discretion of the GM. If it is allowed, a PC can choose to start with a discipline, treating it as a class skill when picking starting skills for the character.

DISCIPLINE LEVELS

Disciplines are treated in precisely the same way as skills. A character with basic mastery of the art starts at level-0 expertise and can eventually attain up to level-4, if they continue to practice the art and gain enough experience to have skills of that magnitude.

A newly-generated PC who is allowed to pick a discipline may spend one of their free skill picks to gain level-0 mastery of it. If they spend two free skill picks on it, they begin at level-1, the maximum starting proficiency for a discipline.

LEARNING AND IMPROVING DISCIPLINES

Those without the advantage of a gifted bloodline must find a tutor willing to train them in the discipline. Such a tutor must have at least level-2 expertise in the art in order to understand it well enough to pass on its secrets. Such training takes a minimum of one month, though both student and teacher can perform other activities and adventures during that time provided they have regular training sessions.

Learning a discipline comes at a cost. The character must spend 1 skill point to gain level-0 proficiency in a discipline. If the character has no skill points available at the moment, she may deduct the cost from her next level's allotment. Learning a discipline also automatically adds 5 Madness points to the student's total as they expose themselves to otherworldly truths and the alien abilities the discipline grants.

Once the basic elements of the discipline are learned, the student may raise the art in the same way as they improve a class skill. Thus, gaining level-2 proficiency would require the PC to have already mastered level-1, spend 2 more skill points, and be at least third level. No tutor is usually required to raise a discipline, as the deeper mysteries of the art exist as seeds within the first lessons in their occult secrets.

USING DISCIPLINES

Disciplines are much quicker to use than spells. Unless indicated otherwise, use of a discipline requires only a character's action for a round. Those disciplines that cause harm to a target, invoke a defense, or augment a character's abilities can be used as part of whatever action involves their benefits, and do not require an extra action to activate.

Such a rapid flux of eldritch force comes at a cost. A character must spend an Expertise point to activate a discipline. After the point is spent, the PC may use any known level of the power for fifteen minutes, if no longer duration is specified. After that time elapses, another Expertise point must be spent to maintain access to the power.

Those PCs who lack the available Expertise can instead take their chances with their scattered and unfocused thoughts. Such reckless use adds Madness equal to the character's level in the discipline plus one. As above, the power remains available for fifteen minutes afterwards.

If a character has multiple disciplines the cost of activating each them must be paid separately. Activating a discipline requires no visible gestures or invocations and is undetectable by others, unless the result of the power is blatant in of itself. Those powers that grant a target a saving throw will be sensed if the target succeeds on the save, but ordinary men and women may not realize that something supernatural is happening to them.

MASTERING DISCIPLINES

Those who wish to make regular use of these occult powers sometimes find themselves willing to pay the great price necessary to reconcile their minds to the eldritch truths of the discipline.

Mastering level-0 of a discipline costs the adept a permanent loss of one point of Expertise and a gain of 10 points of Madness. Each additional level of the discipline that is mastered forces the gain of another 5 points of Madness. Thus, a 9th level telepath who has completely mastered her art will have lost 1 permanent Expertise and gained 35 points of Madness to do so, including the original cost of learning the discipline.

A mastered level of a discipline may be used without spending Expertise or gaining Madness. Each level must be mastered in order and use of a degree not yet perfected will require the same expenditure of Expertise or sanity as before.

DISCIPLINES IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

The campaign creation chapter includes tools for determining the details of the origins and current availability of disciplines in a GM's campaign world. Not all of the arts that follow may exist in every campaign, and some worlds may not have any art suitable for the minds of sane investigators. In most cases, player characters will have to learn the hard way whether a desired occult art is real in their world or merely the puffery of charlatans.

ENLIGHTENED HAND

This discipline covers a number of supernatural martial arts practiced by hermit-sages, barbaric warriors, lost monasteries, and super-science combat technicians. This particular discipline focuses more on bodily control and resilience rather than raw destructive power. Those arts that emphasize more offensive results often have unacceptable side effects for an adept interested in retaining his sanity.

As with the Sacred Blade discipline, the GM should be cautious about including this discipline in their world if they don't want the PCs to be confronting supernatural enemies with direct force. A PC who learns this discipline is advertising their interest in punching squamous horrors in their dangly tentacles, and if the GM doesn't want that tactic to be effective in their campaign they shouldn't be tempting the PCs into trying it.

PRECOGNITION

Whether a psychic visionary or an occult seer, the Precognition discipline allows the practitioner to gain a glimpse of the future. These visions and premonitions tend to be incomplete, but they are relatively clear as far as they reach. Precognitive PCs rarely receive cryptic oracles— they just can't count on getting the whole story.

In most campaigns, the future is not fixed. The visions and apprehensions the precognitive receives are the most likely results given the current course of events, but they are not foredoomed to pass. It's possible to run a campaign with both divination and a fixed future, but mixing them into a sandbox campaign can make more work for the GM than is practical, to say nothing of the railroading sometimes needed to force certain events to occur.

PYROKINESIS

While flame is a classic manifestation of offensive sorcerous power, the discipline of Pyrokinesis can be used as a model for other forms of offensive supernatural disciplines. Psychic pyrokinetics, fire cultists, or super-science wielders of enigmatic tech might all have powers that operate according to this discipline's guidelines.

Offensive magic disciplines bring in the same issues that the Enlightened Hand and Sacred Blade disciplines introduce. Adding something like Pyrokinesis implies that there are times when it is a good thing to have, and superior to an alternate, much cheaper investment in a good shotgun. The powers should be more effective than a strictly mundane weapon, but they shouldn't be so much better that every combatant feels obligated to invest in them. Particularly with offensive disciplines, none of the powers should inflict automatic, unavoidable damage. Affecting a target should always require a hit roll or grant the victim a save to resist.

LVL	ABILITY
0	The adept's limbs gain supernatural toughness. Unarmed attacks now do a base of 1d6 damage and no injury is suffered in striking foes that might harm common flesh.
1	The toughness infuses the rest of the adept's body, granting him a base armor class of 3 for the following hour.
2	The adept gains control of their physical processes, allowing them to stabilize after a mortal wound or mimic every sign of death while remaining aware of their surroundings.
3	The adept's limbs now do a base of 2d6 damage and count as magical for purposes of hitting or Slaughtering creatures.
4	The adept may briefly fend off death, spending 5 Madness per additional round to continue acting even at 0 hit points for up to 3 rounds.

LVL	ABILITY
0	Gain several seconds of warning before an ambush or trap is triggered in the user's presence. This level may be triggered automatically if the PC is willing to spend to activate it.
1	Predict the outcome of simple events, such as gambling, Russian roulette, the next branch a bird will land on, or other imminent random events.
2	Gain a glimpse of the most likely way the GM thinks the user will significantly harmed in mind or body within the next week.
3	Foretell the most likely outcome within an hour should a particular course of action be followed. This level of the gift can function at most once per hour
4	Gain a one-word answer to any simple question about a future event. The precognitive cannot ask about the same event more than once a week.

LVL	ABILITY
0	Summon a candle flame somewhere on the user's body. The user may ignore 2 points of fire damage per round and cannot be Slaughtered by fire attacks.
1	Call a torch-flame somewhere on the user's body, adding 1d6 fire damage to Unarmed attacks. The user may ignore 5 points of fire damage per round.
2	Ignite an easily-flammable object within line of sight. This will not function on items worn or carried by a creature.
3	Cause a visible creature to burst into flame for 2d6 (1d8 Slaughter die) damage if they fail an Evasion save.
4	The flames now do 2d8 (1d10 Slaughter die) damage. The pyrokinetic is immune to damage from heat or smoke, and may see clearly through such visual impediments.

SACRED BLADE

The Sacred Blade discipline is a stand-in for those offensive disciplines based on weapons rather than energies or unarmed attacks. Templars of the occult, supernatural martial artists, or hyper-advanced weaponcrafters might have abilities in line with this discipline's gifts.

The bound weapon of a Sacred Blade practitioner must be a melee or thrown weapon—firearms, bows, and other projectile weapons are not suitable for this art. Bound thrown weapons will automatically return to the user's hand after being hurled.

Aside from the thematic issues, a discipline that augments firearms would be so advantageous in a combat-friendly campaign that every gunslinger would feel obligated to train in it. If a GM does decide to add a firearm-based discipline to their campaign, it's best if it provides benefits not related to flat damage augmentation, but instead gives powers that are useful in other ways.

TELEKINESIS

Telekinetic psychics are a staple of certain types of campaigns, and this discipline provides a model for such abilities. In a like fashion, wizards with conjured minion-hands and mad scientists with spatial distortion tech might have similar powers.

Telekinesis is normally not strong enough to pull equipment away from an alert target, but it can lift possessions from a target too surprised or distracted to fight it. Users cannot affect themselves with their own telekinesis and cannot levitate unwilling targets, but they can lift allies willing to cooperate with the eldritch force.

Telekinetics can manipulate any number of objects at once up to their maximum weight limit, within reason. The manipulation is too clumsy to use heavy objects as effective weapons against mobile targets, but they can be dropped on helpless or oblivious victims unaware of their impending peril.

LVL

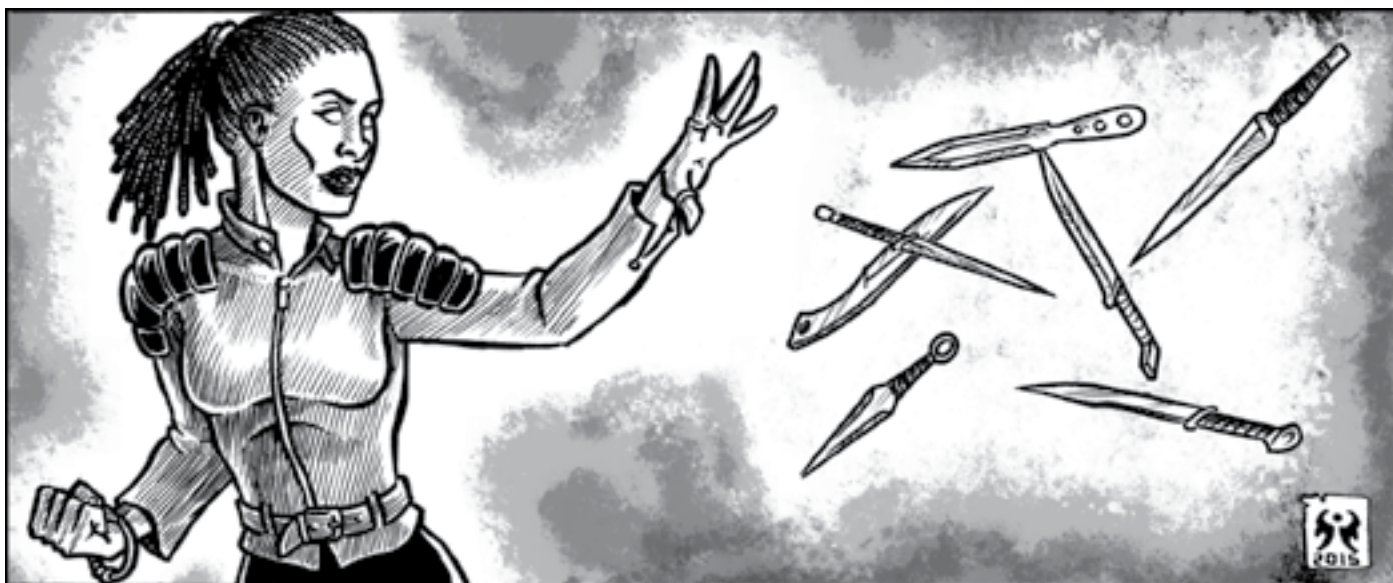
ABILITY

0	The adept can spend a day bonding with a particular weapon, gaining a +1 to hit and damage with it and being able to sense its direction and distance if parted from it. Only one weapon can be bound at a time.
1	The adept can conceal his bonded weapon indefinitely, causing eyes and cameras to automatically overlook it unless magic is used to search for it. The effect ends once the weapon is drawn.
2	The bonded weapon counts as magical for purposes of hitting or Slaughtering eldritch creatures. Its bonus to hit and damage rolls becomes +2.
3	The bonded weapon's Slaughter die increases by one step— from 1d6 to 1d8 and so forth up to a maximum of 1d12.
4	The user's bonded weapon now has a +3 bonus and is unbreakable by any non-magical force.

LVL

ABILITY

0	The wielder may manipulate objects weighing no more than 100 grams— dice, coins, keys, and trinkets. Such manipulation is as dexterous as if the character had both hands available.
1	Manipulate objects weighing no more than 5 kilograms.
2	Manipulate multiple objects up to 100 kilograms.
3	Launch a telekinetic crush or blow at a visible target doing 1d8 damage with a 1d6 Slaughter die. This blow does not count as a magical attack for purposes of harming supernatural entities.
4	Telekinetic blow strength increases to 2d6 and 1d8 Slaughter die, and maximum weight to 200 kilograms.



SORCERY

TELEPATHY

Telepathy is the archetypal psychic power, and one that can drastically reshape the contours of an investigative adventure. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but a GM should be ready for the consequences if this discipline becomes available in a campaign.

In campaigns with a telepathic PC, the challenge of investigation often ceases to be a matter of finding out what happened, and turns into a question of how the PCs mean to deal with it. Telepathic testimony is hardly permissible in a court of law, and finding out that the mayor is a blood-crazed cultist of the outer gods does nothing to actually stop him.

Telepathy normally only functions on targets within unaided visual range, though telepathic communication can be conducted at a distance provided the target is cooperative. Most ignorant normals will be too terrified of the “voices in their head” to cooperate with any attempt to contact them from afar.

Supernatural entities are immune to all forms of telepathy. As far as the psychic is concerned, it feels as if they made their Mental Effect saving throw to resist the power. For level-0 empathic purposes, such inhuman targets appear to be feeling no particularly strong emotions at all.

If a target succeeds in a Mental Effect saving throw to shut out a psychic, they are immune to telepathy for 24 hours afterwards.

WARDING

While the occult arts have numerous spells of warding, most of them require extensive preparations before they can be triggered, or create objects that can only be used once. The discipline of Warding draws on a flexible and intimate knowledge of supernatural defenses and apotropaic powers.

Wardings created by an adept of this discipline can slow down supernatural foes long enough to allow the PCs to escape, or pin inhuman enemies in place for some more violent solution. The wards are not as strong or as enduring as those created by sorcery, but they can be conjured up quickly in a moment of crisis.

Wards only affect supernatural entities and do nothing to impede humans or normal animals. Some cultists may be so infused with eldritch power or tainted by unholy service that they qualify as supernatural entities. Such a distinction is for the GM to determine.

Wards are invisible and imperceptible. Creatures affected by them will be barred, but cannot see the ward until they try to pass it. Wards will persist until they are brought down or until the warder conjures it in a different place.

LVL	ABILITY
0	Roll Wis/Telepathy at difficult 8 to sense a target's emotions and any intensely emotional surface thoughts. Also, when the user makes a successful Mental Effect saving throw, they may activate this power to realize that something just tried to affect their mind, though no details are provided.
1	Make psychic contact with any cooperative person the user has met provided they are within 1 kilometer, allowing the sharing of both verbal and visual communication. Also, the user may read the current surface thoughts of a target within line of sight if the victim fails a Mental Effect save.
2	Psychic contact range is now 20 kilometers. Limited interrogation of a target's memory is now possible— one question can be asked of their memory, and if they fail a Mental Effect saving throw an answer of no more than one sentence is provided. If they succeed on the saving throw, no further telepathic interrogation is possible that day.
3	Psychic contact range is now 300 kilometers. The telepath's powers of interrogation increase until they can ask extensive questions about a single topic when the victim fails a saving throw versus Mental Effect. The answers are detailed and complete, but restricted to that topic.
4	Psychic contact range is now global. The telepath can rifle a victim's memory completely on a failed Mental Effect saving throw, allowing questions on any topic.

LVL	ABILITY
0	The warder can temporarily push back an enchantment. After failing a saving throw against a magical effect, the warder can delay the onset of the effect on him for one round before he suffers the effect of the sorcery.
1	The warder can touch a doorway or draw a line, forcing supernatural foes to spend one round per level of Warding skill in breaking it down. Only one such ward can be created at a time, and this art can be used only once every 2 rounds.
2	The warder can hold back supernatural foes, forcing them to remain at least 5 meters away and preventing them from using any uncanny abilities directly on the user. The ability can be maintained no more than one round per level of skill. This ability can be used only once per minute.
3	The warder can seal himself or others against dark magic, allowing failed saving throws against magical effects to be rerolled. The seal saps the will of those under it, costing them 1 Madness at the start of each hour it is in effect. The seal can be dropped by a subject at any time.
4	The warder may sanctify a zone 5 meters in radius around himself, the zone moving with him. The warder and any allies within that zone will be entirely invisible and imperceptible to supernatural enemies unless the PCs engage with them or perform loud or distracting activities. The zone lasts 30 minutes and can be invoked once an hour



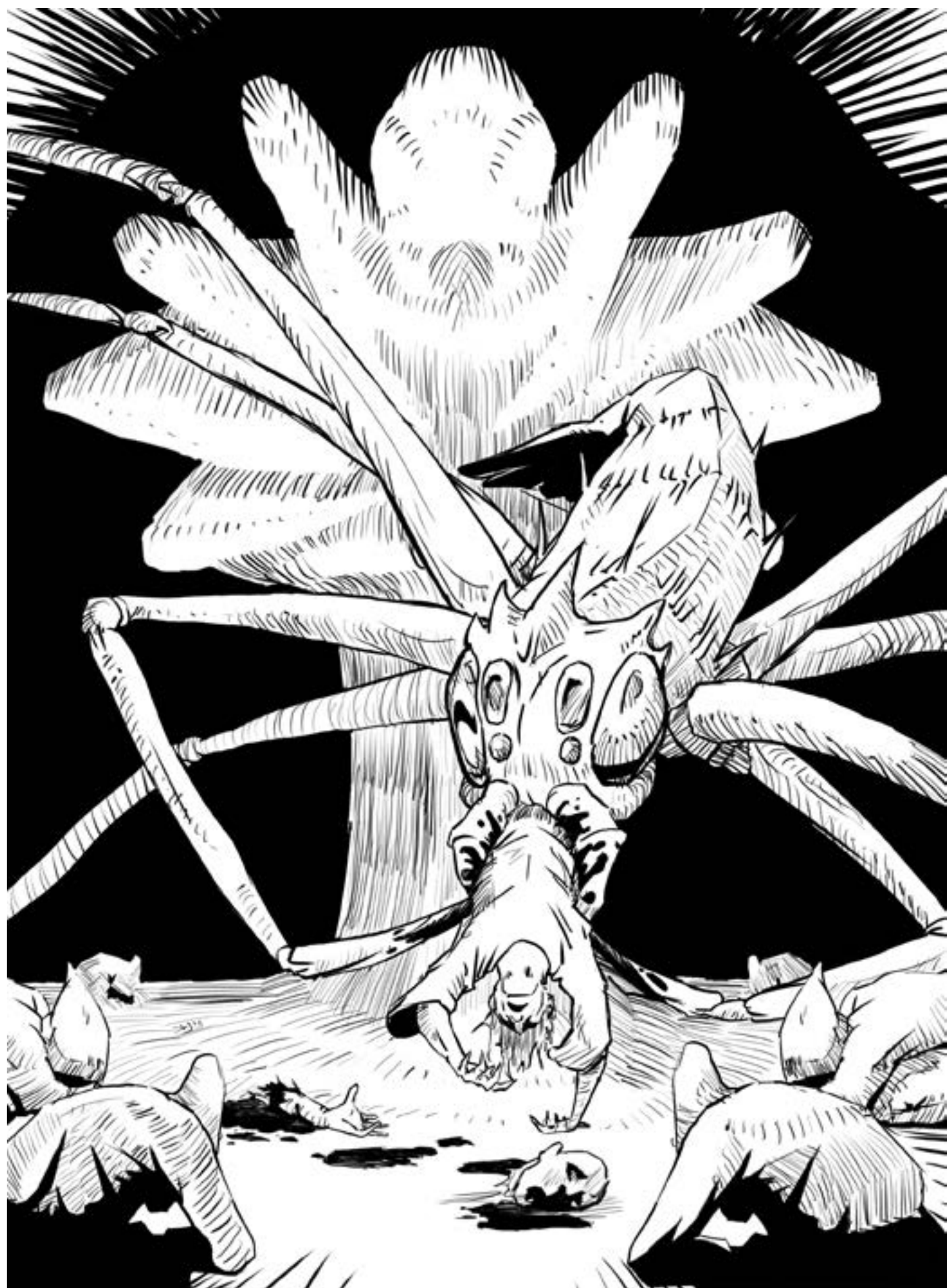
WITCHFINDING

There are innumerable traditional systems for discerning the presence of sorcerers and their foul magics, and most of them are useful only for terrorizing the least popular figures in a society. Some of these traditions are actually effective, however, and the Witchfinding discipline reflects divinations and discernments that actually can tell the sorcerous from the mundane.

These abilities tend to be most often cultivated by groups and teachers with a decidedly hostile attitude toward all things supernatural. Alliances with such groups are possible, but extensive proof of a PC group's trustworthiness is usually necessary to convince them to part with their secrets.

Alternately, these techniques might be taught as part of the canon of those sorcerers and eldritch scientists who are fascinated with the subtler aspects of magic and desire to understand its nature and signs more perfectly. Such understanding usually comes in the shadow of incipient insanity.

LVL	ABILITY
0	When the user is affected or targeted by a magical effect, they automatically become aware of it, if they trigger this power, though they learn no details about the effect.
1	The user can tell whether magic was used in a particular area within the past week. On a successful Wis/Occult check of difficulty 6+1 for each day after the spell, they can gain a two-word impression of the magic's purpose.
2	With skin contact with a person, learn whether or not they have ever cast a spell or participated in a magical ritual. The target can make a Mental Effect saving throw to resist the power, becoming immune to it for ten minutes.
3	With a round of careful study of a person from within 10 meters, the witchfinder can discern whether or not they are affected by magic. On a successful Wis/Occult roll of difficulty 9, they can tell whether the spells were cast by them or by others and a two-word description of each spell. Success is automatic if the target is restrained or cooperative and the witchfinder has a few minutes in which to examine them.
4	After studying a supernatural or enchanted creature with one round's action, the witchfinder can track it unfailingly for up to a day afterwards. They may also activate this ability to gain a +2 bonus on Magic saving throws or sorcerous Mental Effect saving throws, which they may apply even after rolling their save.



CREATING YOUR MYTHOS

SUMMONING UP THE DAMNABLE POWERS

Every intrepid investigator needs secrets to plumb. In this chapter, a GM will be given the techniques and tools for creating a suitably grim, mysterious backdrop for their campaign. While the contents of these pages are intended for the GM, there's no harm in players thumbing through the chapter. In the end, the knowledge will not save them.

THE MEANING OF A MYTHOS

In these pages, a “mythos” is meant to refer to the grand and secret truths of your campaign world, the hidden facts and concealed powers that make up its occult depths. It includes alien gods, forgotten species, abominations from outside the world, relics and artifacts of dead civilizations, and all the other trappings of the hidden and arcane..

The most popular use of the word is in reference to the “Cthulhu Mythos” created by H. P. Lovecraft and adorned by many other contemporary and modern writers. This intricate web of entities, books, characters, and occasionally-contradictory stories has been covered in elaborate and excellent depth by many other games, so it is not necessary to go into it here. Instead, the purpose of this chapter is to help you create your *own* mythos, one fresh and unique to you.

By using your own personal mythos, you add an extra measure of mystery to your players' experience. It may share the same ambiance as Lovecraft's original, but the specifics of entities, organizations, and trappings will be something fresh to them, with new enemies to discover and new perils to navigate. Of course, there is nothing preventing you from mixing the two, or even running a classical Cthulhu Mythos campaign with the abundant source material that already exists.

FROM THE TOP

The first thing you need to do with your mythos is decide the fundamental themes which will inform its construction. A well-chosen set of themes will help guide the rest of the creation by providing you with simple default choices for your creations when your own ingenuity is wearied. It can also help emphasize flavors and themes that your group finds entertaining, and give them the sense of operating in a game world that follows certain coherent principles, however bleak those principles may be.

You can choose any themes that strike your fancy, but there are some particular flavors that show up with regularity in horror fiction. You may choose not to rely on them for your own game, but it's likely you'll have to keep them in mind as principles your players may be expecting to operate in your world. Most of the themes that follow will exist in some form in your game, though some may be emphasized more than others.

COSMICISM

Cosmicism refers to H. P. Lovecraft's conception of humanity as an insignificant trifle in a world vastly more mysterious, indifferent, and profound than humankind can ever understand. In this light, human actions are meaningless, and they are powerless to avert their common destiny. This destiny will inevitably come to pass under the inexorable pressure of cosmic laws or unfathomable, unreachable entities.

Cosmicism contributes a strong feeling of loneliness and desperation to a game, a sense that there is no greater help to be had and no promise of success for the efforts of the heroes. Their best outcome may be nothing more than a cosmically-insignificant delay to some inexorable process of human dissolution. Their foes are not so much specific entities as they are blind cosmic laws, and nothing they do can really save humanity from a bleak and terrible fate

Of course, almost all entertaining gaming sessions must subvert this theme to a greater or lesser extent. Delaying the intrusion of an elder god for another thousand years may be an imperceptible eye blink to the cosmic awareness of that entity, but it is still an extremely significant accomplishment from a human perspective. The heroes may be doomed in the very longest run, but if they can hold off destruction for the moment they're likely to feel like victors.

As a GM, the default use of cosmicism is to give your creations a profound indifference to human comprehension. If you can't figure out why a particular cult should have a specific ritual, or why an entity should manifest in a particular location, or why an eldritch radiation should induce a specific horrible mutation, then you can just chalk it up to a cold cosmic mechanism.

The reasons behind the event are simply incomprehensible to humans, and the intrusion of the occult into our mundane world is the consequence of powers and interactions humans cannot hope to perceive. In the case of human motivations, you can describe the actions of cultists as desperate, confused responses to entities that don't seem to be aware of their propitiations or offerings. Random or incomprehensible responses are interpreted as divine favor or displeasure, and maddened priests construct their theologies around the blinkings of blind, titanic eyes.

Some GMs prefer to temper their cosmicism with the existence of benevolent outer powers, or at least gods that do not inevitably devour their devotees. These entities might be willing to aid the heroes or give them the tools to overcome their enemies.

MYTHOS CREATION

If you do choose to bring a note of hope in by this means, you'll need to be careful so as not to overshadow the significance of the heroes and their own deeds. If cosmic salvation is possible through the benevolence of an outer deity, much of the horror and desperation of a campaign can be lost and the sacrifices of the PCs can end up feeling irrelevant to the fate of the world.

MALEVOLENCE

In this theme, the universe is not merely indifferent to humanity, it actively hates them. Some intelligence in this setting actively and eagerly desires the destruction of humanity, either morally or physically. This malevolence may be centered on a Satanic figure of alien hatred, a shared and visceral revulsion toward humanity by occult entities, or a hostile universe that seems to be constructed by a maltheist. Whatever the particulars, the universe is out to get humanity.

Where a cosmicism-inspired entity might impassively cause madness and sapient tumors to erupt in a human victim due to its simple proximity, a malevolence-inspired entity would do so because it wants the human to suffer. Its motivations and goals are more comprehensible in a way because they are directed toward causing a specific response in its wretched victims.

As a GM, you can use a theme of malevolence to sharply personalize an enemy or group of enemies for the heroes. Cosmic horrors may be terrible, but they don't inspire the same visceral enmity provoked by a clearly malevolent enemy.

Cthulhu does not "hate" humanity in any meaningful sense, but his awakening will inevitably plunge the world into madness. Satan, on the other hand, has a more personal appetite for human ruin. If you need to explain why a particular entity or alien race is doing something unkind to humanity, simple hatred goes a long way toward defining their motivation.

In some cases, you might need to explain why these entities seem to have it in for humanity. For some, it may be that their indifference or alien emotional state might be indistinguishable from acute malice. They "hate" humans in the sense that everything they do toward them seems to be animated by malevolence, though in truth it is simply a motivation or emotion that humans are unable to feel.

For others, particularly alien races, humans might have resisted their conquest or thrown back their invasion in some former age, and they nurse an undying hatred of their apish foes. Or it may be disgust and revulsion, with the beings possessing such an alien aesthetic and moral universe that human existence is as hideous to them as they are to a terrified humanity.

GNOSTICISM

In this thematic sense, "gnosticism" is meant to emphasize the power of knowledge. This power that exists in a figurative sense in the real world takes on a more tangible aspect when dealing with the occult. When emphasizing this theme, knowledge does not merely enable and direct, it performs physical alterations of the world by virtue of its own innate power.

Magical words, cryptic incantations, rituals, spells, hidden places of power... knowledge in an occult campaign is something that does things for those who have it. It summons marvels, banishes evil, enacts changes, and projects the wielder's will upon the world. Beyond this, the simple fact of having certain knowledge changes those touched by it, sometimes in physical and terrible ways.

In an occult campaign, learning a terrible secret isn't just an occasion for distress, it's something that can physically maim a character unable to endure the new knowledge. Truths can boil brains, deform bodies, and enslave wills to the purposes of ineffable entities. Knowledge is dangerous in a very real, direct sense. Those who seek it out risk not only the dangers of the guardians that protect it, but also the potentially lethal side-effects of the understanding itself.

The gnostic theme in your game helps explain the danger and allure of particular knowledge. Players tend to want spells, occult gifts, and secret lore to enhance the power of their heroes; the more emphatic the gnostic emphasis of your mythos, the more powerful these truths are going to be— and the more destructive to tender human brains. There may be some lore that your players decide is just not worth the knowing, leaving them willfully hiding it from the world.

In the default campaign setting, the Black Dream emphasizes this gnostic theme. Understanding the truth of the cosmos inevitably marks those who perceive it. This knowledge ensures their ultimate ruin even as it grants them unique gifts and possibilities.

VIOLENCE

Players often love to employ violence in a campaign, though many of the Lovecraftian stories that inspired this flavor of horror have little or no physical struggle. This has resulted in a tacit genre convention that physical violence is useless against occult entities, and any attempt to confront them head-on is sure to be disastrous. Some games and campaigns hew to this idea very rigorously, making guns and clubs nothing more than dangerous traps for the genre-innocent. Others prefer to have more in the way of fisticuffs with the unknown.

The default mechanics of *Silent Legions* assume that physical violence is extremely effective against humans, less effective against monstrous relicts and alien races, and worthless against outer deities without careful preparation. Gunplay and fisticuffs are not entirely pointless in an adventure, however, and a character focused on physical violence can still make a useful contribution to the success of a group.

You will want to decide how far to take this in your own game. If you want to play a classical Lovecraftian campaign where a pistol is never as useful as the ability to sight-read Assyrian, you might simply avoid giving heroes any of the tools they'd need to fight alien powers physically. If you want the PCs to be capable of regular engagements with occult evil, you might drop the Slaughter Die mechanic for PCs and remove the resistances and immunities of monstrous entities. Whatever choice you make, be sure to communicate it clearly to your players at the start of the campaign. If you're running a "Violence is futile" campaign, you need to alert your players to that effect before they create two-fisted Tough PCs.



Silent Legions also assumes that violence has a steadily-corrosive effect on the minds of those who engage in it. Killing people, witnessing hideous atrocities, and suffering or inflicting torturous pain all take their toll on a hero's willpower and ability to cope. A hero who makes a point of killing every half-suspicious backwoods family or engaging in the kind of casual mayhem that is standard to a normal fantasy RPG is going to rapidly ablate away his sanity.

Even those who try to avoid the darkest excesses of violence can end up shell-shocked by the steady stream of corpses, agonies, and horrors that a hero often finds in the wake of the outer void. In this game, killing someone isn't a matter of racking up another 15 xp, it's a matter of murdering a human being.

Of course, you may want to change the tone of your own game and adopt more of the traditional RPG readiness for bloodshed. Some cultures may not stigmatize violence to the extent that many modern ones do, and some heroes might just be hard-bitten enough not to be scarred by wading through the entrails of alien-possessed children. The default assumption is that heroes are modern men and women who have been brought up in a society where killing is something dreadful and scarring. If that assumption doesn't fit your campaign then you should change it.

MADNESS

Insanity is an old and honored trope of Lovecraftian horror, but it's also a difficult one to use well. There is a distinct tension between the reality of mental illness that many people deal with on a daily basis and the raving, wild-eyed degeneracy that characterizes the average cultist of an outer god. The kind of bloody-handed malevolence that marks these wretches can be hard to square with what we know of an OCD friend or a co-worker who's fine so long as she keeps taking her medication. The kind of nihilistic dementation we see in a respectable

Lovecraftian cultist just doesn't seem to have much to do with actual human mental illness, and it can be tough to represent that in play.

In a way, this is because Lovecraftian madness is fundamentally different from normal human mental illness. In the real world, mental illness is the product of wayward biological processes, brain injuries, or the experience of severe mental trauma. In the world of *Silent Legions*, madness is also the product of exposure to ideas and truths that the human mind simply cannot encompass and cannot endure. Such madness is a toxic, burning idea that fills the heads of its victims with the smoke of insanity and the char of their own combusting intellect.

Such agonizing enlightenment cannot be cured by medicines or therapy. Even those victims who seek refuge in alcoholic stupors or drugged reveries are eventually consumed by visions. Lovecraftian madness eats its victims alive. The Delirium mechanic of the game represents this for PCs by gradually-accumulating tics, compulsions, and seemings, but NPCs and those of less sturdy stuff can easily fall into full-blown lunacy from the corrosive effects of their exposure to cosmic truths.

Most of these victims eventually die either by their own hand or by the consequences of their attempts at escape. Of those who survive, some do so by means of making terms with their new understanding, performing rituals and behaviors that seem to please their unseen tormentors. These victims are the cultists and dark priests of the outer gods, the red-handed murderers and schemers that the PCs face.

Some of them may have been bastards from the first, vicious men and women who were exposed to the outer powers in the course of some wickedness, but most of them were simply wretches who were in the wrong place at the wrong time, or looked too deeply into matters not meant for human understanding. They were not always as they are now, and you can bring a certain element of poignancy into your game by emphasizing the distance they have fallen from their former lives. You can also add an extra note of horror by giving the clear implication that whatever insanity is driving them is wearing away all the remaining elements of their individuality— that the madness is itself purposeful in a way and remaking its host into a vessel for its ends.

Madness is a reliably convenient motivation for your antagonists, as you could easily justify almost any behavior as being part of their attempt to placate their personal demons. While this ease is handy for you in designing your adventures, it does make it harder for the players to predict an antagonist's goals.

If you're going to use madness as a motivation for a villain, you need to make sure to give enough clues and directions in the rest of the adventure to clearly indicate their desires or else the players may end up trying to predict their actions by the canons of rationality. Without some clearly-labeled insight into their real purpose, the party can grow frustrated with plots that they had no way of foreseeing and no means of reasoning out beforehand.

When using madness-inducing visions and situations in your own game, it can be easy to just reach for the "unspeakable and indescribable" trope,

where something is so terrible that you don't have to put any effort into actually describing it. It is an awfulness that just has to be taken on credit. For something that provokes Lovecraftian insanity, the horror of it is not so much in the ineffability as in the instinctive human attempt to make sense of what they are perceiving.

The Delirium that might follow a particularly savage blow at a hero's sanity is not some geas laid upon him by an outside force, it is the utterly rational, reasonable-seeming mental response to what he now knows. He understands that his teammates have yet to realize this truth, that the world around him operates in blissful ignorance of it, but he can no longer ignore the fact that human voices actually all have the buzzing tenor of a fly's beating wings. He realized this when the Thing shrieked with a mouth of seven human tongues, and no drug or surgery can take the knowledge away from him.

Objectively, *he is right*. It is not a madness of delusion, it is the perception of a truth that his brain can only translate in the form of a Delirium. Those who perceive contrary realities are simply understanding a different level of the fundamental truth, however traumatic it may be. In the end, those crippled by an excess of Deliria are simply overcome by the reality around them and can no longer pretend to a normal and rational existence.

THE PILLARS OF HELL BELOW

Once you've chosen your themes and the relative emphasis for each, you're ready to begin creating your mythos. A mythos is built in layers, beginning with the unfathomable outer gods who wait within the Black Dream and working inward until you have formulated the major cults, important arcanists, and characteristic magical trappings of your own campaign world.

The first step is to create your outer gods. The section that follows provides a number of random tables for generating their qualities and traits, but there is no need to worry about game statistics or other mechanical minutiae. Unless you're running an extremely unusual campaign, the PCs have no way to defeat an outer god in a direct confrontation. Their only chance lies in defeating its cultists and averting its intrusion into the mundane world. Once an unholy avatar of these abominations breaches the wall between worlds, there's no hope for anything but a quick death.

After you've assembled your pantheon of horrors, the next step is to fabricate your alien races. These inhuman entities dwell somewhere within the outer darkness or within a particular Kelipah, though some might be denizens of some particularly far reach of mundane space. The presumption is that they are almost universally hostile to humanity, if



not through active malevolence then through a cold indifference that places no more importance upon humanity than they would upon bacteria. These alien races have their own purposes on earth, and their machinations can take the form of servitor cults or secret bases for nefarious operations.

The next step is to create the major cults of your world. While there may be countless minor covens scattered over the globe, these great and terrible creeds have either acted over centuries of patient labor or exert some great force on modern events. Destroying one of these titanic conspiracies is a deed worthy of an entire campaign, and even amputating the lesser branches of the cult is a goal that is certain to consume the lives and minds of heroes.

With the cults duly fabricated, you'll want to create a few sorcerous artifacts for your game. This stage might be delayed until after you start creating adventures, but it can be entertaining to roll up a blasphemous grimoire or two just to provide some extra color for your campaign's back story and occult history. More immediately practical items, such as magical weapons, occult engines, and devices of obscure and terrible super-science can also be generated with this section. As with all forms of magic in the Lovecraftian world, there is almost invariably some terrible curse or cost associated with the use of an arcane item. Even the most benignly useful objects usually come with some ugly consequence to their employment.

Finally, an additional generator is also provided for creating Kelipot, for those GMs who wish to introduce them into their own campaign. These realms of strangeness and alien laws are useful for GMs who want to introduce some more straight-up fantasy adventuring to their game, or those who want to run a crossover between conventional fantasy gaming and the Lovecraftian world of *Silent Legions*. Others might find them useful as strongholds for a particular cult or dangerous realms of ruin that have already felt the triumph of the dark gods.

CREATING GODS: FORGING THE POWERS OF NIGHT

The first step in fashioning your mythos is to create the outer gods and the ineffable powers of the void. These entities will spawn the cults of demented human worshipers that your PCs are most likely to face, and might be the patrons or favored deities of the alien races that plague the earth.

The tables in this section provide a framework for constructing a pantheon of these entities, with names provided by the Lovecraftian name generator in the Resources section of the book. You can use these tools to randomly generate your theogony, or you can pick and choose suitable elements to suit your own ideas.

All of these tables should be understood to be metaphorical. When humans speak of outer gods as “dying” or “hating” or “needing”, it is an expression of the nearest human analogue to their true motivations and conditions. These entities are utterly alien to human consciousness, and move in ways and for reasons that mortal brains cannot comprehend. The pantheons created by mortals and the attributes imputed by their hierarchs are simply the ways that human worshipers have chosen to approach their indifferent gods. They are only shadows of a more terrible truth.

The first step in creating a pantheon is to determine how many gods have significant influence or cult followers on Earth. These are doubtless not the only deities, and may not even be the strongest ones, but they’re the ones you’re going to bother to detail first.

D4 NUMBER OF MAJOR DEITIES

1	1d4+2 of them, all connected into the same pantheon.
2	1d4+2, but few with any connection to the others
3	2d4 divided into two different pantheons
4	2d6+2, half of them unattached, the others in a pantheon

Once you’ve rolled or chosen the number of deities and decided how many pantheons are involved, you can use the table below to assign each pantheon one or more characteristic traits. For gods with no connection to a pantheon, you might roll individually for each of them to give these loners some novel quality.

At this point, you can turn to the Resources section and assign each of the gods some suitable Lovecraftian name, to help keep them straight as you continue the creation process.

D20

PANTHEON TRAITS

1	Animism	The gods are each affiliated with specific locations or objects.
2	Apotheosis	The gods include elevated worshipers among their number.
3	Aspected	The gods each have multiple aspects with different apparent personalities.
4	Conquerors	One group of gods has driven out or subsumed another.
5	Disguised	The gods are the true entities behind modern world religions.
6	Dissociated	The gods have no comprehensible relationship to each other.
7	Distant	The gods interact with the world only through their minions.
8	Dualism	There are only two gods and their servants, each in opposition to the other.
9	Ethnic	The gods are affiliated with specific human societies or bloodlines.
10	Forerunners	The gods are not yet fully born and will usher in a new age.
11	Groups	The gods are associated in two or more groups of affiliated entities.
12	Hierarchical	The gods have a clearly-defined hierarchy of greater and lesser entities.
13	Immanence	The gods exist as specific physical beings in the world.
14	Imprisoned	The gods have been locked away by traitors or some natural force.
15	Indifferent	The gods do not notice their worshipers, though service may bring power.
16	Malthusism	The gods seek only to torment. Devotees try to aim them at non-worshipers.
17	Monotheism	The gods are only seemings, aspects of a single all-encompassing god.
18	Necrotheology	The gods are dead, but may be revived or are somehow still extant.
19	Relicts	The gods come from a former age of reality, when things were different.
20	Wounded	The gods were crippled by something, reduced from their former power.

PORTFOLIOS AND MODES

Now that you have your gods named and given characteristic traits to pantheons and individuals, it’s time to assign them each a portfolio. Lovecraftian deities tend not to be associated with sophisticated human concepts or elements specific to mortal life. Lovecraftian gods rarely oversee love, commerce, war, or anything else specific to a sophisticated human experience.

Instead they are gods of primal things, of flame and fertility and night. Even these understandings are no more than the nearest analogue their demented worshipers can comprehend for the true nature of their masters. The table below provides a selection of appropriately grim portfolios. You can pick or roll from the list, and possibly choose more than one element. These qualities might be separate aspects of the god, or you might mix them together to create a synthesis.

D100	PORTFOLIO	D100	PORTFOLIO
1-2	Age	51-52	Parasites
3-4	Caverns	53-54	Plants
5-6	Cities	55-56	Roads
7-8	Cold	57-58	Seas
9-10	Corpses	58-60	Sensory perception
11-12	Dance	61-62	Serpents
13-14	Death	63-64	Shadows
15-16	Decay	65-66	Silence
17-18	Deserts	67-68	Sky
19-20	Disease	69-70	Smokes and mists
21-22	Dreams	71-72	Sorcery
23-24	Earth	73-74	Specific alien species
25-26	Fertility	75-76	Specific animal
27-28	Flame	77-78	Specific emotion
29-30	Forests	79-80	Specific shape
31-32	Hunger	81-82	Specific monster
33-34	Illusions	83-84	Sun
35-36	Jungles	85-86	Swamps
37-38	Life	87-88	Thirst
39-40	Memory	89-90	Time
41-42	Mirrors and reflections	91-92	Vermin
43-44	Mountains	93-94	Voices
45-46	Music	95-96	Wastelands
47-48	Night	97-98	Water
49-50	Pain	99-00	Words

SELECTING MODES

Once you know what the entity’s general portfolio is, you can select the mode of their relationship to it. If this isn’t useful to you, you can simply dub the entity the god of all aspects of their portfolio, but it can be more useful to narrow it down. A specific way in which the god relates to their bailiwick can help to give you some idea of what its cultists might be interested in doing— a god of jungles and creation is likely to have very different cult priorities than a god of water and destruction.

The modes below can be used either separate aspects of the god or synthesized in with the portfolio. Thus, if you get “Destruction” as a result for a god of Silence, you might interpret it as a destroyer god who works by means of inflicting silence so profound as to obliterate matter. Alternatively, you might choose to take it as a god that exists to destroy silence with maddening cacophony.

A list of ten suitable epithets are provided with each mode, for use in brewing up a sufficiently portentous title for the new deity.

MODES AND EPITHETS				
D4	1	2	3	4
D10	CREATE	DESTROY	CONTROL	SEE
1	Conceiver	Breaker	Autarch	Beholder
2	Creator	Destroyer	Hierarch	Discerner
3	Deviser	Devourer	King	Diviner
4	Father	Eater	Lord	Haruspex
5	Forge	Eradicator	Master	Knower
6	Incarnator	Feaster	Pontifex	Oracle
7	Maker	Ravener	Prince	Prophet
8	Mother	Reviler	Ruler	Seer
9	Source	Ruiner	Sultan	Speaker
10	Womb	Thirster	Tyrant	Whisperer

With the god’s basic mode of operation chosen and a suitable epithet in hand, you can start to mix a title for the hideous deity. The table below offers different patterns that can be useful, and the facing table gives some words that can be mixed in. Such randomly-generated epithets can give ideas for unique manifestations or sorcerous gifts granted by the deity. Add prepositions as needed— “Verb Epithet Noun” can be “the Howling Pontifex of the Dream.”

D8	TITLE	D8	TITLE
1	Adjective Epithet Noun	5	Verb Adjective Noun
2	Noun Adjective Noun	6	Verb Epithet Noun
3	Epithet Adjective Noun	7	Adjective Verb Noun
4	Adjective Noun Epithet	8	Title Verb Noun

D8	D10	WORD	D8	D10	WORD
1	1	Alabaster	5	1	Mouth
	2	Anguish		2	Night
	3	Arm		3	Opalescent
	4	Ashen		4	Purple
	5	Bleeding		5	Radiant
	6	Blue		6	Rage
	7	Breeding		7	Ravening
	8	Burrowing		8	Red
	9	Claw		9	Rotting
	10	Consuming		10	Sagacious
2	1	Craving	6	1	Sand
	2	Crimson		2	Scarlet
	3	Dancing		3	Scorn
	4	Dawn		4	Screaming
	5	Day		5	Second
	6	Descending		6	Sevenfold
	7	Dreaming		7	Shrieking
	8	Dusk		8	Silken
	9	Emerald		9	Singing
	10	Empty		10	Sixfold
3	1	Eye	7	1	Sleeping
	2	Festering		2	Smoke
	3	First		3	Sorrow
	4	Fivefold		4	Stinking
	5	Fourfold		5	Tendril
	6	Fuligin		6	Third
	7	Greed		7	Thirsting
	8	Growing		8	Thorns
	9	Hand		9	Tone
	10	Hatred		10	Undying
4	1	Head	8	1	Unknowable
	2	Howling		2	Unseeing
	3	Hunger		3	Viridian
	4	Incarnadine		4	Wailing
	5	Indifference		5	Waiting
	6	Listening		6	Walking
	7	Living		7	Watching
	8	Lust		8	Wing
	9	Many		9	Writhing
	10	Memory		10	Yellow



AN EXAMPLE OF CREATING A PANTHEON

Fabricating his new world, a GM has no special preferences in matters of unholy deities. A random roll on the pantheon table shows that there are 4 known gods associated in a single pantheon and four more that have no special connection to each other. For simplicity's sake, the GM decides to fashion the pantheon first.

He begins by rolling a couple of pantheon traits that will characterize this collection of outer gods. The dice say that this particular conger of dark powers are Imprisoned and Hierarchical. They have what humans perceive to be a clear pecking order, and something has shackled them away from the circles of the mundane world.

The GM begins with the ruler of the pantheon, and a glance at the Resource section provides the suitably Lovecraftian name of Ubboch Tlo. A visit to the portfolios and modes provides that it is the Seer of a specific alien race. As the GM has yet to fabricate any alien races, he puts a placeholder there for the moment and decides that Ubboch Tlo is actually the hive-mind consciousness of the alien race, manifesting through the thoughts of this species. A roll for a suitable title shows that Ubboch Tlo is known among its human cultists as the Seer of Crimson Sorrow.

The second god is Limmog, the Breaker of Memory. The GM is getting a distinctly cerebral vibe from the gods generated thus far, and decides that Limmog is a subordinate deity who destroys the memories of sentient creatures, breaking down their recollections as food for Ubboch Tlo and replacing them with the nightmarish contemplations of the Seer of Crimson Sorrow. The cultic epithet for Limmog is the First Craving Bred, the primordial hunger of the ruler of the gods.

The third deity is Vohag-Hlu, the Mother of Death. When Limmog has consumed the last of a being's memories and nothing remains of their mind, Vohag-Hlu renders them into food for the bodies of their fellows, nourishing the multitude so that Ubboch Tlo may feed. Her devotees know her also as the Mother of the Rotting Head, eidolon of the decay of the sacred brain.

The fourth god of the pantheon is Zothogu, the Conceiver of Disease. It is a god of cancers, a patron of fevers and deformations of the flesh, the servitor of Vohag-Hlu who enacts the will of the Mother of the Rotting Head. Its servants also call it the Fuligin Bringer of Blood in certain of their texts.

With the qualities of the four gods determined, the GM now takes a moment to connect them with the traits already devised. Both Limmog and Vohag-Hlu are servant-deities to Ubboch Tlo, while disease-bringing Zothogu is the tool of the goddess of death. The hierarchy there is simple enough.

Imprisonment offers more ambiguity. It could be that the alien race itself is seeking to imprison their gods, hiding them away in the shackles of their own thoughts in order to prevent them from making a harvest of their minds. Instead, they placate Ubboch Tlo with the memories of human thralls, even though it brings them occasional frenzies of self-consumptive madness to defy the god that is their hive-mind.

While these human thralls are meant to merely be food, Ubboch Tlo and his servitors have started at least one major human cult dedicated to freeing the imprisoned pantheon and bringing them forth to feed upon the minds of their wayward servants. Of course, if they ever accomplish such a thing, the hungry pantheon will gladly consume more than alien minds.

The other four gods serve as wild cards in the campaign, self-centered sources of eldritch evil that need not necessarily connect to the other cultic powers. These one-off gods help break up a too-neat cosmology and help keep players from getting too comfortable in their understanding of the outer gods. While human cults of the Ubboch Tlo pantheon might have reason to cooperate with each other, these outliers can serve as equal-opportunity enemies to all the other eldritch cults in the campaign.

Hlagoth, the Eater of the Sky, is a god who devours the wind and consumes the wisps of atmosphere that shelter a planet. Its particular trait is Animism, and its presence in this reality is localized in a particular frozen Antarctic mountain wreathed in the perpetual roaring winds that rush to feed Hlagoth's hunger. Its worshipers know it as the Devourer of the Fourfold Emptiness, consumer of the winds of each direction. When its work is complete, its faithful will be elevated into the naked void above to dwell with it in glory... or so they imagine.

Mok'lag, the Feaster of Words, devours the concept of language. Its hierarchs communicate with gesture and lamps and scents, seeking the perfect wisdom that lies behind the absence of all possible words. Its special trait is Disguise, and Mok'lag is actually the animating power behind a Christian monastic order especially devoted to silence. The enlightened abbots of this order know it as the Eater of the Stinking Tone of Indifference.

Jivavu, the Deviser of Night, brings forth darkness and negation of radiance. Its special quality is that it is Aspected, and there are cults that revere Jivavu both as a patron of deception and secrecy and those that pray to it as an eidolon of elder night. Both cults of the Maker of the Descending Dusk likely hate each other as heretics.

Nimmu-Dzag, the Lady of Parasites, commands all things that feed upon living flesh and hot blood, and her rites of worship are especially hideous to behold. Her trait is Indifference, and she never troubles to manifest her power for her worshipers or answer their pleas. She only cares to feed through the mouths of her sacred beasts, and her cults serve because they are made hosts of these hideous insectile things. They know her as the Ravening Lady.

With the primordial powers of outer night properly created and recorded, the GM can now move on to fashion the rest of his secret world. These gods might need avatars, symbols, and other paraphernalia of worship, but these details can be established when their respective cults are generated. Until it's necessary to establish more about them it's best to let them remain minimally developed. The more you nail down at this point, the harder it will be to sculpt things to fit your later campaign developments.

CREATING ALIENS: WELCOMING IN THE STRANGERS

With dark powers devised, the GM can now generate the major alien races of their campaign world. These intruders may be natives of some distant planet in the mundane world, or they might be interlopers from strange Kelipot or distant realms of madness. In a Lovecraftian game, their only reasonably certain quality is an overwhelming malevolence toward human life.

Alien interaction with humanity is usually the incidental consequence of some greater purpose they cherish. It's not that humanity is of any importance to them, it's that Earth provides some rare material, some mystical significance, or a convenient battleground against their real rivals. Their dealings with humanity are usually only insofar as the primitive ape-things can give them something useful to their real purpose, a purpose which is usually highly unpleasant to humanity.

In your campaign, aliens can serve as an organizing force for dangerous cults and constructors of hidden bases among human societies. Their exotic technology can make a useful prize for inquisitive player characters, and their purposes on Earth are often more easily understood than the ineffable indifference of the outer gods. If the aliens have a clear *modus operandi* they can also help players feel engaged by recognizing situations and activities that are characteristic of their specific style. Inexplicable evil is all well and good, but complete randomness can be frustrating for those trying to find patterns in a set of events.

If you're making your first pass through the campaign you shouldn't feel obligated to define any alien races if you don't care to spend the time on them. The only aliens that need to be defined from the start are those you intend to have had a profound effect on human history or their evolutionary development. Species that haven't had a deep effect on history or a significant presence on earth can be generated whenever you need them.

You should consider whether you intend to have a single significant alien race or several of them in your campaign. A single breed of alien can help focus player attention and give you just one sinister inhuman society to develop. While one-off monsters and wayward intruders might exist, keeping the major alien races to a single entry gives you less development work.

If you choose to have multiple significant races in your campaign you provide yourself with an easy source of conflict. These inhuman powers almost certainly hate each other more than they do the trifling human natives, and their schemes and counterplots provide good opportunities to involve PC investigations.

This section of the book is focused on the aliens' natures and appearances. If you need to generate combat statistics for them, the tools in the Bestiary chapter can provide guidelines.



GRIM HISTORIES

The tables here can be used to generate a few quick ideas as to what kind of influence the aliens have had on human nature or history. A GM can roll one of each type of die to get a result, with two different d12 tables offered for those GMs who want a little more specificity about the influence the aliens had on human society. As always, a GM can ignore unnecessary tables or edit the result as their creativity requires.

D4 HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN HERE?

- 1 Since the deep prehuman past.
- 2 Since the earliest ages of human development.
- 3 Within the past thousand years or so.
- 4 Only for the past one or two centuries at most.

D10 WHY AREN'T THEY KNOWN?

- 1 Their artifacts and structures melt away if untended.
- 2 Their great works were so long ago they have all vanished.
- 3 Their cities were in now-uninhabited parts of the world.
- 4 Some among them work to assiduously clean up evidence.
- 5 Some humans work to assiduously clean up evidence.
- 6 Their structures exist on a different wavelength of reality.
- 7 Their works are disguised as products of human builders.
- 8 Their works aren't even recognized as such by humans.
- 9 Their major works are all elsewhere in the solar system.
- 10 They perfectly disguised themselves as humans.

D20 THEIR GREATEST REMAINING WORK

- 1 Biological control or influence codes in human DNA
- 2 A massive city somewhere in the polar ice
- 3 A number of eldritch weapons of similar appearance
- 4 An engine that maintains a vital part of earth's ecology
- 5 A major religious text formulated under their control
- 6 Secret psychological conditioning embedded in humanity
- 7 Automated servants created in a former age
- 8 A vast metropolis deep beneath the ocean
- 9 A hidden orbital station concealed from human sensors
- 10 A buried alien base beneath a major human city
- 11 A strange geographical feature created by their technology
- 12 A monstrous human-derived servitor race, now masterless
- 13 An ancient civilization actually built by them
- 14 A lost alien command center deep within a desert
- 15 An alien spacecraft hidden somewhere in the wilderness
- 16 A concealed global network of underground structures
- 17 A planet or moon they added to the solar system
- 18 A selection of alien technology kept by human heirs
- 19 Music which can control or influence human minds
- 20 A nefarious alien "book" containing mind-ruining truths

D6 WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

- 1 Explorers or vanguards of a distant alien species.
- 2 Exiles and outcasts from their own kind, banished forever.
- 3 Natives of this solar system, but terribly different.
- 4 Soldiers in a war humanity cannot comprehend.
- 5 Colonists seeking to expand their species' influence.
- 6 Ineffable visitors, crystallizing from eldritch possibility.

D8 WHAT DO THEY THINK OF HUMANS?

- 1 Humans are vermin to them, not even counted sentient.
- 2 Humans are meat tools, to be shaped and used as needed.
- 3 Humans are weeds, annoying pests and animate clutter.
- 4 Humans are hideously disgusting and loathsome.
- 5 Humans are fuel to be burnt for their needs or ambitions.
- 6 Humans are fine hosts for larvae or other offspring.
- 7 Humans are terrifying monsters and persecutors.
- 8 Humans are wondrous and utterly fascinating to them.

D12 WHAT DID THEY INFLUENCE?

- 1 Wars. They started at least one great war for their ends.
- 2 Religion. One substantial religion results from their work.
- 3 Geography. Some region of earth is their handiwork.
- 4 Ideology. One ideology is secretly from their thinkers.
- 5 Government. One government was controlled by them.
- 6 City. One historical city was actually under their control.
- 7 Psychics. Psychic powers are a product of their influence.
- 8 Sorcery. Many sorcerers draw from their knowledge.
- 9 Art. A great artist or work of art was really their doing.
- 10 Animal life. Some animals are secretly under their control.
- 11 Climate. They changed or are changing it to suit them.
- 12 Astronomy. They altered the solar system to their needs.

D12 WHY DID THE INFLUENCE END?

- 1 A human group banded together to stop them.
- 2 Their human catspaws were destroyed by others.
- 3 They lost interest in meddling with humanity.
- 4 They accomplished their purpose, and had no other goal.
- 5 A factional dispute within their numbers stopped them.
- 6 Trouble with other aliens or entities distracted them.
- 7 They never really intended to influence mankind at all.
- 8 They ran out of something they needed to influence us.
- 9 Events spiraled beyond their control or wishes.
- 10 Their human minions ran wild and slipped their control.
- 11 An environmental change forced them to cease their acts.
- 12 It never has ended, it's just become more subtle.

DARK WAYS

Every ineffable alien race needs its own horrible habits and debased values. The tables below offer some quick possibilities, along with suggestions for their immediate goals in the region. Alien minds can be difficult to portray in play, but a basic grasp as to the things they want, the things they fear, and the values they hold precious or loathsome can help give a GM some hints as to how they might pursue their schemes.

D4 HOW DIRECTLY INVOLVED ARE THEY?

- 1 They actually live within human communities.
- 2 They live apart from humans, but go among them at times.
- 3 They prefer to work through human agents and catspaws.
- 4 Aggressively aloof, trying to avoid all human contact.

D10 WHAT IS THEIR ADVANTAGE?

- 1 Stealth. They are extremely hard to detect.
- 2 Sorcery. They are versed in much black magic.
- 3 Disguise. They can look exactly like humans if needed.
- 4 Wealth. They have enormous amounts of money.
- 5 Distance. Their critical structures are very hard to get to.
- 6 Science. Their technology is useful, if ineffable.
- 7 Knowledge. They know what others have forgotten.
- 8 Spies. They're watching all the time.
- 9 Mind control. They can somehow control human brains.
- 10 Allies. They have minions in government or on the street.

D20 WHY ARE THEY IN THIS REGION?

- 1 Here to mine some mineral vital to their survival.
- 2 They've always been here, merely very well hidden.
- 3 They've been beckoned in by human occultists as allies.
- 4 They've come in to seize control of a local cult.
- 5 They're trapped here by some ancient sorcery.
- 6 They need to remain close to an ancient life-support unit.
- 7 This location provides ideal spawning material for them.
- 8 They suck nourishment from places of eldritch power.
- 9 The place somehow reminds them of their lost home.
- 10 They're trying to build a way back home here.
- 11 They're trying to subvert local government with minions.
- 12 They're hiding here from some scourge of their kind.
- 13 They're recruiting a swarm of human slaves here.
- 14 They're cooperating with local government officials.
- 15 They're trying to open a path for more of their kind.
- 16 They serve in a local temple to an eldritch deity.
- 17 They're trying to wake up some ancient inhuman power.
- 18 They're guarding a vast army of their sleeping brethren.
- 19 They're waiting for a prophesied disaster to arrive here.
- 20 They're starting a covert alien colonization plan here.

D6 WHAT DO THEY FEAR?

- 1 Humans. They dread a humanity unified against them.
- 2 Outer gods. They have reason to dread their wrath.
- 3 Rivals. Some other aliens threaten their destruction.
- 4 Their own. Treachery from within threatens them all.
- 5 Nature. Some terrestrial quality is deadly to them.
- 6 Sorcerers. Some cult or arch-mage seeks their ruin.

D8 HOW DO THEY CONTROL MINIONS?

- 1 Bribery. The pay is far more than minions can earn.
- 2 Technology. Minions are mind-controlled or tech-slaved.
- 3 Addiction. They give something the minion must have.
- 4 Zeal. They have an ideology that attracts fanatical sorts.
- 5 Magic. Minions are bound with sorcerous rites.
- 6 Blackmail. They know things that minions want hidden.
- 7 Lies. They trick minions into thinking goals are their own.
- 8 Kin. Minions are relatives or heirs to ancestral service.

D12 WHAT VALUES DO THEY ADMIRE?

- 1 Physical strength and the crushing of their enemies.
- 2 Utter mercilessness is their guiding principle.
- 3 Spawning and reproduction of their kind is critical.
- 4 They extol the complete extermination of terrestrial life.
- 5 Consumption. To devour is to be great.
- 6 Pain. The infliction of torment is the key to rule.
- 7 Treachery and the ruin of all who trust in their words.
- 8 Debasement and defilement of those beneath them.
- 9 Transformation of life into useful tools for them.
- 10 Piety and the hideous worship of their gods.
- 11 Struggle, and the constant strife among their own kind.
- 12 Devotion and blind worship by those beneath them.

D12 WHAT VALUES DO THEY DESPISE?

- 1 Truthfulness, scorning words of excess honesty.
- 2 Pity, showing no forbearance to failure or uselessness.
- 3 Beauty, hating everything that humans find aesthetic.
- 4 Cooperation, each sullenly pursuing its own plans.
- 5 Adaptation. They change only their environment.
- 6 Weakness, where the weakest are food for the greater.
- 7 Directness, instead seeking to do all things secretly.
- 8 Generosity, moving their minions only by pain and fear.
- 9 Human technology, loathing human science and its fruits.
- 10 Piety, hating human religions and having none themselves.
- 11 Passion, seeking cold and merciless logic in all things.
- 12 Change, seeking all things to be exactly as they were.

THE CREATURE'S PHYSICAL FORM

D20	BASIC CONFIGURATION	ANIMAL TYPES AND CHARACTERISTICS	OTHER GROWTHS
1	Upright humanoid	Ant Segmented, crawling, identical, queen-serving	Antenna
2	Quadrupedal	Ape Hulking, primordial, feral, long-limbed	Weeping sores
3	Birdlike walker	Bear Muscular, tough, small-eyed, thick hide	Bulging tumors
4	Centauroid	Beetle Wing cases, iridescence, burrowing	Pus-filled sacs
5	Legless crawler	Bird Sharp beaks, talons, feathers, scaly limbs	Vestigial limbs
6	Amoeboid	Canine Acute smell, packs, hierarchies	Excess eyes
7	Radial symmetry	Eel Bulging eyes, fangs, rasping mouths, limbless	Tail
8	Seal or fish-like structure	Feline Cruelty, sinuousness, speed, silence	Fins
9	Spherical	Fish Silence, stink, scales, hunger, schools	Spines
10	Half-intangible cloud	Fly Swarming, vomiting, carrion, nimbleness	Frills
11	Upright cylinder	Lizard Basking, indifference, quickness, pebbled hide	External organs
12	Conical mass	Lobster Pincers, molting shells, spiky feelers	Warts
13	Jellyfish-like	Maggot Softness, wetness, rot, squirming, gnawing	Bone spikes
14	Congery of geometric shapes	Snake Poison, treachery, cunning, stealth	Patches of shell
15	Mostly liquid	Spider Webs, faceted eyes, venom, husks, patience	Phosphorescent parts
16	Bird-like winged	Squid Tentacles, beaks, eyes, ink, color-changing	Stalked eyes
17	Many-legged crawler	Toad Sticky tongue, warts, croaking, jumping	Chitin spurs
18	Roll again, plus many legs	Turtle Hard shell, slowness, snapping beak, burrows	Slime glands
19	Roll again, plus many arms	Wasp Parasitic eggs, poison, viciousness, slenderness	Excess mouths
20	Roll again, plus 1d4 parts	Worm Blindness, burrowing, slime, decay	Roll twice and blend

D12	ARM OR LEG	HAND / FOOT	HEAD	SKIN	TORSO	MOUTH	TENTACLE
1	Human-like	Clawed	Animalistic	Slime	Segmented thorax	Small mandibles	Suckered
2	Many-jointed	Tendrils digits	Human-like	Scales	Serpentine	Fanged jaws	Gelatinous
3	Emaciated	Paw-like	Skeletal	Flayed	Emaciated	Human-like	Leathery
4	Grossly muscled	Skeletal	Mist-shroud	Humanlike	Amorphous pile	Vertical jaws	Spiked
5	Extremely long	Human-like	Half-melted	Feathers	Human-like	Skeletal maw	Vampiric
6	Flabby & swollen	1d4+5 digits	Muzzled	Fur	Grossly obese	Sucking proboscis	Many-jointed
7	Flayed or skinless	Hooved / horny	Featureless	Pebbled	Chitinous body	Rasping sucker	Bladed
8	Shrunken	Bladed	Mantis-like	Chitinous	Spidery thorax	Blade mandibles	Fanged
9	Bifurcated	Suckers	Neckless maw	Transparent	Intertwined cords	Crushing teeth	Eye-studded
10	Telescoping	Small mouths	Microcephalic	Blistered	Fishlike sleekness	Mouthless	Mouthed
11	Twisted	1d4 digits	Grossly large	Warty	Spherical mass	Bladed maw	Poison-coated
12	Digitigrade	Spray of digits	Multi-headed	Leathery	Thick cylinder	Acidic spittle	Metallic

ADDITIONAL TRAITS

D10	MANNER OF FEEDING	VOICE OR CALL	THE WAY IT MOVES	HUNTING STYLE
1	Liquefies its food	Deep, bone-vibrating bass	Slow and deliberate	Chases down prey
2	Eats its food alive	Shrill and piping	Skittering and nimble	Stalks in ambush
3	Eats well-aged carrion	Wet and slaving	Motionless, then quick	Lies in wait
4	Eats it raw	Fluting and tonal	Serpentine smoothness	Lures prey in
5	Elaborately prepares its meals	Chorus of many voices	Staggering and lurching	Eats carrion and decay
6	It kills, but does not seem to eat	Airy and breathy	Twitching and violent	Feeds on sick and weak
7	Tears prey to small pieces	Too high or low for human ears	As if to a strange dance	Pretends to be prey
8	Swallows prey whole	Whispering like dry leaves	Through alien angles	Forces slaves to gather
9	Often saves prey for later	Metallic buzz	Leaping and bounding	Raises “livestock”
10	Crushes food to paste	Crystalline chiming	Crazed velocity	Parasitizes its prey

D100 OPTIONAL SPECIAL ABILITIES

1-4	By warping light they can turn invisible 1d4 times a day for up to an hour. The invisibility is broken by energetic motion
5-8	Their touch liquefies terrestrial animal tissue, adding +1d6 acid damage to physical attacks
9-12	Emit a hideous stench that leaves all victims in a 10 meter radius at -2 to hit for 1d6 minutes
13-16	Their touch is extremely hot, adding +1d6 fire damage to all physical attacks
17-20	A toxic stinger or claws; on a save vs. Physical Effect, the victim is -2 to hit for 1d6 minutes. Failure adds 2d6 damage.
21-24	They can move on solid surfaces in defiance of gravity, either through spatial warping or clinging limbs
25-28	They can take the shape of humans whose blood they taste
29-32	They fly with wings, gas sacs, or alien physiognomy, usually at a movement rate of 30 meters per movement action
33-36	They move in bursts of speed, gaining an additional round's action every even-numbered combat round
37-40	They burrow through earth at a rate of 3 meters per round, and rock at a tenth of that
41-44	They can target specific human body parts to mutilate and ruin on a successful hit and failed Physical Effect save
45-48	They are partially insubstantial; every non-magical hit has a 50% chance to do no harm at all
49-52	They can track their prey unerringly through scent, psychic emanations, or temporal perception of where they will be
53-56	They erupt with biting larvae when they die, inflicting 2d6 damage on all within 5 meters unless victims make an Evasion save
57-60	They inject an enslaving ichor in prey, forcing a Mental Effect save or the victim becomes their helpless thrall
61-64	They disrupt electronic devices by their presence, rendering them useless as long as the alien is within 30 meters
65-68	They possess titanic strength, gaining +4 on all damage rolls and able to lift and throw a car
69-72	They keep functioning 1d4 rounds after reaching zero hit points, as they refuse to die as terrestrial things do
73-76	They have an innate ability identical to one spell of level 1d4.
77-80	They can warp space so as to teleport a distance equal to their usual movement rate
81-84	They're temporally out of phase, so any damage or other hostile effect they suffer only occurs one round later
85-88	They fight with a blur of haste or multiple limbs, gaining three attacks per round
89-92	They vomit a noxious substance that inflicts 2d6 damage (1d6 Slaughter) on anyone in melee with them, once per 5 minutes
93-96	They have uncanny reflexes, and always win initiative over humans
97-00	They breathe whispers of unendurable horror, inflicting 1 Madness on all within 5 meters every round they live.

CREATING KELIPOT: REALMS OF SHADOWED DREAM

The mundane world that the heroes know is not the only possible existence. While trans-dimensional aliens and other eldritch things dwell within the darkness of the outermost voids, there are nearer husks of reality that do not stray so far from the waking world. Scholars of the bleak mysteries call such shards Kelipot, or Kelipah in the singular, and they are numberless and strange.

Some of them are mere pockets of curdled reality, chancres and boils on the skin of the world. They are hallways in houses that should not be there, or rooms behind walls that have no space for them. They are deep forest clearings that appear on no map, or roads that lead to houses that the waking world never built. Kelipot can be very small indeed.

Others are huge, wild expanses of dream and nightmare that spread out over continents or entire worlds. They are massive cities of the dead, dream-realms of tangible myth, or flesh-fashioned tales told by delirious gods. Such a Kelipah might swallow the waking world whole in its vastness and in its endless desolations.

Kelipot are dangerous. Even the ones that appear harmless, the ones that seem to be dreams of light and beauty, are places that are fundamentally alien to human existence. Their inhabitants are not men and women, however they may seem to be. At most, they are something almost-human, something that looks and acts and seems to be akin to mundane humanity save in those ways that are specific to their realm. Their homelands can eat an unwary intruder whole, and many are filled with dangers that outsiders cannot hope to anticipate.

Most Kelipot do not hide their perils. They are monstrous places, shadowed and strange, and the inhabitants are dangerous to human intruders. They are places of monsters and unbearable revelations, full of torments impossible in the mundane world. Skies of burning glass and seas of opalescent liquid agony scour some domains, while others promise nightmares from behind the waxen masks of not-men. To enter a Kelipah is to risk destruction.

Even so, sometimes there is little choice in the matter. Sometimes a Kelipah holds the sanctum of some foul cult, or is the wellspring of a monstrous incursion into the waking world. Brave heroes must enter these places to root out the evils within, or smash the nests of some gibbering swarm of horrors.

At other times, a Kelipah holds knowledge, or power, or strange allies that might be enlisted by sufficiently desperate heroes. A Kelipah is nearer to the outer dark than the mundane world, and much is revealed there that is never shown beneath the clean sunlight of Earth. Some vital secrets might only be discoverable in their hidden depths.

Not every campaign will have use for Kelipot. For some games, it's best to focus entirely on the mundane world, and Kelipot may not even exist in such settings. Other GMs like the occasional taste of the wholly supernatural, however, and enjoy adding places where conventional law no longer holds sway. This section gives guidelines for creating and using Kelipot, and will help a GM to build these pocket worlds to the extent their campaign might require the work.

THE WAYS OF THE OUTER REALMS

Kelipot are reached through **Ways**, arcane gates that allow creatures to pass from world to world. Some of these gates are visible, while others are perceptible only to magic. Some of them function constantly, while others work only with the help of particular actions, incantations, or circumstances. Most of the Ways work in both directions, but a few of these portals lead only to or from their destinations.

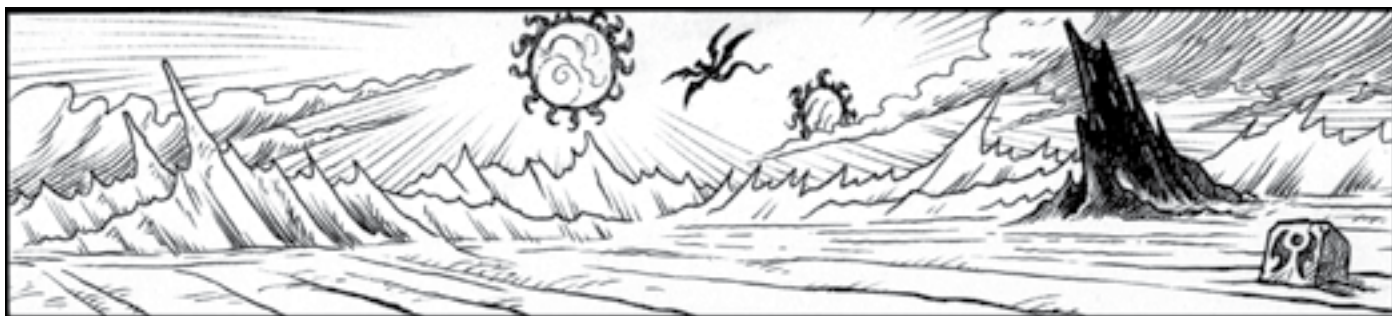
Active Ways are not usually found in centers of active human habitation. Something about the roil of mundane humanity tends to smooth over these cracks in reality and seal shut the holes in foreign worlds. While opening a Way in the middle of Times Square is theoretically possible, the great majority of such dimensional fissures are found instead in desolate or remote locations, or deep within the ruins of abandoned human dwellings. A few smaller Ways can be found in seemingly ordinary buildings or places, however.

A few Ways exist in the form of dreaming states or specific meditations. When dosed with the correct drugs or practiced in the right arcane mantras, voyagers may send forth their dream-selves to enter a Kelipah. Years might pass within the dream-realm without more than a single hour passing in the mundane world. In time, the drug wears off or the incantation fades, and the voyagers awake in their familiar bodies. Those who die in the dream-realm will never rise from their slumber—or if they do, it will be something else entirely that wears their empty skin. Most objects cannot travel to or from such phantom realms, though powerful arcane objects can sometimes be carried into such a place or brought forth by sufficiently brave adventurers.

Ways are “natural” phenomena, in the sense that they usually coalesce for reasons incomprehensible to humans. Great atrocities, massacres, or concentrated periods of madness and horror sometimes loosen the fibers of mundane reality sufficient to provide an opening for a Way, but forcing this phenomenon is difficult even for the most dedicated monster. Some great sorcerers have secret rites for opening these doors wherever they desire them, but such magic is commonly the preserve of madmen, cult hierarchs, and practitioners of black wizardry.

An physical Way admits anyone who passes through it. Such travelers appear instantly at the Way's destination along with whatever they might have been carrying at the time. Very large Ways might allow the passage of vehicles or massive entities, but most aren't much larger than a human form. Travel through a Way usually leaves an intense feeling of uncleanness and faint nausea in a user, but such discomfort normally fades within minutes. Ways do not normally provide any protection for travelers who venture into environmentally hostile realms. Investigators who are not equipped to handle local conditions will find their journeys ending in a very abrupt fashion.

Ways usually require some sorcerous effort to permanently close them, and there are certain spells which can be used to seal Ways for greater or lesser periods of time. Those with fewer occult resources might bury or wall up a Way, trusting that whatever might lie on the other side will not eventually claw its way through.



THE HAND OF MUNDANITY

Kelipot vary in their adherence to mundane reality. Even the most logical and rational ones have frayed edges of unreason in their makeup, while the most extravagantly inhuman realms might be unendurable by mortals for anything more than short jaunts. There are three different levels of mundanity possible for a Kelipah, and you can use them as models for the degree of rationality and logic you use in assembling a realm for your game.

Static Kelipot are very similar to the mundane Earth. Incomprehensible features are few and subtle, and the sentient inhabitants usually have recognizable thought patterns and motivations that make sense to humans. The inhabitants interact in ways that outsiders can comprehend, and may have jobs, interests, and desires much like humans. The environment behaves in rational ways—dropped objects fall, there is something like a sun in the sky, water flows downhill, and the flora and fauna appear to be things that could at least theoretically exist on Earth. You could even use many conventional fantasy settings as the backdrop for a static Kelipah.

Static Kelipot are best used when you foresee a lot of PC interaction with the inhabitants. The more esoteric and bizarre you make a Kelipah, the harder it is to model the thinking and interests of the locals. If the natives of this dream-realm have desires similar to those of humans, it becomes much easier to roleplay them and track their interests. Sentient platonic solids who communicate via modulations of a crawling sense of dread might make for good enigmatic monsters, but they're less useful as interlocutors.

This is not to say that static Kelipot are just a different Earth. There is always something *wrong* about a Kelipah, always something fundamental that is different and uncanny. In the simplest sense, this might be the presence of overt magic in the world. You might break out your traditional old-school RPGs and use the rules in them to conjure up monsters and sorcerers who use a more active and vigorous form of magic than that practiced by earthly adepts. If you want to send your PCs into a world where their gunslinging toughs and wise-cracking investigators go up against armored knights and wild-eyed sorcerers, a static Kelipah works perfectly.

Themed Kelipot revolve around a particular place, structure, or idea. The House That Wasn't There is an example of such a place, a Kelipah that consists only of a manor that does not actually exist in the waking world. So also might a world-sea Kelipah, a stygian temple beneath endless stone, or a world of tangible music all have a specific thematic focus to their details.

In such a Kelipot, everything is fundamentally about the theme. In such a dream-house, there is not just an absence of anything outside the house's walls, there is the absence even of the *concept* of anything outside the house's walls. PCs in such a realm may be physically incapable of thinking about the exterior of the house without suffering Madness, as they meddle with concepts that simply have no place in such a deformed world.

In a world like this, variations and local law anomalies all revolve around this theme or locale. Every change or alteration made to the Kelipah should be in some way connected to this idea—toxic environments should relate to acidic currents in the world-sea or choking dust in the empty house, while spatial distortions might cause every possible location in the realm of the black monolith to somehow have the structure looming immediately nearby.

Dream Kelipot are places of stories and archetypes with a thin skin of normality stretched over their surface. Things happen in dream Kelipot because they are narratively appropriate, or because they are in the archetype of the enactors. In the markets of Dzur, the saffron-turbaned merchants barter the dying words of sages for beautiful, tongueless slaves brought by the desert-men in their cloaks of black sand and blood. They do this because it is the nature of merchants to barter and the nature of raiders to enslave, and it is the nature of Dzur to be a place where these things happen.

Dream Kelipot are interwoven places of stories, where particular tales are enacted by the logic of storytellers and dreamers. There are no Dzurian Customs Offices adjudicating the appropriate tariff on second-grade beautiful tongueless slaves, nor a Dzurian Mercantile Academy Sub-Committee on Slave Torture Via Forced Rice Consumption. Mundane details of tariffs and shipping and acquiring sufficient supplies of saffron dye for turbans are simply nonexistent in such a Kelipah because they are not meaningful parts of the story and are not significant elements of the setting.

And yet the world continues to operate without these little details, and trying to discern them can provoke the same Madness that always comes when an outsider tries to introduce ideas and concepts that are utterly foreign to a Kelipah's reality. The merchants of Dzur always have their saffron turbans because that is the way they are. An outsider who disrupts this order of affairs becomes part of the Kelipah's tale and must somehow survive the narrative consequences of his act. One who slays a merchant and steals his turban for a disguise makes a new story with his actions, one that might end happily for him or one that may end as a profoundly cautionary tale.

When running PCs in a dream Kelipah, the key thing to remember is that the world works by story logic. Entities serve their archetype, and while it's not impossible to shake an inhabitant out of the grooves of its personal narrative, such an effort is difficult and terrifying for the subject, who experiences it much as a human might experience a delirious fit of madness.

In the same fashion, the minutiae of local economies, social structures, and geography are almost always irrelevant. A city may not be able to survive on the commerce in tongueless slaves and dying sage-words, but that is irrelevant, because that is what Dzur is, so it is sufficient for the city. Heroes who wish to reach a particular destination do not painstakingly stage supplies and arrange a precisely-mapped route to their goal. They simply reach it, unless there is some challenge or mystery on the way to impeded them, in which case their hazy journey pauses only so long as is necessary to deal with the difficulty. Dream Kelipot are worlds where everything is glossed except the story and the dream-logic.

PCs who work with such a Kelipah's logic will usually have far more success than those who try to struggle against it. If forced to creep into the arabesqued palace of the Weeping Sultan in order to retrieve the long-lost Emerald Seal of Agah Khan, a charismatic Socialite might attempt to woo the most neglected of the Sultan's nine and ninety wives in hopes of winning her aid in despoiling him of the seal. Since such palace intrigues are appropriate to the setting and story, the attempt's chance of success is increased— and even if it fails, it is most likely to lead to some further narrative complication rather than simple indifference. Conversely, deciding to blow up the main gate and charge in with guns blazing may fail at every level, as explosives prove inert in this world and the hundred holy eunuch warriors of the Weeping Sultan all rise as one to defend their master.

Alien Kelipot are unendurable by humans save for the very shortest sojourns. Something about this Kelipah is simply intolerable to human minds or bodies. The atmosphere may be toxic, the fauna might be uniformly ravenous for human flesh, the inhabitants might provoke Madness by their simple appearance, or some other variation from reality taken to a level that humans cannot possibly tolerate.

In a game, alien Kelipot fulfill two main roles. In the first, they're hostile terrain which the PCs must invade to kill, rescue, or steal a target. The characters must move as quickly as possible to avoid being destroyed by the dangers of the realm, and each delaying encounter with the local perils leaves them one step closer to their collective doom. In the other role, these Kelipot serve as midpoints between two distant Ways that lead to places the PCs want to reach. They're willing to endure the dangers of the place to cross it and get to the interdimensional gateway that will take them deep inside a cult fortress, for example, or place them in some far-distant Kelipah that cannot be reached directly from earth.

Creating an alien Kelipah is relatively simple. Just use the following tables to create environments and inhabitants and then take these results so far that humans could not possibly stand them for very long without protective gear or defensive sorcery. Don't worry about coherence or rationality. If these places were comprehensible to human reason, they wouldn't be so hostile to human existence.

THE SCALE OF THE KELIPAH

When building a Kelipah, the first thing you'll need to determine is what exactly you need it to do. If this Kelipah is needed as a secret cult stronghold, it doesn't need to be a particularly large one. If it is instead the end point of a fleeing sorcerer's extradimensional escape route, one which the PCs might have to chase him in for days, then you're going to need a larger world. At the very far end of the scale, you might establish it as some kind of dream-Earth, a wholesale echo of the waking world that you mean to use to interlace actions between mundane and dream-reality.

Whatever purpose you choose, you don't want to overbuild for it. You already have one substantial chunk of the world to write. You don't need to pile on another planet just because it might be useful. If it's fun and enjoyable to fashion a vast Kelipah then that's all to the good, but you should never feel any obligation to build more of a dream-realm than you need for your own campaign.

If you do decide that you need a large Kelipah for some purpose, you should consider recycling your work for other needed pocket-realms. Other gates and Ways might lead into different parts of that same world, and the characterization work you do on one can be recycled and tweaked for the next. Players may come to take advantage of this, learning the location of various Ways into the dream-world and using them as hidden roads to their own desired destinations.

The table below offers a few different sample scales for a Kelipot. You should pick the one that makes the most sense for your need, or roll if you really have no preference in the matter.

D6 THE SIZE OF THE REALM	
1	<i>Tiny.</i> The Kelipah is a single room, clearing, glade, or pool.
2	<i>Small.</i> The Kelipah is a single structure or building, though it may be a large one.
3	<i>Substantial.</i> The Kelipah is as large as a small town, with multiple interesting features in it.
4	<i>Large.</i> The Kelipah is as vast as a city, dozens of kilometers in diameter if it were reduced to mundane measurements.
5	<i>Region.</i> The Kelipah is the size of a small nation, with multiple communities or concentrations of features.
6	<i>World.</i> The Kelipah is a complete world, though it may not respect the geographic laws of mundane reality.

ESTABLISH BASIC TRAITS

Once you know how large the Kelipah ought to be, you can start to furnish it with an appropriate environment. In some cases this will be self-explanatory; if you're building a Kelipah that's a twisted shadow-analogue for a ruined mundane manor, then your realm is going to be shaped like a distorted mansion. If the realm is a smoking battleground that echoes an unending struggle from the Thirty Years' War then you have an automatic baseline for the terrain.

You don't always have such convenient hooks, however, and so the tables below provide some basic framing for your Kelipah. If you're building a particularly large husk of reality you might generate multiple sets of traits to represent different portions of the realm, with each of the regions having their own special horrors.

To begin, roll to determine the basic terrain of the Kelipah. You might mix this up a little by rolling more than once and mixing the terrain together—“Mountains” and “Forest” might produce thickly-forested mountains in one of the more rational realm, while in another one it might produce entire mountains made of living wood. Blend things according to your tastes.

Once you have the fundamental terrain chosen, you can start to mix in bizarre notes in certain environmental elements. You can pick or roll to determine both a part of the environment and a way in which it is twisted or disturbing. As with terrain, you can read this as something literal—“The rain is the color of blood.”—or as a metaphor, where rolling “The sea is an ancient ruin remnant” means that the oceans are actually gigantic bathing-pools with cyclopean fixtures lining the shore and eldritch gods swimming within their steaming depths.

Once you've twisted things to your liking, you can flavor the local flora and fauna with their own breed of uncanny nature. The tools earlier in the chapter for creating alien species might be enlisted to flesh out specific breeds of animals or plants, or you might simply use natural animals fitting the terrain but twisted in particular ways.

Once you have the basic elements of the Kelipah in hand, smooth over any contradictions or impossibilities as your needs require. Some Kelipot are rational enough to require some coherence and logic to their environment, even if it's “An Elder God did it.” Others are willfully demented, and operate in defiance of basic cause and effect.

BASIC TRAITS OF THE KELIPAH

D20	THE TERRAIN IS...	AN ELEMENT...	...IS WARPED THIS WAY	THE FLORA IS...	THE FAUNA IS...
1	Airless Rock	Caverns	Births monsters	Carnivorous	Avian or feathered
2	Arid Badland	Clouds	Comes from strange sources	Colonial or hive-like	Made of strange stuff
3	Blasted Waste	Earth	Found where it shouldn't be	Gelatinous / tentacular	Cries with human voices
4	Desert	Earthquakes	Ignites in unclean flames	Geometric in structure	Dead but still moving
5	Endless Sea	Fog	Induces a great emotion	Grows in alien matter	Feeds largely on carrion
6	Forest	Geysers	Induces madness	Jewel-colored	Ghostly or semi-tangible
7	Glassed-over	Hills	Is a home for dark things	Largely parasitic	Insatiably voracious
8	Icy Waste	Lakes	Is a road to evil places	Like prehistoric cycads	Inscribed with glyphs
9	Island Archipelago	Lightning	Is a slow poison	Made of strange stuff	Insectile or arthropodic
10	Jungle	Rain	Is a strange color	Mobile	Intelligent as humans
11	Landless Sky	Rivers	Is acidic or noxious	Nauseating in hue	Made of light or fog
12	Moorland	Seas	Is an ancient ruin remnant	Sentient to a degree	Metallic or artificial
13	Mountains	Seasons	Is sentient	Produces strange drugs	Warped and tormented
14	Plains	Shores	Issues terrible commands	Produces strange music	Parasitic on each other
15	River	Sky	Made of something strange	Resembles animals	Piscine or crablike
16	Savannah	Stars	Murderously dangerous	Spongy and moss-like	Plotting against humans
17	Swamp	Storms	Punishes those who offend	Strangely fragrant	Reptilian or serpentine
18	Tundra	Thunder	Scours or wounds	Symbiotic with animals	Resembles humans
19	Underwater	Tides	Serves dark powers	Vine-like and creeping	Warped in its shape
20	Volcanic	Wind	Whispers something	Violently invasive	Swarm or hive entities

CREATE THE INHABITANTS

Some Kelipah have no intelligent inhabitants of any kind, or are occupied only by human refugees from the mundane world. Others are too small to contain meaningful cultures, though they might have a denizen or two spawned from the substance of the husk. For times when you want to decorate a realm or a region with useful inhabitants, however, you can use the following tables to flavor your creations.

The first step is to pick a base inspiration for the culture. You can't possibly detail everything about these people in your notes, so by picking a basic outline for the group you can extemporize answers to questions that arise in play. The table below offers twelve different possibilities, but you don't need to use any of them wholesale. If you want to disguise your inspirations, you might apply different sources to different aspects of the culture—architecture in one style, physical appearance in another, and so forth.

D12	INSPIRATION
1	Ancient Rome or Greece
2	Contemporary native land of the PCs
3	Historical China or Southeast Asia
4	Historical India or subcontinental
5	Historical Japan—Heian, Meiji, Sengoku, etc.
6	Middle East—Islamic, Pre-Islamic, Golden Age, etc.
7	Medieval Africa—Dahomey, Ethiopia, Mali, etc.
8	Medieval continental Europe or Scandinavia
9	Pre-Colonial Polynesia
10	Pre-Columbian New World—Aztecs, Incas, Mayans, etc.
11	Pre-modern tribal of a region of choice
12	Roll twice and stitch them together

With a basic inspiration chosen, the next step is to decide how rigid this culture might be. In dream Kelipah or alien worlds, these cultures are usually remarkably static and unchanging—in some cases, the people are literally incapable of changing due to the properties of the Kelipah. By establishing the degree of rigidity to the world, you can avoid setting up cultural conflicts or values that don't fit. If the locals will forever be quasi-Egyptian, then you don't set them up with a conflict involving dramatic social changes.

D4	RIGIDITY
1	Frozen. The Kelipah's nature is such that the society can never change, but only be destroyed.
2	Variations. The culture can change in its details, but will always be fundamentally the same society.
3	Changeable. They can change as easily or as painfully as any normal Earth culture.
4	Flux. The culture will inevitably alter in drastic ways.

The next question that arises is how many inhabitants of the Kelipah belong to this dream-society. In some cases the answers are obvious or determined by your needs, but otherwise you can use the table below to randomly determine a population. If the Kelipah is too small to handle the largest results, just use a smaller die type when rolling on the table.

D8	POPULATION
1	One household. Or even one person, if they happen to be a sole survivor or an avatar of the Kelipah itself.
2	One clan. A few hundred at the most. If they persist, it's usually because the Kelipah requires them to exist rather than any scientific question of genetic viability.
3	One town. A few thousand, sufficient to make a viable population in a more rational Kelipah.
4	Many towns. A few tens of thousands, whether spread out in numerous towns or clustered in a single city as survivors of a formerly greater population.
5	Many cities. A few hundreds of thousands, sufficient for a small nation or a great feudal domain.
6	A nation. A million or more members of the society.
7	Several nations. Hundreds of millions of people.
8	A world. Billions of these beings are within the Kelipah.

With a clear idea of their basic inspiration, how rigid the culture is, and how many of them there are, you can now move on to choosing or rolling an appropriate degree of technological and magical development. It's rarely worth the effort to try to be too specific about either of these points—just a general hint of the kind of technology the natives of the Kelipah might have is sufficient for most gaming needs.

D8	MATERIAL TECHNOLOGY LEVEL
1	Stone Age. The locals are unable even to work metals.
2	Bronze Age. They have metalworking and muscle-powered devices and tools.
3	Renaissance. Complex muscle, wind, and water-powered devices are possible, perhaps with crude firearms.
4	Victorian. Steam power, firearms, and industrial plants are possible for them.
5	Modern. They have equivalents of computers, synthetics, internal combustion, and other modern trappings.
6	Futuristic. Their technology encompasses many of the things we would consider plausible for hard sci-fi.
7	Alien. They have devices that work on logical but unknown principles and perform soft sci-fi miracles.
8	Enigmatic. Their tech is indistinguishable from outright magic, and it may actually be as much.

In most Kelipot, the native inhabitants have a much closer relationship with magic than exists for humans in the mundane world. It is common for magic to be more overt and more clearly useful in Kelipot than on earth, though there is no guarantee that it is any more moral or safe to use. Societies deeply raddled with sorcery are usually terrible places, with awful sacrifices and unspeakable practices used to fuel these powers. Many of their efforts may be turned toward grand projects or massive edifices dedicated to their dark arts.

On other occasions, at least some of the magic is morally tolerable, and sorcerers may have honorable positions within the society. This is particularly likely if you decide to import the magic systems of other old-school games into your *Silent Legions* campaigns. Such magic may or may not function correctly in the mundane world, depending on whether you want to let your PCs wield it.

D6 MAGICAL PREVALENCE

- 1 **None.** This culture has absolutely no magical tradition, and may be incapable of using it.
- 2 **Lost.** The culture may have once had magical arts, but they have since been lost or rendered unusable. It may be they never had any, but a predecessor culture did.
- 3 **Hidden.** Sorcery is deplored and despised, and those who shepherd knowledge of it must hide that fact.
- 4 **Reserved.** These people have a magical tradition, but it is restricted to a specific group—rulers, priests, specially ordained wizards, or some other subgroup.
- 5 **Limited.** While there is no cultural bar on the practice of magic, only a limited number of the inhabitants have the talent or interest necessary to pursue the art.
- 6 **Widespread.** Most of the culture are either practitioners or participants in magical rituals. Elements of their society are likely strongly colored by their arcane arts.

Next, check to see if there are any substantial divisions in the culture. You may have already decided that the group is monolithic, either because you don't need the further complications of competing subgroups or because the population is too small to be reasonably divided.

D6 NUMBER OF MAJOR FACTIONS

- 1 **One.** The culture is unified around one authority.
- 2 **Two,** either near-equal or one strong and the other weak
- 3 **1d4+1 groups,** each with a largely fixed membership consisting of traditional allies and mutual interests.
- 4 **1d4+1 major alliances,** each composed of a shifting constellation of groups, castes, or occupations.
- 5 **Clan against clan,** where real trust only exists within the scope of extended families, castes, or communities.
- 6 **All against all,** where any formal organization is just a thin skin over a seething mass of treachery.



Once you know how many groups there are, you can decide how many formal organizations of authority exist within the culture. The table below offers a few basic templates for organizing the group, though individual factions or subgroups might pledge loyalty along other lines.

D12 RULING AUTHORITIES

- 1 **Anarchy.** The culture recognizes no authority beyond brute force and immediate convenience. Optionally, they are so cooperative and peaceful as to require no authority.
- 2 **Caste leaders.** Members obey the leader of their occupational or birth caste.
- 3 **Clan elders.** The heads of extended families work together to arrange affairs.
- 4 **Democracy.** Whether direct or in the form of a republic, the culture rules by general consensus.
- 5 **Feudal lordship.** A great lord rules through lesser ones.
- 6 **Hive mind.** They obey the will of the collective.
- 7 **Magocracy.** Sorcerers may rule them, or some other special caste of gifted entities.
- 8 **Monarchy.** A strong autarch directly rules the domain.
- 9 **Narrative.** The natives obey the theme or narrative of the Kelipah, compelled into fulfilling their destined roles.
- 10 **Oligarchy.** A group of powerful nobles, merchants, or other figures of importance make decisions.
- 11 **Subjection.** The culture is subjected by a stronger power, whether neighbors, dark gods, or uncaring aliens.
- 12 **Theocracy.** Priests of the elder gods or adepts of some mystical dream-faith are obeyed.

ADD VALUES, DESIRES AND ATTITUDES

By now, you should have a fairly clear idea of the culture's basic structure. You should be able to identify the ruling power, discern whether there are divisions in the society, and match their available technology and magical prevalence to the cultural inspiration you're using. While these are useful high-level determinations, you need something a little more specific if you're going to have an easy time playing these entities as NPCs.

For the next step, you're going to establish a pair of values which define those traits or qualities that the society prizes. The average NPC from the group is likely to be obviously motivated by these values. As PCs get to know the culture in more detail they'll doubtless discover the nuances and complications that shade even the most homogeneous community... unless they don't. In a Kelipah, there is no guarantee that the entity you are speaking with is even capable of being something other than what it seems to be. The natives may be mentally incapable of being merciful or breaking their sworn word or otherwise acting against their primary values. Such a condition is most common in themed or dream Kelipah where so much revolves around a narrative.

The table below offers twenty example values— the first ten being largely negative and the latter ten being mostly positive. You could roll 1d10 on each to balance matters in the society, or just pick something that fits the flavor of the domain.

D20 VALUES PRIZED BY THE CULTURE

1	Domination , conquest, and control of others.
2	Envy , despite, and desire to despoil others.
3	Fanaticism for a god, cause, nation, or race.
4	Greed for wealth, power, or dark secrets.
5	Hatred for outsiders, enemies, the weak, or the stronger.
6	Hedonism of the flesh and mind, heedless of the cost.
7	Ignorance , desiring the concealment of certain truths.
8	Obedience even to self-destruction or ruining others.
9	Treachery executed at the most profitable moment.
10	Violence and the delight in bloodshed and war.
11	Beauty in form, art, and creation.
12	Compassion and mercy toward the suffering.
13	Courage in the face of danger or horror.
14	Excellence in whatever role is chosen for a person.
15	Honesty in all things, especially when it costs.
16	Honor and the keeping of promises and duties.
17	Justice and the fair application of laws and rules.
18	Knowledge and enlightenment shared with all.
19	Loyalty to friends, lieges, and those pledged with it.
20	Selflessness and self-sacrifice for noble causes.

Now that you know what they esteem in their culture, what is it that this particular group of them desires? What goals are sought by their leadership, or what is it that the common people cry out to possess? If your culture is not some fly in amber, caught in perpetual stasis in the Kelipah, you can use the table below to get some idea of what they might want. If the society consists of different factions, they may have very different goals.

D12 DESIRES OF THE RULERS OR PEOPLE

1	Creation . They want to build something.
2	Expansion . They seek to push into a new region.
3	Knowledge . Some great secret obsesses them.
4	Peace . They desire an end to some terrible conflict.
5	Reform . They wish to renew their corrupt society.
6	Rescue . They want to save themselves or an ally.
7	Restoration . They want to bring back an old glory.
8	Stasis . They want to stop some threatening change.
9	Unity . They want to reunite their fractious people.
10	War . They seek the bloody ruin of a foe.
11	Wealth . They want riches and material wealth.
12	Worship . They seek to glorify their gods or masters.

With their values and goals in place, it can be useful to discover how they react to outsiders. In some cases, their attitude will be obvious— blood-crazed cultists of a gigantic cancer-god whose flesh forms the metastasized island of a Kelipah are unlikely to be all that friendly to infidel strangers. Still, even in obvious cases, the table below can give some idea as to how that hostility or friendliness might be flavored.

D8 ATTITUDE TOWARD OUTSIDERS

1	Oblivious . They are unaware that strangers exist, and will respond to outsiders with shock and disbelief.
2	Frightened . Outsiders are fearful emissaries of dark powers or bringers of plague and terror. They are to be shunned and avoided.
3	Hateful . Outsiders are loathsome and foul, to be killed or driven away by the people.
4	Exploitative . Outsiders are useful, to be enslaved, cheated, or tricked into performing dangerous work.
5	Indifferent . Outsiders are of no importance, to be tolerated so long as they do not annoy.
6	Hospitable . Outsiders are to be greeted and allowed courteous participation in the community.
7	Welcoming . Outsiders are wonderful, to be gladly welcomed and provided all reasonable aid.
8	Reverent . Outsiders are holy, to be worshiped as gods.

ADD CULTURAL FLAVOR

With your inhabitants largely fleshed out, the final touch is to add a few obvious traits and hooks to their culture. The table below offers fifty possible elements, which you can dial up or down in strangeness as the rationality of the Kelipah recommends.

A particularly mundane Kelipah might take “All behavior must conform to a certain book” to mean that the natives all pattern their daily comportment and speech upon a particular holy book. A more alien world might literally have its inhabitants’ predestined actions written down in a particular tome, and outsiders who change these words will inevitably change the actions of the natives. If the culture you’ve created thus far seems a little too staid and pedestrian, you can use this step as a chance to throw in some profoundly strange traits.

Another way to use this table is to link elements together in a “effect-cause” chain. The first roll indicates a particular trait of the culture, and the second roll gives the reason why it is so. In many cases, the

connection will be less than obvious, and it can give you a chance to come up with some suitably otherworldly reason for why the link should exist.

Blending in elements of their environment can be useful as well— a particular trait may be a response to their alien surroundings, or a consequence of some sorcery needed to keep their society functional.

Don’t worry about making the final result too “one-dimensional” or lacking in nuance. Trying to work out every detail of a Kelipah’s native culture is unlikely to be a good return on the time invested in it. Unless you can reasonably expect the PCs to spend a lot of time in the place and focus heavily on dealing with the locals, something done in broad strokes is all you need. Once it becomes clear that something more is required, you can then sit down and establish the finer details and more complex reality that might exist for these dwellers in the husks of half-formed worlds.

D100	CULTURAL ELEMENT	D100	CULTURAL ELEMENT
1-2	Accidents of birth mark people as slaves	51-52	Polygamy is common to the wealthy
3-4	All behavior must conform to a certain book	53-54	Prevalent use of a drug colors their customs
5-6	Cannibalism is normal for them	55-56	Rigid castes divide the populace
7-8	Common infant sacrifice to gods or necessity	57-58	Ritual tribute to leaders dominates their production
9-10	Communities are hidden from outsiders	58-60	Ritually forbidden taboo zones exist in places
11-12	Crime is punished hideously	61-62	Rulers are always carried; they never touch earth
13-14	Dangerous initiation rites for adulthood	63-64	Scarring or ritual mutilations are common
15-16	Each community is convinced of their superiority	65-66	Slavery is integral to their basic survival
17-18	Atheism is enforced on pain of awful torments	67-68	Temples are everywhere among them
19-20	They favor a single type of weapon	69-70	They are a decayed remnant of a greater past
21-22	Food is scarce and controlled by the rulers	71-72	They came from another Kelipah
23-24	There are harsh sumptuary codes of dress	73-74	They came originally from Earth
25-26	Herds of sacred animals wander freely	75-76	They drove out a remnant race before them
27-28	Human sacrifice is common	77-78	They favor living on ships or houseboats
29-30	Impractical, scanty, or elaborate clothing is worn	79-80	There is a sacred beast they dare not harm
31-32	Institutional misogyny or misandry is normal	81-82	They have an inhuman feature
33-34	Music is a secret vice for them	83-84	They have been cursed for some old offense
35-36	Music is vital to them	85-86	They need an exotic substance to live
37-38	No money; all trade is barter	87-88	They prefer underground homes
39-40	Nomadic customs keep their towns moving	89-90	They shun or lack writing or written documents
41-42	Not all children are born human	91-92	They speak only on certain topics
43-44	Only the elite may marry	93-94	They transform with age into something else
45-46	They make use of oppressed inhuman slaves	95-96	Unique gender roles exist among them
47-48	Outcasts have no rights and may be abused at will	97-98	Veils or masks are worn among non-family
49-50	Polite lies are always expected in social settings	99-00	They worship an alien race as gods

AN EXAMPLE OF KELIPAH CREATION

During the last session's adventure, the PCs stumbled over an ancient tome that revealed the location of a Way into a perilous Kelipah where the Golden Talon of Ibbad-Lu was to be found. As the PCs know that the Brotherhood of the Unsleeping Eye desires the talon to perform their hideous rites, the PCs decide that they need to be the ones to get it first. At the end of the session, they tell the GM that they're going to enter the Way and retrieve the talon.

Up to this point, the GM has not bothered to create any Kelipah, as they haven't been needed in the campaign. As the tome had no details about the realm, he's free to start with a blank slate.

The GM begins by deciding that the Kelipah will be as big as a geographic region— something large enough to support several communities of natives and provide multiple points of interest there. He then rolls on the basic traits chart to find that the terrain is mostly jungles and savannas. Earthquakes in this realm birth monsters, the native flora resembles animals, and the fauna are covered with glyphs.

These raw facts he puts aside for the moment, as he'll come back to tie them together once he knows more about the local inhabitants. He begins by rolling a basic inspiration, and comes up with "Historical India". The natives here will have clothing, cuisine, names, and titles loosely based on Indian models, and if the PCs ask a question about them that the GM doesn't have an answer for, he'll use historical India as a default. For their appearance, he decides to stick with humans, rather than roll up some more alien shape from one of the generators earlier in this chapter.

He next determines that their society is in flux— when the players arrive they find that some sort of drastic change is coming that will inevitably disrupt the society's former existence. He arbitrarily decides that there are several hundred thousand of these people in this realm. The dice tell him that they have only Stone Age-era material technology, but magical arts are known and practiced by most people with the gift to use them. Their society is highly fractious, with community pitted against community, and they are run by a magocracy of the local spellcasters.

Their society prizes obedience and knowledge as cardinal virtues, and unsurprisingly, the great desire of their people is for peace from the constant conflict between communities. Outsiders are viewed with reverence for some reason, and the tables say that not all their children are born human, and that they are cursed for some ancient crime they committed against some unknown power.

With these raw elements decided, the GM then assembles them together into a form that fits his needs. First, he flips to the Resources section of the book to roll up a random Lovecraftian name for these people, discovering that they are the Yin-Thu.

He then goes down the list of their traits and starts tying them together, using one element to justify another. Why do they have Stone Age technology? Because mining is impossible with the threat of the cthonian monstrosities that boil up with every earthquake. What is their ancient sin? Whatever it was, it caused the earthquakes that now

plague their society. Why do they view outsiders with pious reverence? Because outsiders had no part in the ancient sin that cursed them, and so they are ritually clean in a way no native could ever be. Why are the fauna covered with glyphs? Because those signs protect them from the hungers of the cthonic monsters. In what way do the flora resemble animals? Because they grow from the earth, sometimes cthonic powers enter into them and give them fangs, claws, and mobility with which to stalk their jungle homes. What of the inhuman children birthed by the Yin-Thu? They appear normal at first, but soon grow to be animalistic, massively-thewed humanoids who graze upon savanna grass. The curse forces humanity to birth them as fodder-beasts for the cthonic creatures of the realm.

The GM then assembles these connections into a smoother whole. The people of Yin-Thu dwell on the savannas, constantly in motion as their cities of timber and vine are carried on the backs of massive herds of the "accursed" children. These walking cities are forced into constant nomadic motion to evade the fresh cracks that split open with each earthquake, and their bearers never cease their endless march across the savanna.

In the ancient days, the forefathers of the Yin-Thu built great cities of stone and gold within the jungle, burrowing deep for the treasures of the earth. But one day they delved too deeply and opened a way for awful powers to climb up from the darkness below. The Yin-Thu were cursed and driven from their cities, and to this day it is taboo to touch any thing of metal or stone. Their tools are all of wood carved with plant-beast claws or the talons of cthonic monsters. When a building begins to rot upon one of their city-platforms, the community must march near to one of the jungles and claim those trees shaken down by the last earthquake. Such marches are dangerous for the city.

Each walking city is heir to one of the original cities of the Yin-Thu, and each blames the rest for the curse. Their outrunners fight when they meet at the edge of the jungle, or when they are found pausing to fill their water-casks at the edge of a river or pool. The common people are exhausted with the fighting, but they fear that if they do not constantly struggle their enemies will grow strong enough to crush them and take their people as slaves.

Each walking city is ruled by a Raja, a mighty sorcerer, and its nobility is made of those capable of wielding the magics they inherited from their forebears. The GM simply picks their sorcery from one of his other old-school role-playing games, most of which are directly compatible with this game.

For a final touch, the GM places the Golden Talon within one of the long-abandoned Yin-Thu jungle cities, its true location known to the Raja of its heritor people. To find it, they'll need to befriend the ruler and convince him of the need to meddle with powers that once cursed his people so terribly. At the same time, who is to say that there are no other Ways into this warped land, and that agents of the Brotherhood are not even now consorting with rival cities to beat the PC heroes to their prize?

CREATING CULTS: SONS OF FORSAKEN WISDOM

With the powers of darkness established and the intruding aliens of the campaign sketched out, the GM might next find it useful to draw up a cult or two. This section covers a number of tables that can guide the GM through a basic outline of cult creation, giving them the information they need to fit the malefactors into their campaign.

Some cults will need more elaboration than others. If you intend to make a particular cult a major antagonist in the setting, with regular and repeated clashes with the forces of justice, then you might be justified in fleshing it out rather thoroughly. An understanding of its historical roots and its grand accomplishments can give you background material and inspiration for the kind of plans and accomplishments that the cult has achieved. You might even go so far as to detail several different branches of the cult within the region, drawing up notes on their strongholds and secret sanctums in various locations.

Most cults don't need this kind of development. Particularly in the early days of a campaign, a GM already has enough creative work to do. Instead, it can be more beneficial to just do a quick sketch of the cabal, perhaps only establishing its current manifestation and goals. If it turns out that the cult is useful or important, more can be added.

This section doesn't cover the creation of combat statistics or particular arcane resources that the cult may have. The monstrous and mortal servitors of the cult can be put together with the information in the Bestiary chapter, while strange sorceries or occult artifacts can be built with the material elsewhere in this section. As with the detailing of the cult itself, this sort of information is also best left fallow until the GM actually needs to know the particulars for an upcoming adventure.

Cults are usually comprised of horrible people doing horrible things. It's possible that a cult might have peripheral members who don't really understand what the coven is about, or fresh initiates who have yet to taste of the abominable pleasures of the group, but most Lovecraftian cultists are in desperate need of swift death. These organizations are not usually such as leave PCs wondering what to do with them.

Many of them also pursue singularly hideous pastimes. As a GM, it's often best to leave the nature of these horrors merely insinuated rather than detailed. Getting too specific about what the cultists are doing with that little boy is too much detail for many players' fun, and it's easy to cross the line from evocative to queasy. Aside from that, horrors that are left to the imagination are often the most effective.



THE ROOTS OF THE EVIL

These tables serve to generate details about the history and origins of the cult. You can place their geographic origins anywhere that might be convenient for your campaign. If the cult was originally founded in a distant land, they might have migrated to your region sometime in the past, or this branch of the cult might just be an offshoot of the larger, more terrible forces gathering elsewhere.

D4 WHEN WERE THEY FOUNDED?

- 1 In ancient days, in the earliest hours of human civilization.
- 2 Perhaps a thousand years ago.
- 3 It was founded within the past few centuries.
- 4 Within the past few decades, being a recent formation.

D10 WHO FOUNDED IT?

- 1 A humble peasant wracked with unholy visions.
- 2 A scholar who learned too much and shared it too widely.
- 3 A noble who used their wealth to indulge in the occult.
- 4 A priest who made contact with a “better” god.
- 5 An artist driven by visions of something vast.
- 6 A scientist or artisan who devised unearthly machines.
- 7 An outcast or marginal person “gifted” with new sight.
- 8 A sorcerer or occultist who delved into dire truths.
- 9 A soldier or warlord who discovered something foul.
- 10 An alien or inhuman entity who had its own reasons.

D20 THEIR MOST IMPORTANT PAST EVENT

- 1 They were briefly an accepted and open faith somewhere.
- 2 They’ve actually summoned their patron at least once.
- 3 They created a powerful occult artifact.
- 4 They destroyed and pillaged a powerful rival cult.
- 5 They toppled a troublesome ruler or government.
- 6 Their leaders interbred with some alien entity.
- 7 They obtained some enormously potent eldritch relic.
- 8 They fled their former home for new lands.
- 9 They established a foothold in a congenial Kelipah.
- 10 They were almost wiped out by angry victims of the cult.
- 11 Almost all their leadership was consumed by sorcery.
- 12 They cultivated a special bloodline of eldritch power.
- 13 They took control of an important government office.
- 14 A rival cult nearly destroyed them in a secret war.
- 15 They effectively seized control of a significant community.
- 16 They destroyed an organization of investigators.
- 17 They constructed a hidden stronghold or temple.
- 18 They took control of a holy place and profaned it.
- 19 They acquired enormous wealth from their sorceries.
- 20 They lost something that they desperately need to regain.

D6 WHO TROUBLED THEM MOST?

- 1 Clergy, who counted them heretics or demoniacs.
- 2 Rulers, who deplored their atrocities and heinous deeds.
- 3 Peasants, who dreaded their exactions and sacrifices.
- 4 Scholars, who tried to contain their mad ideas.
- 5 Their own, wounding the cult with treachery and strife.
- 6 Rivals, who despised them as upstarts or unbelievers.

D8 WHO WERE THE EARLY RECRUITS?

- 1 The desperate, wretched, and outcast of the society.
- 2 The sagacious learned who knew not when to turn away.
- 3 The ruling class, who desired more power than they had.
- 4 The clergy, seduced by a new and better faith than theirs.
- 5 The peasantry, seeking prosperity and strength in them.
- 6 The artists, entranced by new visions and new delights.
- 7 The merchants and wealthy, enticed by the cult’s aid.
- 8 Other cultists, drawn away into this fine new sect.

D12 WHAT MOTIVATED THE FOUNDING?

- 1 The crazed need to spread an unearthly gospel.
- 2 Famine and hunger, with the cult offering help.
- 3 Plague wracked the land, but the cult gave healing.
- 4 Corruption in a faith drove some to this mad new purity.
- 5 Ambition for earthly power was aided by the cult.
- 6 Greed for wealth was sated by the cult’s riches.
- 7 Revenge against a hated oppressor fueled the cult’s rise.
- 8 Salvation from an unstoppable aggressor was offered.
- 9 Mystic truths were given to blast the reason of cultists.
- 10 Sorcerous power was promised to those who learned well.
- 11 The impending demon-lord would spare its loyal cultists.
- 12 Unspeakable pleasures rewarded their obedience.

D12 HOW DID THEY CONCEAL THE CULT?

- 1 They hid in plain sight as a seemingly harmless social club.
- 2 They met in caves or tunnels, hidden from daylight.
- 3 They had the help of nobility who sheltered their shrines.
- 4 Allied clerics secretly repurposed temples to their use.
- 5 They masqueraded as helpful aid societies or lay brethren.
- 6 They burrowed into a military unit and used its discipline.
- 7 They nested in academia, hiding in universities.
- 8 They favored remote and isolated places for their fanes.
- 9 They worked with criminals who kept off notice.
- 10 They connected via secret and invisible occult means.
- 11 They recruited only kin, enlisting familial discretion.
- 12 Once enlisted, a sorcerous curse ensured their silence.

HOW IT MANIFESTS

These tables describe the cult's current condition and ambitions. The details given here largely refer to specific branches or groups of the cult, though small cabals might exist in only one location. Two groups worshipping the same diabolical god might have very different ways of arranging their affairs and express very different desires of their unholy patron. GMs can pick and choose here as they find useful.

D4 HOW CRAZED ARE THEY?

- 1 Coldly rational, using the cult's powers as a mundane tool.
- 2 Largely rational, but distracted by demented cult needs.
- 3 They are aiming for a lunatic purpose in a rational way.
- 4 Many members are barely capable of functioning in society.

D10 WHERE DO THEY MEET?

- 1 In an abandoned or disguised building in the slums.
- 2 In a mansion or penthouse held by a wealthy member.
- 3 In an abandoned church or one perverted to their ends.
- 4 In the sewers, tunnels, or caves beneath a place.
- 5 In a wilderness glade or remote rural location.
- 6 In the back of a club, bar, or other social center.
- 7 In a government office or building they've subverted.
- 8 In a hospital, clinic, or other place with sacrifice material.
- 9 In a cemetery, tomb, ossuary, or other place of death.
- 10 In an art gallery or other place with secret occult meaning.

D20 SPECIAL TRAITS AND QUIRKS

- 1 An ancient language is their ceremonial and ritual tongue.
- 2 All of them share a hidden brand, tattoo or mutilation.
- 3 They are driven back by some substance or symbol.
- 4 All of them have some sort of subtle deformity.
- 5 They favor specific symbols and occult seals.
- 6 They have a totemic type of animal that serves them.
- 7 A type of alien or monster obeys them.
- 8 Their elect have an uncanny beauty or seductiveness.
- 9 They are unable to pronounce a particular phrase.
- 10 They are unable to feel pain and sense it as something else.
- 11 They are hosts to a subtle but terrible disease.
- 12 They require something unwholesome for nourishment.
- 13 The lesser are hypnotically subjugated to the greater.
- 14 They radiate a subtle aura of disquiet or repulsiveness.
- 15 They become sterile and unable to reproduce.
- 16 Their leaders are made immortal through hideous rites.
- 17 They are unable to see objects of certain colors.
- 18 They decay slowly without special food or rituals.
- 19 They don't bleed, and must be dismembered to be killed.
- 20 Their leaders can sacrifice them to conjure quick magic.

D6 HOW DO THEY CONTROL MEMBERS?

- 1 Threats of violence against them or their loved ones.
- 2 Blackmail with the crimes they've committed for the cult.
- 3 Addictions to strange substances or depraved pleasures.
- 4 Sorcerous bindings or geases on them.
- 5 Threats of ruin at the hands of cult-influenced authorities.
- 6 Twisted love and a sense of familial devotion.

D8 HOW IS IT GOVERNED?

- 1 A single high priest directly commands the cult masses.
- 2 A high priest has a number of trustworthy lieutenants.
- 3 A high priest with one more or less trustworthy viceroy.
- 4 An alien or worse that speaks through a mouthpiece.
- 5 A high priest is first among equals on a council of others.
- 6 Acephelous group action according to alien compulsions.
- 7 A council of high priests constantly at each others' throats.
- 8 A council of high priests that mostly can work together.

D12 WHAT DOES THE CULT CRAVE?

- 1 It wants political power around its centers of activity.
- 2 It wants depraved pleasures that no decent law permits.
- 3 It wants powerful sorcery or eldritch artifacts.
- 4 It wants revenge against a rival, a government, or a traitor.
- 5 It wants to worship dark powers with bloody sacrifices.
- 6 It wants to destroy a community or a group opposed to it.
- 7 It wants to elevate its leader to complete local control.
- 8 It wants to bring forth an unholy abomination.
- 9 It wants to destroy a rival cult, perhaps its parent group.
- 10 It wants to create some enormous atrocity or disaster.
- 11 It wants wealth beyond mortal imagination.
- 12 It wants to destroy the world for its patron.

D12 WHAT'S THEIR STRONGEST TOOL?

- 1 They have a large supply of thugs and brutish warriors.
- 2 They have diabolical sorcery that's quite useful.
- 3 They have alien allies willing to lend their aid.
- 4 They have moles within local government and police.
- 5 They have control over the newspapers and media.
- 6 They have vast amounts of mundane wealth.
- 7 They have friends and members among elite society.
- 8 They have large funds of blackmail on many people.
- 9 They have unholy abominations at their command.
- 10 They have some sort of mind-influencing power or item.
- 11 They control a large number of criminal enterprises.
- 12 They are perfectly disguised as a benevolent group.

MINIONS AND NAMES

Use these tables to generate a suitably imposing name for the cult and identify any particularly interesting minions they might have in their service. Where combat statistics are needed for these thralls, you can refer to the Bestiary chapter and pick something appropriate. Multiple rolls might produce several minions, or you might blend them together.

D12 WHAT IMPORTANT NPCs SERVE?

1	A barely-human savage or maniacal warrior, kept penned up when not needed for merciless bloodshed.
2	An alien pacted with the cult either through sorcerous rites or some hideous bargain.
3	A seductive femme fatale who specializes in appearing helpless and in need of heroic aid.
4	A local official in too deep, desperate to escape the cult but forced to use their authority on the cult's behalf.
5	A crazed scientist, capable of building uncanny devices but requiring awful ingredients for their completion.
6	A merciless crime boss who directs his unwitting minions at the secret command of the cult.
7	A monstrous entity that looks like a harmless human, but possesses secret and terrible powers.
8	An avatar of their patron, almost uncontrollable in its terrible power and summoned only in dire need.
9	A brutalized victim of the cult, hollowed out and helpless in their obedience. They yet have a useful social position.
10	A cold and ruthless mercenary, skilled and willing to hire their services even to monsters like the cultists.
11	A former investigator and fallen hero, now forced or seduced into serving the cult's needs.
12	A mad sorcerer versed in unholy wisdom, yet too unstable to function as the cult's leader.

D12 WHAT PETTY NPCs SERVE THEM?

1	A foolish street thug with grandiose plans.
2	A corporate striver meaning to use the cult to move up.
3	A corrupt cop who only cares about the bribe money.
4	A reporter who pretends they're really just investigating.
5	A sneak thief or pickpocket who does as they're told.
6	A popular local artist who is inspired by the cult.
7	A lecherous businessman who's just in it for the flesh.
8	A confused kid who serves because his parents are in it.
9	A hungry gamin being used as fodder by the cult.
10	A sweet old lady carrying on a hideous family tradition.
11	Ambitious young academic seeking secrets the cult has.
12	Grubby hacker seeking the "friendship" of the cultists.

D12 POSSIBLE NAMING FORMATS

1	Group + Hue + Object
2	Object + Laud + Master
3	Hue + Group + Occult + Count
4	Laud + Group + Count + Master
5	Occult + Object + Material + Master
6	Material + Object + Hue + Group
7	Count + Group + Occult + Master
8	Object + Hue + Material + Master
9	Hue + Object + Master + Group
10	Hue + Count + Occult + Master
11	Laud + Master + Group
12	Material + Group + Laud + Master

WORD ELEMENTS FOR THE CULT'S NAME

D12	GROUP	OCCULT	HUE	OBJECT	COUNT	LAUD	MATERIAL	MASTER
1	Academy	Alchemic	Argent	Book	Countless	Adept	Blood	Demiurge
2	Brotherhood	Arcane	Azure	Chalice	Dual	Ancient	Bone	God
3	Chantry	Cabalistic	Black	Crown	Legion	Ascetic	Bronze	King
4	Church	Goetic	Crimson	Eye	Manifold	Austere	Copper	Lady
5	Circle	Hermetic	Fuligin	Fist	Myriad	Benevolent	Diamond	Lord
6	Compact	Hidden	Golden	Hand	One	Blessed	Golden	Master
7	Creed	Occult	Gray	Message	Primary	Enlightened	Iron	Mistress
8	Fellowship	Primitive	Illuminated	Sword	Singular	Holy	Leaden	Prince
9	Pact	Sorcerous	Ivory	Throne	Sole	Learned	Mercurial	Prophet
10	Rite	Theurgic	Shadow	Treasure	Solitary	Noble	Ruby	Queen
11	Society	Transcendent	Veiled	Truth	Threefold	Sagacious	Sapphire	Sage
12	Sodality	Veritable	Viridian	Vision	Unified	Venerable	Skin	Star

AN EXAMPLE OF CULT CREATION

The GM decides to spend a little time fleshing out the cult of Volag-Hlu, the Mother of the Rotting Head. Death-cults tend to make convenient adversaries for PCs, and the zealous human servants of this alien god should shape up handily as foes. The GM knows nothing about the cult aside from its patron, and hasn't got any special role for them in the campaign, so he decides to let the dice have their way in defining them.

The GM grabs a fistful of dice and rolls on the history tables. It appears that the cult is a very old one, founded a thousand years ago by its progenitor. Its founder was an outcast, so the GM decides that the first cultist was a leper named Nithard in Carolingian France around 800 AD, his own harsh affliction perceived as a "blessing" from the Mother of the Rotting Head.

In the early years, the cult's motivation was survival; by embracing the Mother, Nithard survived where others lepers were doomed to a slow and terrible death. While the rot gnawed at him, it did not kill him, and contracted until it could even be concealed from casual eyes. Other men and women in ninth-century France came to worship alongside Nithard, seeking healing from their own sicknesses. While the Mother never cured, the worship did seem to halt and even reverse many of the ravages of disease.

The earliest and most influential recruits came from a scholar-priest who was also stricken with leprosy. Through his contacts with other learned men of Frankish blood, he drew in many sages and physicians who sought to learn the secrets of the Mother. They learned much, though all of it came at a terrible price in sacrifice.

The strongest opposition to the cult came from Charlemagne and his loyal vassals, who viewed the cult as an especially loathsome brand of paganism to be stamped out by a good Christian ruler. The cult was forced into hiding, concealing itself with the threat of latent curses. A cultist who confessed the sect's secrets to an outsider would immediately be devoured by a hideous rotting curse. With so few cultists willing to speak even under torture, the persecution had to content itself with purging the most obvious branches of the cult.

In the end, the cult's greatest accomplishment was the subversion of an entire village in the mountains of the Pyrenees, a place masquerading as a pilgrimage site of healing and mercy. Some came and died, others came and were mended by nature, but the most desperate and useful were enlisted into the service of the Mother of the Rotting Head.

With the cult's history established and some idea of its heartland, the GM then defines the cult's activities in the campaign's current region. He throws another fistful of dice, and finds that the cultists are actually quite rational, as far as they go. They're motivated by what the cult gives them and what the cult threatens, and have little blind zeal for the alien goddess. What they want most is pleasure; the horrible, murderous pleasures necessary for flesh numbed by disease and poisoned by sickness. They capture victims for their own unholy uses, using the threat of punishment at the hands of cult-influenced authorities to help keep the rank and file in line. Their greatest sorcerers remain bound by the ancient curse of the Mother, however.

Their most advantageous tool is their appearance as a wholly benevolent society. The GM decides that they actually appear as a medical care and hospice group, working among the poor and needy in the region. In actuality, they arrange the "sickness" and "death" of victims in their care, burying loaded coffins and reviving the torporous prey for long, hideous deaths at their hands.

The cult's leadership is composed of several sorcerous adepts, all of whom hate each other and seek a greater share of the prey they collect. All of them nurse fatal diseases, held in abeyance by the Mother's blessings. They would kill each other directly if they could, but such treachery would trigger their curse, and so they merely try to set up situations where their rivals are certain to perish. Their contentious meetings are held at an isolated manor kept as a "healing retreat" for the society and their victims.

Next, the GM picks out an important NPC in the cult and a couple of minor members, so as to have some personalities available for adventures. The most likely significant cult servitor in the region turns out to be the Putrescent One, a monstrous, disease-ravaged brute infected with more forms of sickness than even the cultists can name. He refuses to die, but so long as he's kept placated with regular supplies of "playmates", he can be turned on cult enemies as a stealthy but savage assassin. Along with this monster, the cult has a corrupt cop on its payroll, Janice Croke. She takes their money and doesn't ask questions, though she might be getting "invited" to a deeper understanding of their goals soon. They also have Skinny Joe, a local pickpocket with a bad case of syphilis that "the clinic" keeps "helping" him with, in exchange for little favors.

And as a final touch, the GM needs a name for this group. As a cover, he decides they're known as the "Bridger Medical Aid Society". The initiates of the cult know its true name, however, which is generated with a quick roll on the format table and a tweaking of the ensuing words that are generated. It appears that the cult here is known as the Brotherhood of the Ivory Crown, with its hidden sigil depicted as a stylized head with its scalp rotted away.

With these details established, the GM knows enough about the cult to fit them in properly into adventure templates or other campaign scheming. If extra time and interest can be found, the GM might detail more specific cult members or create some of the characteristic spells that the servants of the Mother use in their dark purposes.

A GM can also take this time to establish combat statistics and other game information for a cult, profiling average members, significant priests, and leading adepts of the Brotherhood. The Bestiary chapter provides much of the necessary information for such work, but this kind of detailed development isn't normally necessary at this stage. With so much to create in a sandbox game, it's important to reserve a GM's effort for the most critical content. Understanding the cult's basic role and motivation is much more helpful in building adventures than knowing the details of hit dice and skill rolls. Only after that kind of information becomes necessary to an evening's adventure is it really vital, and so a GM should shepherd their energy accordingly.

CREATING ARTIFACTS: POISONED TREASURES

Magic items in a Lovecraftian campaign are never simple. There is no such thing as a classic *sword +1* or a *potion of healing*. Every magical item the heroes are apt to find is usually double-edged, possessing both a significant occult power and a burdensome curse or side effect to its use. Sometimes an item can be so dangerous that the heroes would rather destroy it or leave it than risk employing it against their foes.

Still, GMs often find a need to create magic items for their campaigns. Instead of providing a list of static, pre-made items here, this section gives you the tools to generate your own unique relics for your campaign. You can make them as common or as rare as your own judgment recommends, and weight them to be as useful to the heroes as you think is proper.

Some magic items might be effectively NPC-only. These tools might have enormous power, but they require such horrible sacrifices or such crazed users that there's no practical way for the PCs to use them. These artifacts are very easy to make, as you don't need to worry about balancing them or giving them interesting curses. They're plot devices in artifact form, and you can assign whatever details you need to them without worrying about the consequences or game balance.

Most occult items fall into one of four categories: magic weapons, protective items, spell grimoires, and artifacts of miscellaneous effect. The frequency of any given category will depend on the tone of your game. If you have no PCs interested in sorcery, it's not likely worth your time to create a carefully-developed grimoire. By the same token, if your campaign theme has no room for direct violence against the eldritch dark, then magic weapons might be more trap than benefit.

The tables that follow can be mixed-and-matched not only with each other, but also with the other tables in this section. You can have grimoire names drawn from the Pantheon tables, magic swords twined in with cult histories, or any other conjunction of generators that works for you can be employed.

The tables provide some basic cues for defining the game-mechanical aspects of magic items, but the main focus is on flavor and general description of their powers. Roll bonuses, free rerolls, attribute bonuses and bonus hit points or healing can all be used to cover a very large range of effects, with greater or lesser intensity depending on the numbers being added. Beyond that, simple GM ingenuity can be used to give specifics to these powers from beyond.



HOW WAS IT CREATED?

Sometimes it's not important or relevant to determine how a magical item was created. Some artifacts are just too strange or too trivial to establish all the particulars of its creation, and there's no need to spend time and effort doing so.

Even so, some artifacts are important enough or interesting enough to merit some detail to their origins. Answering these questions can make it easier to pick out special powers for an artifact or reason out its curse. It also proves convenient when foreshadowing an item or deducing how its current owner got their hands on it. Most magical items are ancient, at least a thousand years old or more. In such a span of time it's easy to explain how an item might have wandered far from its origins to reach its current owner's hands.

The tables here provide the rough outline of the item's past and history. The GM will need to provide specific places and names if that proves relevant, and they might want to add a few vignettes from history if the item has a significant presence in occult writings. The more well-known the item, of course, the more likely that the scribes are to have noticed any attached curses or any specific details of its power.

D4 WHAT DO LEGENDS SAY OF IT?

- 1 Nothing. It is completely absent from occult literature.
- 2 A few hints exist; Int/Occult difficulty 12 to know them.
- 3 Some books speak of it. Int/Occult difficulty 10 to know.
- 4 It is widely known. Int/Occult difficulty 8 to know of it.

D20 WHAT GREAT DEED WAS IT PART OF?

- 1 It was instrumental in the destruction of its maker.
- 2 It was part of the defeat of a great eldritch abomination.
- 3 It was involved in the destruction of a city or community.
- 4 It was the downfall of a great hero or scourge of evil.
- 5 Its making required a hideous sacrifice of lives.
- 6 It caused a great natural disaster or catastrophe.
- 7 It slew or helped slay a horde of cultists or outer evils.
- 8 It was the central relic of a great shrine to an evil power.
- 9 Its creation involved the destruction of a mighty sorcerer.
- 10 Its fabrication beggared a mighty ruler, who paid willingly.
- 11 It somehow consumed the soul of a great wielder of it.
- 12 It drove its creator into dangerous and violent madness.
- 13 It was empowered by some terrible crime by its maker.
- 14 It figured in the ruin of every one of its major wielders.
- 15 It was the key to open some ancient hoard of secrets.
- 16 It was the bane of an elder deity's manifested avatar.
- 17 It was originally just a component of something greater.
- 18 Its creation ended up destroying a major group.
- 19 Its creation cursed the land around for generations.
- 20 A dire and inexorable prophecy is attached to it.

D6 WHEN WAS IT CREATED?

- 1 Sometime in the unfathomably distant past.
- 2 During the dawn of human civilization.
- 3 During the time of the ancient empires of humanity.
- 4 Roughly a thousand years ago.
- 5 It was fashioned within the past few centuries.
- 6 It was created relatively recently.

D8 WHO CREATED IT?

- 1 An alien power, fashioning it for their species' purposes.
- 2 An elder god or outer deity formed it for nameless ends.
- 3 A deliriously inspired artisan made it in a mad frenzy.
- 4 A cunning sorcerer devised it with their black arts.
- 5 A priest or "holy" figure made it and consecrated it.
- 6 It congealed from the dark energies of a blighted place.
- 7 A mad scientist created it from their feverish theories.
- 8 It was an accident of chance that imbued it with power.

D12 WHY WAS IT CREATED?

- 1 Its creation was the blind purpose of its maker's madness.
- 2 To destroy or afflict the creator's enemies.
- 3 To glorify the eldritch might of its maker's patron.
- 4 To strengthen its maker's power and aid their purposes.
- 5 As a gift or reward for a loyal minion or desired lover.
- 6 As a vital component in a scheme of its creator.
- 7 As a token of submission offered to its maker's master.
- 8 To pursue a mad vision or magical theory its maker held.
- 9 To blight and immiserate the wretch who was to receive it.
- 10 To be a holy relic and focus for worship of its maker.
- 11 To be a secret trump for the maker against their enemies.
- 12 Even its creator has no idea why they made it.

D10 HOW WAS IT LOST BY ITS MAKER?

- 1 Its maker lost it when they were slain by their enemies.
- 2 A thief plundered it from its maker's lair.
- 3 Its maker threw it aside because of its curse or their whim.
- 4 It was taken from its maker by a foe who subjugated them.
- 5 It was traded away by its maker for some favor or item.
- 6 It was lost in a natural disaster or great catastrophe.
- 7 It was hurled from its maker in a magical accident.
- 8 It was lost with its maker on a journey to distant lands.
- 9 Its maker's apprentices took it with them when they left.
- 10 It was seized as a trophy by heroes who defeated its maker.

THE CURSE IT BEARS

Lovecraftian artifacts almost always have a significant drawback to their use. There is no such thing as “safe magic”, and these powers demand a price for those humans who would wield them. These “curses” are rarely explicitly set by the creator. Most often, they’re simply the unfortunate and inescapable consequences of touching on the powers these artifacts are made to employ.

A GM should be careful not to make an item’s curse *too* onerous, however, or the PCs won’t have any interesting choice to make about the item; it will be so obviously bad that they’ll destroy it or leave it without a second thought. If you can’t readily see a situation where the PCs would want to use the item even with the curse, it’s probably too baleful a bane. Curses need not be obvious, especially on artifacts without much presence in occult history. Even magical spells might not reveal all the details of an item’s curse, though they usually give some strong hints.

Some items might not have curses at all, especially very weak items, or items that are consumed in use. If an artifact is only going to be around for one or two uses, there’s little need to burden it with additional reasons not to use it lightly.

D4 HOW BAD IS THE CURSE?

- 1 Minor. It’s noticeable and annoying, but not debilitating.
- 2 Significant. Triggering it is weighed carefully by its owner.
- 3 Severe. Most PCs will try to avoid triggering it at all costs.
- 4 Overwhelming. It may kill the wielder or do even worse.

D20 WHAT IS THE BASIC CURSE EFFECT?

- 1 It inflicts hit point damage on the wielder.
- 2 It causes penalties to hit or damage rolls.
- 3 It inflicts an eerie aura that harms social skill checks.
- 4 It inflicts a persistent effect like a wasting disease.
- 5 It drains strength or vitality from the wielder.
- 6 It sucks away Expertise and clouds the mind.
- 7 It causes bad luck for comrades, forcing rerolls on things.
- 8 It causes bad luck for allies and friends, forcing ill fortune.
- 9 It erodes the soul, slowly sapping maximum hit points.
- 10 It eats the wielder’s sanity, inflicting Madness points.
- 11 It causes wounds to be worse, forcing damage rerolls.
- 12 It weakens the user against magic, forcing save rerolls.
- 13 It causes obsession, making it hard to put the item down.
- 14 When ill luck is randomly assigned, the user is always it.
- 15 The user is especially weak against a type of foe, rerolling.
- 16 The user has a hard time healing; spells can’t cure them.
- 17 The user’s life force is fragile; they die instantly at 0 HP.
- 18 The user has terrible dreams. Bad sleep halves HP regain.
- 19 It induces a type of compulsion; save or indulge in it.
- 20 The user becomes unable to succeed at a type of check.

D6 HOW FREQUENT IS THE CURSE?

- 1 It’s very hard to trigger and requires specific events.
- 2 It happens only rarely when the item is employed.
- 3 It has a reasonable chance of manifesting when used.
- 4 It’s easy to trigger unless specific precautions are taken.
- 5 It almost always triggers when the item is used.
- 6 It’s almost always in effect when the item is owned.

D8 HOW CAN THE CURSE BE SUPPRESSED?

- 1 A specific spell can quell or dampen the curse.
- 2 By expending HP or Expertise it can be contained.
- 3 Using it only in certain times or circumstances contains it.
- 4 Lengthy but morally neutral rituals will quell it for a time.
- 5 Using it only on certain types of foes or allies will calm it.
- 6 Using it only very rarely can forfend the curse.
- 7 A grim and disturbing sacrifice can suppress it for a time.
- 8 There is simply no way to lessen the curse’s power.

D12 WHAT TRIGGERS THE CURSE?

- 1 Activation of the item’s power applies the curse.
- 2 A particular type of injury to the wielder triggers it.
- 3 It triggers if the user is subjected to a magical effect.
- 4 It activates in sunlight, in heat, or in other environments.
- 5 It triggers if particular rituals are not performed for it.
- 6 It triggers in the absence of certain costly sacrifices.
- 7 It triggers when used against or on certain targets.
- 8 It triggers when it is brought into certain types of places.
- 9 It triggers when touched by “unworthy” hands.
- 10 It triggers when the bearer breaks certain taboos.
- 11 It triggers in the presence of a deity or its servitors.
- 12 It triggers seemingly at random.

D10 WHAT CURES THE CURSE’S EFFECT?

- 1 Only time can heal the damage the curse inflicts.
- 2 Magical spells of dispelling will end the curse effects.
- 3 Particular deeds pleasing to the item will end the curse.
- 4 Slaying certain foes and anointing with their blood.
- 5 Expensive treatments and medical cures will ease it.
- 6 Disquieting worship performed to a certain outer god.
- 7 The infliction of Madness aids adjustment to the curse.
- 8 Putting away the artifact and staying away from it.
- 9 Meditation and undisturbed concentration eases it.
- 10 Fasting and occult purification can lessen its effects.

MAGICAL WEAPONS

Magical weapons are often either the most or least important items in a campaign. For those campaigns where direct force is largely useless against the opposition, the possession of a magical spear might be an active harm, persuading the heroes to try fighting something that really can't be fought. For other campaigns where two-fisted monster-punching is a valid tactic, many foes might be immune to mundane weaponry and strongly incite the heroes to search for better tools.

Most weapons have a basic bonus related to combat. Even those that don't do extra damage or have a specific power related to attack rolls still count as magic weapons for purposes of harming supernatural entities.

Other tools of war also have an additional power, usually related to their origins or creator. This power might be fueled by bloodshed, or just always available for the creator, or may require the sacrifice of hit points, Expertise, or Madness to trigger.

Magical weapons are also usually possessed of some sort of uncanniness about their construction or employment. These weapons are unnatural, and those who wield them cannot escape the constant awareness that they brandish powers not meant for this world.

D4 WHAT KIND OF WEAPON IS IT?

- 1 A small hand weapon like a knife.
- 2 A large hand weapon like a sword or axe.
- 3 A missile weapon such as a bow or throwing blade.
- 4 A modern firearm or other advanced technology.

D20 THE STRANGENESS WHEN IT'S USED

- 1 A low moan or other disturbing sound.
- 2 Opalescent or colored glows around the weapon.
- 3 It drinks any blood it spills.
- 4 Things it kills wither away to dust in moments.
- 5 It keeps attacking for one round after the wielder stops.
- 6 A shroud of cloudy darkness when wielded.
- 7 It alters the wielder's perceptions of their surroundings.
- 8 It produces an odd and characteristic smell.
- 9 It drains batteries in objects worn by the wielder.
- 10 It twitches slightly in the hand.
- 11 It goes faintly translucent, as if existing in a different plane.
- 12 It remains fixed in space unless intentionally moved.
- 13 It's always the first thing that comes to hand in storage.
- 14 It changes color or shows hidden markings on it.
- 15 It feels warm, with a faintly-perceptible pulse to it.
- 16 The user can't see anything but targets when it's used.
- 17 It never seems to run out of ammunition or get dull.
- 18 It is completely soundless in use.
- 19 It's impossible for others to find in a weapons search.
- 20 It utters glad telepathic cries when it is used.

D6 WHAT DOES IT WORK AGAINST?

- 1 Anything. Its benefits apply to all possible targets.
- 2 Anything except one type or species of foe.
- 3 An extremely large class, such as all humans or all aliens.
- 4 A circumstantial class, like everyone at night or surprised.
- 5 A narrow class, like all cultists or all undead.
- 6 One specific type of creature or particular human role.

D8 WHAT KIND OF BENEFIT DOES IT GIVE?

- 1 An improved hit roll, or possibly even a reroll on hit rolls.
- 2 Increase damage, usually +1 to +3, but maybe plus dice.
- 3 Both increased hit and damage, usually modest.
- 4 It adds a type of energy or magical force to the damage.
- 5 It can ignore armor or obstacles to the attack.
- 6 It gains major benefits to harming a thing it's hit before.
- 7 It detects or grants perception of hidden enemies.
- 8 It's vampiric, strengthening the user with HP it takes.

D10 WHAT OTHER POWER DOES IT HAVE?

- 1 It protects the wielder from some kind of harm.
- 2 It improves the wielder's armor class by 1-3 points.
- 3 It can't be lost unless it's given away or exorcised.
- 4 It causes certain creatures to obey the wielder.
- 5 It opens magical locks or wardings of a certain kind.
- 6 It grants a magical type of movement to the wielder.
- 7 It improves a certain type of skill check by 1-3 points.
- 8 It can cut through or destroy mundane barriers.
- 9 It returns to the hand if thrown.
- 10 It gives advice in the form of visions or whispers.

D12 WHAT'S UNCANNY ABOUT IT?

- 1 It's marked with occult glyphs and sinister sigils.
- 2 It perpetually stinks of alien foulness.
- 3 It's shaped slightly incorrectly for a human hand.
- 4 It's made at least partially of some unnatural substance.
- 5 It requires some unpleasant substance to fuel it.
- 6 It's made of glass, bone, or other unsuitable material.
- 7 It's worked with disquieting shapes and symbols.
- 8 It weighs something wrong for its size and material.
- 9 It reflects light in an incorrect way.
- 10 It whispers something incomprehensible when listened to.
- 11 It provokes a certain emotion when touched or beheld.
- 12 It induces a strong emotion when used for violence.

PROTECTIVE ARTIFACTS

Lovecraftian artifacts are not famously known for their protective qualities. Most of them are directly hazardous to their wielders, and some promise hideous doom for excessive employment of their powers. Still, some charms and wards can be trusted to protect the bearer, if perhaps at a stern price.

These tables offer ideas for the basic description of a protective artifact. The GM's own judgment will need to be employed when it comes to determining the exact number of hit points or benefit to AC involved.

Minor wards should probably grant a +1 AC bonus, a +2 to saving throws, or the absorption of about 3 points of damage from a harm. The exact nature of the bonus will depend on what kind of harm is being forefended.

Significant wards should double those bonuses, or grant a reroll on a failed saving throw, or completely shelter the bearer from minor hazards. Major bonuses should triple them, allow for an automatic saving throw success, or protect completely against mundane perils. Total protection should be just that, either a complete negation of harm or a +4 AC bonus against a very broad range of physical damage.

D4 HOW COMPLETE IS THE PROTECTION?

- 1 Minor; it aids a little, but can't ward substantial harm.
- 2 Significant; it can absorb minor hurts and lessen greater.
- 3 Major; it can absorb all but the worst effects.
- 4 Total; it can soak up any reasonable amount of the harm.

D20 WHAT DOES IT PROTECT AGAINST?

- 1 Firearms and projectiles.
- 2 Bladed weapons.
- 3 Blunt weapons and fists.
- 4 Teeth, claws, fists, and other natural weapons.
- 5 Poisons and toxins.
- 6 Diseases and magical plagues.
- 7 Suffocation or poisonous gases.
- 8 Radiation.
- 9 The blows of supernatural entities.
- 10 Mind-affecting powers or sorcerous spells.
- 11 Hostile sorcery.
- 12 Drowning or harm from water or liquids.
- 13 Flame or heat.
- 14 Acids or corrosive substances.
- 15 Falling from a height.
- 16 Aging or natural decay.
- 17 Exhaustion or the need to rest.
- 18 Deception from magical disguises or illusions.
- 19 A failed type of saving throw.
- 20 Death from bleeding out due to mortal wounds.

D6 HOW BROAD IS THE PROTECTION?

- 1 Not even all of a person, just a part of them.
- 2 All of the bearer's person.
- 3 The bearer and those they are touching.
- 4 The bearer and a few allies within the same room.
- 5 The bearer and a few allies at any distance.
- 6 The bearer and all allies within sensory range.

D8 HOW OFTEN CAN IT BE USED?

- 1 Once an hour, only for a single round or brief moment.
- 2 Once an hour, for five minutes.
- 3 Once a day, for an hour.
- 4 Several times a day, for five minutes.
- 5 Several times a day, for an hour at a time.
- 6 Once a week, for up to twenty-four hours.
- 7 Up to four hours a day.
- 8 All the time; the protection might be constant.

D12 HOW DOES THE WARD APPEAR?

- 1 The harm just accidentally goes askew from the user.
- 2 A shield of light wards it away.
- 3 An invisible force pushes away the harm.
- 4 The harm seems to vanish into a sudden dark void.
- 5 The bearer's location is distorted out of the way of it.
- 6 The harm strikes them but to no visible effect.
- 7 The harm passes through them as if intangible.
- 8 The harm is bent around the target by warped space.
- 9 The harm seems to hurt them but it doesn't bother them.
- 10 The harm peters out into feebleness before it hurts them.
- 11 The harm is deflected in a different direction.
- 12 The harm simply ceases to exist when it strikes.

D10 WHAT IS ITS FLAW?

- 1 A type of creature's hostilities ignore the protection.
- 2 The bearer must perform rituals to empower it.
- 3 The protection costs Expertise or hit points to trigger.
- 4 The harm sometimes is shed onto an ally.
- 5 The bearer must do something distasteful to charge it.
- 6 The object is unwieldy or awkward to bear or wear.
- 7 It sometimes randomly fails for no perceptible reason.
- 8 It only works at particular times or places.
- 9 The harm is only delayed for a while, not negated.
- 10 The user must spend HP to charge it beforehand.

MISCELLANEOUS EFFECTS

Some artifacts create effects that don't relate to weaponry or magical protection. These tables offer some suggestions in that vein, or a GM can loot magic items from other games and simply apply a patina of suitably horrific awfulness to them.

These artifacts can either be permanent items that regularly produce their magic, or they might be powders, dusts, elixirs, or other consumable substances that wear out or are used up after a time. The latter can be useful for giving a group a valuable resource that won't burden a campaign with long-lasting consequences.

Permanent artifacts should generally only be usable once or twice a day, if that. Some exceptionally potent relics might grant a permanent bonus to the bearer, but a GM is best advised to be careful about that sort of thing unless the curse on the item is troublesome enough to balance its utility. Magic items in a Lovecraftian game aren't really intended to be reliable additions to a hero's basic prowess, but dangerous tools to be brought out only when strictly needed. Still, the tools ought to be valuable enough that the PCs aren't inclined to just ignore them.

Consumable items can be less carefully limited. They might have powers strong enough to completely negate a challenge or instantly win a battle. Some groups are hesitant to use consumable items, and can be prone to hoarding their magic against an extremity that never comes. Given the desperate nature of many Lovecraftian adventures, this is less of a problem in this genre. When the choice is almost certain death or the use of an irreplaceable treasure, most PCs come to the right conclusion in a hurry.

D20 INTERNAL EFFECTS

1	They regain lost hit points through a healing effect.
2	They gain +1d3 to an ability modifier.
3	It cures poisons or diseases.
4	It allows shapeshifting into some form.
5	Grants imperviousness to a type of harm.
6	Allows the user to go without air, food, sleep, or rest.
7	Improves the user's attack roll by +1d3.
8	Renders the user impervious to mental influence.
9	Grants rerolls on a type of failed saving throw.
10	Absorbs the next damage from a particular source.
11	Improves a type of skill check by +1d3 points.
12	Reduces Madness gain by half for a time.
13	Improves their armor class by 1d3 points.
14	Adapts the user to an otherwise hostile environment.
15	Improves or grants a new form of sensory awareness.
16	Allows temporary use of a Discipline power.
17	Applies a particular spell to the user.
18	Halts or reverses aging in the bearer.
19	They gain a new type of movement: flight, phasing, etc.
20	They gain bonus temporary hit points.

D4 HOW LONG DOES IT LAST?

1	Just for an instant or a single round.
2	For 1d6 minutes.
3	For 1d6 hours.
4	The effect is always active or in play while the item is owned.

D6 HOW HARD IS IT TO RESIST?

1	Inexorable. It's impossible to resist or miss with it.
2	It can be partially resisted with a save if target is animate.
3	It can be fully resisted with a saving throw.
4	It requires a hit roll to target the unwilling, but no save.
5	It requires both a hit roll and a failed save to work.
6	It only works on willing, inanimate, or helpless targets.

D8 HOW STRONG IS THE EFFECT?

1	Overwhelming, enough to overcome a monster.
2	Very strong, sufficient to overwhelm a skilled human.
3	Strong, enough to take out or kill an ordinary human.
4	Extremely variable, both weak and very strong.
5	Modest, enough to probably kill an ordinary human.
6	Minor, enough to hurt or slightly help the target.
7	Focused, enough to substantially affect in a narrow way.
8	Petty, as small a change in the targeted quality as possible.

D20 EXTERNAL EFFECTS

1	Restores or repairs a damaged object.
2	Creates a zone of some dangerous environment.
3	Traps a target, holding it immobile or helpless.
4	Transports the user and comrades to a distant point.
5	Alters the terrain around a target point.
6	Creates a desired mundane object.
7	Generates a doorway or path to a target point.
8	Calls forth a structure of magical force.
9	Generates a burst of some damaging force at a target.
10	Translates a text or speech into comprehensible form.
11	Reverts time briefly around a target.
12	Dampens magic and harms occult creatures.
13	Creates a ward or wall against a type of entity.
14	Provides a prophecy about a particular target.
15	Fires a beam of some dangerous energy.
16	Absorbs hostile magic, perhaps at some cost to it.
17	Casts a particular spell when invoked.
18	Heals or revitalizes allies when used.
19	Reflects an attack back at a target.
20	Tracks or detects a particular type of target.

OCCULT GRIMOIRES

As friendly sorcerers are few and far between, most heroes are going to learn their magical spells from grimoires. While many of these tomes are choked with black sorcery that is too damnable for PC use, some of them have more ambiguous spells to learn. These tables help give the details of books the heroes might find and study for their own use. The table at the bottom gives potential book name elements, though the words earlier in this section can also be mixed in to the title.

Most spell grimoires contain 1 to 4 spells. Each spell will be of a level dependent upon a d10 die roll: 1-3 is first level, 4-6 is second level, 7-8 is third level, 9 is fourth level, and 10 is fifth level. The specific spells can be rolled on the spell lists given in the Sorcery chapter.

Students will need to be able to read the language in question or enlist a translator who can be trusted to deal discreetly with the text. The base time to digest a book's contents is one month, or two if a translator is required. This doesn't include the time needed to learn the spells.

Unlike in some other games, there is no Madness cost for simply reading an occult tome. A price must be paid for mastering the magic within, but only an exceptionally horrible tome crazes with its text.

D4 WHAT LANGUAGE IS USED?

1	The most probable common language of the creator.
2	An esoteric human tongue of the learned and wise.
3	A language heavily larded with codes and hidden meaning.
4	An incomprehensible alien script. Magic is needed to read.

D20	BOOK	ADJECTIVE	NOUN
1	Atlas	Ancient	Arcana
2	Book	Argent	Curse
3	Codex	Bitter	Depths
4	Compendium	Black	Enlightenment
5	Essay	Bleak	Heavens
6	Grimoire	Exalted	Hells
7	Incunabulum	Fearful	Incantation
8	Inscription	Glorious	Knowledge
9	Manual	Golden	Lady
10	Mirror	Hidden	Master
11	Opus	Highest	Might
12	Opusculum	Invisible	Mountain
13	Primer	Joyous	Power
14	Revelation	Magnificent	Rite
15	Scroll	Occulted	Seas
16	Secret	Penetrating	Throne
17	Thesis	Red	Truth
18	Tome	Ruinous	Wisdom
19	Tractatus	Terrible	Word
20	Vision	Uttermost	World

D6 WHAT'S THE BOOK'S CONDITION?

1	Uncannily perfect in its preservation.
2	Slightly worn but clearly kept with careful attention.
3	Spattered as if by the results of arcane workings.
4	Worn and possibly missing some important pages.
5	Rotting and fragile, prone to easy destruction.
6	Partially ruined, as if someone tried to destroy it.

D8 WHAT IS THE TENOR OF THE TEXT?

1	Incoherent ravings interspersed with spell information.
2	A historical record by a bitter soul interleaved with spells.
3	A private diary recording magical studies and research.
4	A delusional record of grand plans and occult works.
5	A terrified retelling of the awful secrets of the writer.
6	A holy text full of eldritch pieties and foul worship.
7	An artistic work with the spells embedded in symbols.
8	A coldly scientific study of the occult powers it holds.

D10 WHAT FORM DOES IT TAKE?

1	A huge and massive manuscript tome.
2	One or more scrolls wrapped around rotting wood.
3	A cheaply-printed book on smudged paper.
4	A sheaf of loose papers tied together carelessly.
5	A handmade book of painstaking and strange form.
6	A professionally-printed book with no known record of it.
7	A small bound manuscript no larger than a hand.
8	A single huge scroll wrapped around an adorned rod.
9	One printed volume in a mysteriously unrecorded series.
10	An artifact that doesn't actually look like a book.

D12 WHAT'S THE MANUSCRIPT MADE FROM?

1	Ordinary book materials for its time and place.
2	Skins of strange and uncanny beasts.
3	Thin sheets of metal embossed with its sigils.
4	Carved tablets of thin, tough stone.
5	Illuminated parchment with rich inks and drawings.
6	Coarse paper or papyrus with inartful scribbles.
7	Human skin and bones for the fittings.
8	A palimpsest of some worse work, scraped and rewritten.
9	Pages adorned with gilding and precious metals.
10	Colored papers and strange handmade fabrics.
11	Silk sheets with brushwork scripting.
12	An inexplicable alien substance with strange properties.

AN EXAMPLE OF ARTIFACT CREATION

The GM decides that a magical weapon is needed in the campaign, one that the PCs might have a chance of finding and using against certain monstrous entities. He decides that the weapon should have some sort of downside to its use, but it shouldn't be so drastic that the PCs abandon it as a bad bargain. Aside from that, he has no real plans in the matter, so he turns to the random tables to generate its past.

According to the dice, the weapon was created during an ancient human empire, as an accident, in consequence of the circumstances around its creation. The dice also say that it was created to be a bane to the person who was to receive it. The GM decides that the item is an ancient Roman gladius, forged by a bitter legionary smith enslaved by a Germanic chieftain. The smith's hatred imbued itself in the blade which he was forced to forge for his brutish master.

Furthermore, the dice claim that the weapon is well-known in occult circles and is attached to a dire prophecy. The GM decides that the PCs are very likely to have heard of the sword and its special qualities, though they might not know about the prophecy. The GM mulls some possibilities for the prophecy and decides that it is damned to be a great warrior's ruin. The weapon is blameless in the hands of a novice or unaccomplished warrior, but the more mighty and glorious the bearer's martial achievements, the more likely that its curse will strike.

Which brings up the curse. The GM has a general idea about its effects and triggers, but rolls the dice anyway to get some further inspiration. According to the rolls, the curse causes obsession with the item and an inability to put it away. The GM decides that this means that the curse causes the wielder to go berserk, fighting even his allies after all enemies are destroyed. The dice tell the GM that it's a severe curse, easy to trigger unless specific precautions are taken, suppressed by lengthy rituals, induced by the touch of unworthy hands, and can be eased by accepting Madness.

From these results the GM refines the curse's effects. The curse triggers when actually held by *worthy* hands: a hero with at least a +4 base attack bonus who has just slain a foe more powerful than himself or defeated a worthy supernatural enemy. When these conditions obtain the curse instantly triggers. The warrior can forestall the curse by not touching or being around the weapon; if he spends at least a week well apart from the blade it remains safe to wield for the following 24 hours. Once the curse is triggered, however, the wielder will keep fighting even after all enemies are dead or fled, and will only stop after killing or mortally wounding an ally. The wielder can end this frenzy prematurely, but it costs them 1d10 Madness to contain the rage.

With the weapon's curse established, the GM turns the page to find out more about the blade's abilities. He knows it's a gladius, so skips the table for weapon type. The other rolls indicate that it affects a large class of targets, that it improves hit rolls against them, that it induces a type of creature to obey the wielder, that it provokes a strong emotion when used for violence, and that it never seems to chip or grow dull.

The GM translates these rolls into specific game benefits. He decides that the blade's power functions against all supernatural creatures.

Normal humans and animals are not especially vulnerable to the gladius. Against its chosen foes, however, the attacker can roll twice and take the better hit roll, which is a very potent benefit. It provokes a blind, furious anger when used for violence and is in perfect condition, despite its age and the harsh use it's seen. The spiritual resonance about the blade also gives the wielder the power to influence the minds of warriors, including other humans such as soldiers, thugs, cops, and others with a martial self-image. This influence counts as a +3 bonus to social skill checks related to them.

This is a perfectly serviceable weapon as it is, but the GM decides to make it a little better still and add in a miscellaneous artifact effect, just to make it especially irresistible to the players. The dice rolls there indicate that the effect lasts for 1d6 minutes when triggered, is very strong, and can be partially resisted by an unwilling target. The GM mulls over that briefly, and decides to make it an internal power that affects the wielder, so ignores the roll about resistance. According to the dice, the ability allows the wielder to absorb the next damage from a particular source.

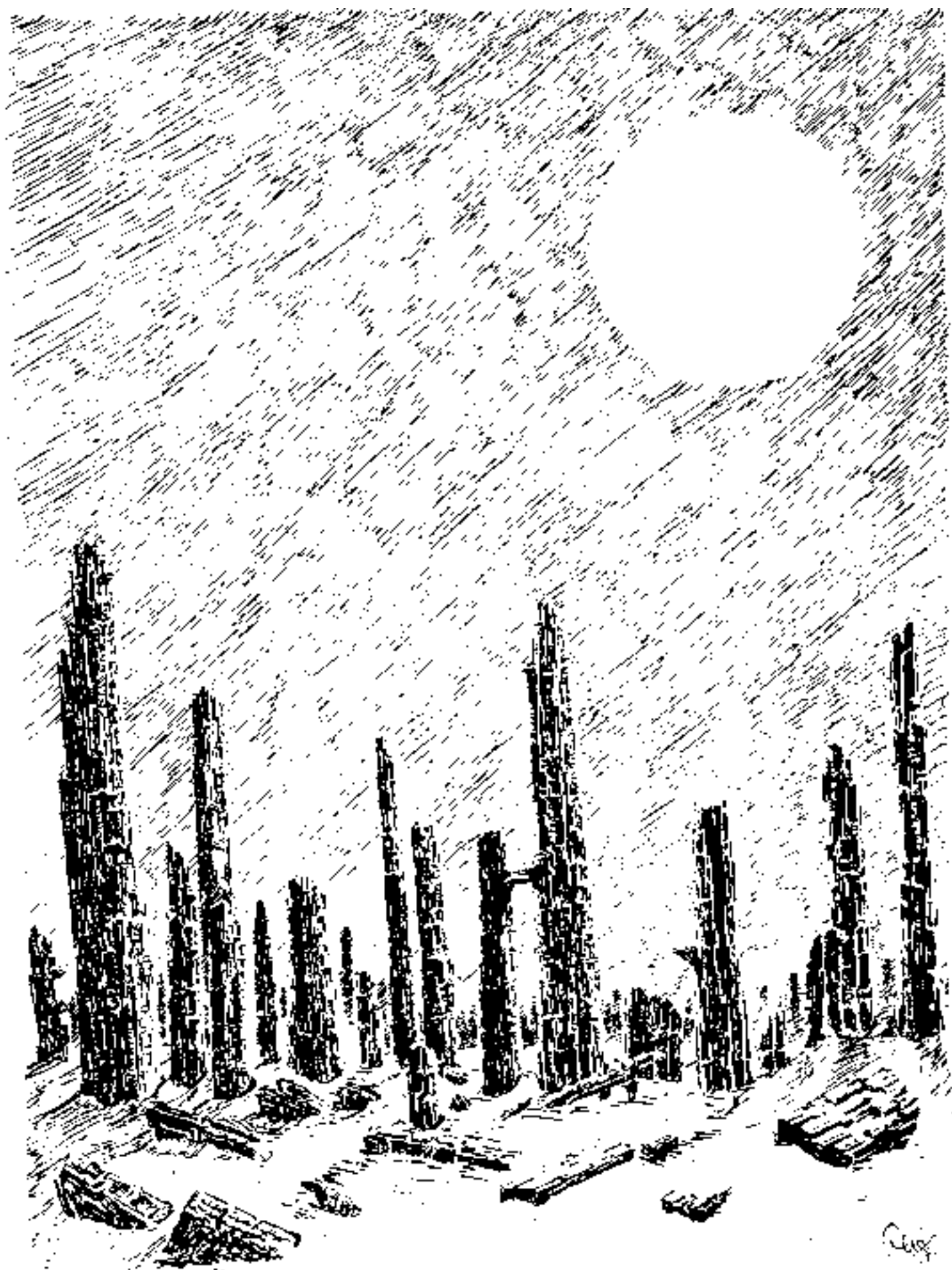
The frequency and details of this power are up to the GM, who decides to weave it into the blade's curse. The weapon is meant to make its wielder mighty, so whenever the wielder wishes, it can completely absorb any incoming damage for a full round. A wielder who isn't aware of this power will instinctively invoke it on an attack that would otherwise kill or incapacitate them. Whenever this power is triggered, however, the curse automatically strikes, and the defensive power cannot be activated again until the wielder kills someone or something.

With that established, the blade is complete. The GM takes a moment to name the blade and write down the item description in his notes, with the details looking something like this:

Thiudoreik's Bane: An ancient Roman gladius about two feet in length, forged from pattern-welded steel and wrought with smooth, geometric lines on its hilt and pommel. The blade is in perfect condition and will always remain in perfect condition, as only magic can damage it. The weapon was forged for the Cherusci chieftain Thiudoreik by a bitter Roman legionary from one of Varus' captured legions. The smith's hate worked itself into the blade, and he swore a curse upon his soul to make it the death of the chieftain who had enslaved him. The curse was successful, though the blade continues to pass down to other hands. Occult histories speak of the blade, but are unclear about its curse.

When used against a supernatural entity, the wielder can roll their hit rolls twice and take the better result. When dealing with soldiers and other martially-minded sorts the bearer gains +3 to all social checks. The bearer may also invoke the sword's power to protect themselves from all damaging attacks for one round, though this triggers the curse below and cannot be repeated until the blade kills someone.

The curse strikes when the weapon is used by a bearer with a base attack bonus of +4 or better who has just killed a more powerful foe or supernatural enemy. A blind rage forces them to continue fighting until an ally is killed or they spend 1d10 Madness to regain control.



CLIX

BUILDING YOUR WORLD

CREATING DARK CIRCUMSTANCES

A *Silent Legions* campaign consists of one or more *regions*. Regions might be as narrow as a single city or remote rural county, or they might encompass an entire small nation or multi-state area. Regions are defined by their self-contained nature. They might have ties to other regions in the campaign, but for the most part, the events and conspiracies within a particular region remain within that region. A globe-spanning plot of cosmic ruin can be good fun, but a certain degree of structure is needed if your preparation work as a GM is to be made manageable.

Inside each region are one or more *locations*. A location is a specific adventure site, a place where curious PCs might find something worth their inquiry. Inside a region consisting of a single city the locations might be neighborhoods, or even specific buildings or organization headquarters. In a larger region, such as one covering a state, the locations might be individual towns, villages, secret occult hideouts, and ancient eldritch haunts.

Not every event and point of interest in a region has to be made a specific location. There might be free-floating schemes or perambulatory horrors that could be encountered anywhere in the region. Still, it's best to start with fixed locations and then build out from them as your own creations recommend.

In the same vein, regions and locations can be created as your campaign grows. It's usually best to start small and simple, with just one region and a few locations. You might have ideas about other points of interest or other regions of the earth where the PCs' adventures might take them, but you can add those in later as your energy, fun, and play needs recommend.

SKETCHING OUT YOUR REGION

First, you need to choose your starting region and assemble your beginning locations. One popular choice is to build what you know; you can pick your home city or native state and add a proper patina of horror to familiar surroundings. Conversely, you might choose some other portion of the earth that offers some particularly tempting history or toothsome occult background. The whole region probably shouldn't be larger than a small European country or a large American state, and a smaller region is perfectly serviceable.

Next, you'll want to download a map of the region. You won't need a particularly fine or fancy map, just something with population centers marked and enough terrain information to pick out those areas that are furthest from human habitation or least inviting to intruders.

As the GM, it's always your privilege to edit the map as your needs recommend, trimming away awkward communities and tweaking the landscape as required.

Next, you'll want to pick three urban locations from the region, choosing cities or towns. These locations should be fairly heavily-populated, the better to serve as backdrops for city adventures and other excitement suitable for a concrete jungle. It's often best to choose cities with different characters and degrees of wealth, the better to have one easy pick for adventures revolving around urban decay and poverty and a different one for sessions involving the local elite and the wealthy. For particularly large cities, you might place locations in different neighborhoods that serve this end.

Now, pick three rural locations, choosing villages or other small communities. These locations will serve as backgrounds for adventures with a more intimate, if not claustrophobic feel. Small communities can be infiltrated, controlled, or isolated far more easily than major cities, and truly baroque horrors can go on far from the eyes of outsiders.

Finally, pick three isolated locations, remote or hidden places that might serve as a cult stronghold or secret site of occult power. Mountainsides, swamps, caverns, isolated retreats, or deep forests can all serve this purpose. You don't need to decide what exactly is at these locations yet. You only need to pick places sufficiently remote or forbidding that the local inhabitants can't be expected to stumble across them often.

Nine locations is usually plenty to start a campaign, but there's nothing preventing you from adding more if you find the work fun. You may also be adding more as the campaign progresses, or adding entirely new regions to the game. The key is not to overwork yourself. If you don't need more material for your very next session, and it's not fun for you to keep going, then you should stop and set it aside. You have only so much energy to put into any project, and you don't want to waste it on material you don't enjoy and won't need for your next game.

FABRICATING CULTS AND ALIENS

You have a region and some locations of interest. Now you need some cults, alien intrusions, conspiracies, and festering horrors to pull the place together and give it some coherence behind the scenes. The PCs will often begin the campaign entirely oblivious to these horrors, but as they progress through the game they will begin to put the pieces together and realize the evil machinations behind their disparate encounters. The Mythos creation chapter is your friend here, as you'll be using it to create the outlines of the content you need.

BUILDING YOUR WORLD

First, decide whether or not you plan to use the faction rules given later in this book. They can provide a simple way of keeping the game world “in motion” even when the PCs aren’t involved in a particular event. The interplay of schemes and counterplots among the occult factions can produce adventure seeds and events worth investigating and spare you the effort of hand-fabricating things.

Some GMs prefer to manage things less formally, however, and simply use their own best judgment for deciding the interplay of major occult groups in their game. This is a perfectly valid way to do things and can be useful if you have only a small region with few hidden actors.

Whether or not you use the faction system you’re going to need to pick a number of occult groups to populate your region. These evildoers will be the powers behind the various awful things that happen in the area, though some locations may simply be infested with darknesses that have no relation to the other events of the campaign. Strictly speaking, you might make all the locations one-off adventures, but most Lovecraftian campaigns work better when there’s at least one group of eldritch baddies behind many of the events. A persistent enemy gives a sense of continuity to the campaign and allows the players to build personal grudge against their enemies.

As an initial stock of baddies, you’ll want at least one cult and one alien species. These groups may or may not know about each other, and if they do know, they are probably vigorously opposed to each others’ plans. Most occult factions are likely to be at each others’ throats, as few of them even share the same basic conception of reality, let alone share mutually-compatible goals. For larger regions you might pick as many as five or six groups, though you probably don’t want more than two or three alien races at most unless you want the campaign flavor to be that of fending off an alien invasion.

You can create these cults and alien races with the tools in the Mythos chapter. Their tendrils in this region may not be the whole of their power or presence on this world, but they are at least the parts that the locals are most likely to care about. If they are broken and disrupted then whatever grand plans they may have are at least temporarily foiled. You might later connect them to branches in other regions you create, but for now, you can let them be relatively self-contained.

You might also choose to create one or more friendly factions, either as employers of the PCs or as NPCs willing to lend assistance to their cause. Most players will be expecting some sort of screw job when it comes to strange allies, however, so you might toy with this expectation by actually making them genuinely helpful and morally tolerable people. They might be a secret religious sect, classified government agency, venerable monster-hunter family, or simply an ad-hoc organization of determined defenders of humanity. Of course, these allies may end up as casualties to the schemes of their enemies, but such outcomes are for the GM to contemplate and the PCs to influence as they can.

Once you’ve completed this stage of preparation you should have several usable antagonist groups in hand. You don’t need to establish much about them beyond whatever the generation process has created. Instead, you’ll be using them as connective elements for the next stage.

FLESHING OUT LOCATIONS

The next step involves preparing the locations with the information you need to run a sandbox horror campaign. Your goal at this stage is not to turn each location into a fully-realized adventure site, but only to set up the resources and raw facts you’ll need to quickly generate an adventure when you need one.

To do this, you need to fill in a few blanks for the location. Your main tool for that is the *location tags* list presented later in this chapter. Each tag describes a particular trope, and gives examples of enemies, friends, schemes secrets, and places related to that trope. These tags are meant to give you the basic raw materials to provoke your own creativity and give you some direction for a location.

First, separate out about 20% of your locations. These are going to be “red herring” locations. There might be bad things happening in these places, but they have nothing to do with occult perils. One of them might even be a stronghold for some force opposing the powers of darkness, but at the very least they’re locations where the players won’t find eldritch foes. You want these red herring locations to exist, or else the PCs will know that any place worth mentioning must obviously have some arcane horror hidden somewhere within its borders.

For location, pick or roll two or more tags. For red herring locations, roll from the mundane tags. For other locations, roll one or more mundane tags and one occult tag. If you use more than one mundane tag, blend

ARKHAMIZING YOUR WORLD

When creating a region, it can sometimes be useful to rewrite the maps and locations in a more convenient way. You might clip out awkward cities and insert new towns that can be given the history that you need, or you might reforge local terrain to add the gloomy forests, grim swamps, or forbidding hills your purposes require. If your map isn’t giving you what you need for your game, then the map should simply be changed.

Smaller towns and villages can be added with hardly a ripple of consequence, as even those players familiar with the local area are unlikely to be too distracted by a new hamlet popping up in the neighborhood. Adding larger cities can be more awkward if you feel the need to nod toward the realistic effects of planting a grimy Gotham next to modern New York. It can sometimes be most convenient to simply rewrite an existing city, giving it a different name to emphasize its changed nature but leaving its particulars intact, aside from the changes you need to make.

These new population centers are often useful choices when you really want to play up the qualities of a particular location tag, as described later in this chapter. Real-life cities have their own histories and pathologies, and it can seem forced to lay a particular tag too heavily on a site that has no real-life parallel among its major problems. A city woven out of whole cloth is much more amenable to your needs.

them together in a synthesis so that the woe the location faces is a mix of its tags. The more tags you use, the more baroque the final result is likely to be, but such a spread can also make it more difficult to give the location a coherent character. As with all the tables in this book, you should use your own judgment as to what best suits your game.

Now write down one element from each category for your location, providing it with an enemy, a friend, a scheme, a secret and a characteristic place. Give these elements names and details. It's not necessary to give NPCs statistics yet, or give powers to magical objects, or actually figure out the specific horror that's going on in the community. At this stage, all you need are names, descriptions, and a vague sense of what the basic problem is in the area.

Use the groups you've created to tie these locations together. If you've used the faction rules, you can map faction assets and strongholds to particular enemies or places in a location. If you're managing things in a more free-form fashion, hook up the NPCs to the groups in numbers roughly fitting to their size and importance.

Not every element in a location needs to be connected with a group and its goals, but you probably want at least half of the locations to be entangled with the factions in order to ensure that the PCs will have some threads to pick at when and if they involve themselves in the place.

This is all the preparation that your locations need at this point. Details such as maps, combat stats, or other necessary game resources are involved at a later stage in your prep work. Right now, all you need are the basic ideas.

CREATING ADVENTURE TEMPLATES

Now that you have the basic elements of your region settled, it's time to build one or two adventure templates. These templates will be vital in play for providing you with the details and framework you need to quickly transform any location into a suitable adventure site for your heroic investigators. Once you have them built, you shouldn't need more than five or ten minutes to turn any of the locations in your region into a playable evening's fun.

Templates are adventure outlines with blanks where particular types of NPCs and location elements should go. When you need to use one, you pull it, fill in the blanks with the NPCs and elements appropriate to the specific location, and do a last-minute pass to smooth any rough edges and fill in any local details. The template provides the investigative clues, maps, and combat statistics you need to run things at the table.

The *Creating Adventure Templates* section of this chapter covers the details of this process and a selection of sample scenes and hooks you can use to assemble a template. You're going to need at least one for your initial session's play, and if your creativity holds out you probably want another built as emergency content for those occasions when you need to slap down an adventure in a hurry.

When you've got a template roughed out, the next step is to fill in the blanks to transform it into your first campaign adventure. You can use the relatively copious free time you have before the campaign starts to

polish things up neatly and make sure all the pieces fit and all the clues are arranged for your first game session.

It doesn't have to be a long adventure, and in fact it's best if it only lasts a single session. The goal with your first adventure is not to set the PCs on a lengthy arc of story development, but just to give them a session's worth of play to get used to the game and shape up relationships between their characters. Once the players have had a chance to get comfortable with the campaign's basic elements, then they can turn their attention to other possibilities. The hooks and hints this first session leaves behind can then tip them off to other sites of interest in the region and lead them on to their next perilous adventure.

WRAP-UP AND MAINTENANCE

And with that, your region is complete and ready for play. Once you have a working map, a list of sites and tag elements, and an adventure substantial enough for your first session's play, you're ready to run the game. Of course, a successful campaign tends to run for many sessions, and maintaining such a game takes a little forethought.

First, at the end of each session, ask the players what they intend to do or investigate next. In some cases this will be obvious, such as when they're not finished with a current adventure. In others, they might struggle a little if they haven't come across any particularly eye-catching adventure hooks. You should always be ready to give them specific suggestions related to what their characters might have observed or realized. Ideally, the players will have their own goals and a clear idea of how to pursue them, but you should be ready to help if needed.

Once they tell you what they plan to do, use the downtime between sessions to create the content you need to run their attempts. If they plan to investigate a particular location, get out a template and fill it in with the location's elements. If they want to clean house and deal with some local problems in their backyard, get together the material you need to make a session's worth of challenges or conflicts for them to resolve. There's no need to try to push the players toward a particular action or angle of investigation. You just need to make sure you're prepared to make whatever they do want to try into a worthwhile evening's play, and prep for that accordingly.

Of course, sometimes you'll realize that what the players have in mind is hopeless or has no chance of filling out a full session of play. It may look like a viable effort from their perspective, but due to the Dark Truths behind the matter, it's rapidly going to force them to retreat or reconsider their choices. You don't need to warn the players about this in advance if their assumptions are in line with what their characters know. Instead, just prepare something to drop on them when they realize that the situation is not what they expected, so that you have enough material for the evening's gaming.

Remember, you don't need to prep enough material to last an entire campaign. You just need to prep enough material to last the next session. Shepherd your creative energy and build only that content that is immediately necessary or that is genuinely fun for you to make. If you're careful about how you spend your limited time and focus you'll be able to keep the campaign going with a minimum of effort.

LOCATION TAGS

The sixty location tags that follow are meant to serve as examples and inspiration for your own work. Many of the tags provided in the other *Sine Nomine* games can be used as well with a little adjustment, but these tags are intended to give you the conflicts and crises you need to build fittingly horrific adventures.

Some of the tags are mundane in nature, depicting situations or problems that require no supernatural explanation. The first forty tags provided in the table below fit this description, and if you want to roll exclusively mundane tags, you can roll 1d4 and 1d10 together to ensure such a result.

Just because they're written to be mundane doesn't mean you need to use them that way, however. Any of the problems they depict can easily be credited to supernatural influence or alien scheming, and a GM should feel free to adjust these tags to a more uncanny mode whenever it seems interesting.

The last twenty tags on the list are related to the occult, and can be used when you want to decide what specific eldritch activities are cursing a particular location. If you wish to pick only from these options, you can simply roll 1d20 and compare it to the final entries on the table.

USING LOCATION TAGS

Each tag is composed of five different types of elements: Enemies, Friends, Schemes, Secrets, and Places characteristic to that particular trope. They are not meant to be a rigidly exclusive list, but simply a set of examples that you can use for your own construction, or touchstones for your own creativity. You can use them verbatim with the adventure templates you'll construct later in the chapter, or you can remix them to fit your own particular needs.

When rolling multiple tags for a site, it's often helpful to synthesize the results. If you roll both "Exploitative Industry" and "Alien Bloodline" for a site, you might pick "Merciless Foreman" and "Ruthless Broodmother" from the enemy lists and merge them together into Nora Aldweiss, a plant manager for a local chemical company. She drives the employees on with pitiless rigor, and any who complain or try to quit have "corrosive chemical accidents" where they are spirited away and transformed into alien drones.

When writing down elements for a site, you shouldn't worry about defining them too closely. Just a sentence or two for each element you include is plenty, and you shouldn't concern yourself with combat statistics or detailed maps. You'll add these later when you start building adventure templates.

Location tags are just there to give you the basic components you'll be using later to fill out an adventure template. If you spend time trying to fully realize every element of nine or more locations before you even start play you're likely to prematurely exhaust your creative energy.

SCALING A TAG

Many of the tags are written with the assumption that they'll be applied to an urban neighborhood or entire small town. A GM will often need to apply these to smaller locations, however, with perhaps only a single isolated manor or reclusive family involved in a site. In these cases, the GM should feel free to scale things down. Maybe "local authorities" are just the clan matriarch, or "Race Hatred" is just the family's refusal to accept the interracial marriage of one of their members.

The basic gist of the struggle can be scaled up or down as the location's size requires. Many of the problems are hard to apply to entire cities without creating implausibly traumatized communities. For these, just restrict the tag's problems to particular neighborhoods that lack the wealth or cachet of other parts of the city.

D6	D10	TAG	D6	D10	TAG
1	1	<i>Averted Eyes</i>	4	1	<i>Political Zealots</i>
	2	<i>Bitter Envy</i>		2	<i>Puppet Leadership</i>
	3	<i>Black Market</i>		3	<i>Race Hatred</i>
	4	<i>Clannish Silence</i>		4	<i>Religious Conflict</i>
	5	<i>Class Hatred</i>		5	<i>Senseless Violence</i>
	6	<i>Corrosive Vice</i>		6	<i>Slave Trade</i>
	7	<i>Corrupt Police</i>		7	<i>Suborned Media</i>
	8	<i>Creeping Plague</i>		8	<i>Twisted Bureaucracy</i>
	9	<i>Crime Ridden</i>		9	<i>Tyrannical Elites</i>
	10	<i>Crumbling Structures</i>		10	<i>Vast Graft</i>
2	1	<i>Crushing Despair</i>	5	1	<i>Academic Sorcerers</i>
	2	<i>Dark Undercity</i>		2	<i>Alien Bloodline</i>
	3	<i>Decaying Industry</i>		3	<i>Black Altar</i>
	4	<i>Demagogues</i>		4	<i>Breeding Program</i>
	5	<i>Depraved Clergy</i>		5	<i>Buried Power</i>
	6	<i>Disaster Site</i>		6	<i>Criminal Cultists</i>
	7	<i>Drug Epidemic</i>		7	<i>Cult Beachhead</i>
	8	<i>Entrenched Poverty</i>		8	<i>Damnable Savior</i>
	9	<i>Exploitative Industry</i>		9	<i>Darkened Door</i>
	10	<i>Feuding Elites</i>		10	<i>Eldritch Radiation</i>
3	1	<i>Forbidden Flesh</i>	6	1	<i>Foul Faith</i>
	2	<i>Forced Relocations</i>		2	<i>Horrific Wealth</i>
	3	<i>Gang Influence</i>		3	<i>Inhuman Masters</i>
	4	<i>Hateful Tradition</i>		4	<i>Lich Lair</i>
	5	<i>Impending Doom</i>		5	<i>Massive Ritual</i>
	6	<i>Migrant Tensions</i>		6	<i>Predator Entity</i>
	7	<i>Old Grudges</i>		7	<i>Recruitment Center</i>
	8	<i>Pervasive Treachery</i>		8	<i>Secret Nexus</i>
	9	<i>Plutocratic Control</i>		9	<i>Terrible Pact</i>
	10	<i>Poisoned Ground</i>		10	<i>Traitorous Hunters</i>

ACADEMIC SORCERERS

Some group of local scholars, academics, scientists, or engineers have delved into unspeakable mysteries. These groups are usually prompted by some long-lost tome or inexplicable alien artifact, and often have no greater goal than exploring yet more of the wonders this new knowledge provides. Of course, given the nature of occult learning, moral limits soon dissolve into maniacal obsessions.

- Enemies:** Tweedy university professor, "Crackpot" mad scientist, Shade-tree occult mechanic, Academic radical with a vision
- Friends:** Worried student, Concerned librarian, Relative of a sacrifice, Nervous campus cop
- Schemes:** Perform a great ritual at an auspicious time, Seize the well-guarded relic or book they require, Sacrifice the chosen one at the correct place and hour, Call forth an eldritch mentor from beyond
- Secrets:** The book or relic that provoked them is sentient, The cult is actually very old and long-standing, University customs actually feed into the cult's needs, The cult masquerades as a student organization
- Places:** Campus social center, College sports arena, Grimy lab hidden away, Sepulchral library stacks

ALIEN BLOODLINE

Some of the locals are alien-human hybrids. The natives may or may not understand their own nature, but those with greater portions of the blood are prone to strange urges and compulsions, if not physical manifestations of alien physiognomy. These changes might be concealed, or they might have been rationalized as an ordinary genetic disorder. These natives might originally have physically interbred with the alien race that sired them or they might be the product of ineffable genetic science.

- Enemies:** Ruthless broodmother, Helpless thrall of programmed commands, Newly-awakened local grandee, Utterly remade abomination
- Friends:** Worried relative-by-marriage, Panicked witness to things best unseen, Concerned local physician, Intrigued genetic researcher
- Schemes:** Infect others with the alien transformation, Create a device to summon their progenitors, Lure a useful local authority into marriage, Seize control of local government through infiltration or coercion
- Secrets:** Even the infected are unaware of their condition until it manifests, The infected are meant to be slaves to the aliens, The infected are meant to be a new generation of terrestrial rulers, The aliens are still present and controlling their spawn
- Places:** Hidden creche, Sanitarium for the changed, Locked attic room, Concealed ceremonial chamber

AVERTED EYES

The locals simply don't talk about crime or cult involvement. They know better than to speak of such things or report them to the police, whether due to a harsh history of reprisals, an eldritch compulsion laid upon them, or the simple reluctance to get involved.

- Enemies:** Chief silencer of a malign group, Local terrified that outsiders will make trouble, Corrupt cop who likes it quiet, Local who cooperates with the evil
- Friends:** Crime victim with no hope of justice, Frustrated outside investigator, Escapee from a cult or gang, Brave local detective
- Schemes:** Crush the last local source of troublemaking investigation, Blackmail cowed leaders with what they've hidden, Kill a victim who won't be quiet, Eject a troublemaking outside group
- Secrets:** Most locals willingly accept the silence in exchange for benefits, Only a subgroup maintains a silence which others are unaware of, The silence has been there from the start, Something terrible will happen if the silence is broken
- Places:** Secret club where truth is spoken, Hidden memorial for victims, Banal site of unacknowledged horror, City records room where true numbers are kept

BITTER ENVY

The site is suffused with envy and a spirit of thwarted desire. Whether for money, power, or respect, one group is convinced that their rightful due is being kept from them by another group. This envy may be rooted in a seed of injustice, but it has long since ballooned beyond any reasonable measure and will now be satisfied with nothing less than everything.

- Enemies:** Furious demagogue, Victim with insatiable lust for revenge, Politician who profits by conflict, Traitor within the envied group
- Friends:** Bewildered member of envied group, Troubled doubter of envious group, Repentant assistant to a demagogue, Outsider peacemaker
- Schemes:** Destroy the thing if it cannot be taken from their enemies, Make an example of someone through plunder, Ravage the envied group in a sudden uprising, Brutally punish a resistant comrade for their refusal to join in
- Secrets:** The envy is actually totally unjustified, The envy is a cover for the leadership's real goal, The leaders never actually want the envy satisfied, The envy is just a cover for simpler hatred
- Places:** Demolished home of the envied class, Grimy place of envious deprivation, Lushly excessive building, Den where vengeance is plotted

BLACK ALTAR

A place of dread holiness is present at the site, a locus for the power of an outer god or other ineffable power. This altar may predate human settlement of the area or it may have been constructed more recently by devout servitors. It forms a place of pilgrimage for the faithful and tends to warp local residents in ways pleasing to its patron deity.

- Enemies:** Demented cult leader, Dream-driven native, Awakened alien high priest, Otherworldly avatar of the deity
- Friends:** Afflicted local resident, Concerned native clergy, Relative of a new cultist, Archaeologist who's discovered too much
- Schemes:** Destroy a structure that's sealing away the holy site, Perform a mass ritual around the altar, Recover a removed piece of the altar, Summon an avatar of the patron deity
- Secrets:** The altar has innocently been incorporated into an important building, The faith has infected a local church, The altar is calling cultists from distant places, The altar is changing the natives in subtle ways
- Places:** Ill-litten unnatural cavern, Desolate glade, Hidden conjunction of tunnels, Secret chamber in a major building

BLACK MARKET

There is a pervasive black market at the site that controls the trade of illicit goods. Some powerful organization usually ensures the market's smooth functioning, often with the tacit complicity of local leadership. Sales might even be centralized through actual bazaars and theoretically illegal shops.

- Enemies:** Corrupt politician, Brutal and amoral market trader, Drug manufacturer or maker of forbidden goods, Savage enforcer of market deals
- Friends:** Desperate local needing something illegal, Theft victim seeking stolen item on the market, Legal trader being extorted by black marketeers, Victim of some dubious good bought on the market
- Schemes:** Create a new supplier of forbidden goods, Crush or corrupt a local do-gooder, Hook someone important on black market goods, Smash an upstart illegal competitor
- Secrets:** A group of poor locals relies on the market for jobs, The market is the only way to get something vital there, No politician can survive without the market's support, The market pretends to be the protector of a group
- Places:** A truck with things to sell out the back, Shabby shop with special goods in back room, Underground tunnel with sinister sellers, Private party with special offers to guests

BREEDING PROGRAM

A local cult is engaged in a complex breeding program using the natives as raw material. The goal may be to create a host capable of incarnating an alien god, or perhaps to devise a superior breed of slave or to escape the consequences of some genetic curse. The subjects may be chosen from particular families, or they may be gathered in bulk from the easily-missed and unwanted of the area.

- Enemies:** Soulless human trafficker, Kidnapping ring boss, Demented eugenic scientist, Mad patriarch or matriarch
- Friends:** Relative of kidnapping victim, "Failed" offspring, Puzzled obstetrician, Missing persons investigator
- Schemes:** Construct a hidden breeding center, Perform a ritual to imbue a hopefully-Chosen Host, Gain control of a prison or boarding school for use as hosts, Recapture an escaped offspring alive
- Secrets:** The products of the program are remarkably or supernaturally gifted, The products of the program are visibly inhuman, The offspring require human flesh to survive, The cult has a family or group of willing hosts
- Places:** Secluded manor house, Isolated country jail, Obstetrics ward run by cultists, Subterranean dungeon for kidnapped hosts

BURIED POWER

A blind and terrible power is buried or otherwise sealed away at the site, and a cult desires to remedy this confinement. The power may be an unnatural wound in the fabric of the world, a gate to a strange Kelipah, or an alien intellect that chafes at its imprisonment. The power has drawn a group determined to liberate it, even if they don't fully understand their own strange urges, and their efforts may range from physical digging to the enactment of rituals.

- Enemies:** Obsessed archaeologist, Cultist construction company owner, Maddened local occultist, Alien minion of the trapped power
- Friends:** Owner of the land over the power, Rare book collector, Curious geologist, Heir to the family keeping the power sealed
- Schemes:** Physically excavate the entity's prison, Perform the rite that will break the ancient seals, Arrange the bloody deaths that will awaken the power, Foolishly seek to bind the power to their own purposes
- Secrets:** The power creates a subtle but unnatural effect on the surroundings, The power is sealed by several important objects, The power grants gifts to those who seek to free it, The locals retain legend of the last time the power was free
- Places:** Ancient buried chamber, Park with strangely charged atmosphere, Hidden ritual room, Tightly-secured digging site

CLANNISH SILENCE

A group of locals simply doesn't talk to outsiders. They keep their affairs among themselves, either out of xenophobia, old resentments, or fear of reprisals. In cities they may be ethnic, political or religious groups, while entire small towns may be disinclined to deal with strangers.

- Enemies:** Brutal group leader enforcing quiet, Depraved member taking advantage of their silence, Outside leader scapegoating them, Politician who ruthlessly exploits their enforced support
- Friends:** Outsider resident seeking help, Local breaking custom, Government investigator trying to crack a case, Elder grudgingly in need of outside aid
- Schemes:** Kill a member who threatens to reveal dark secrets, Conduct bloody "justice" on an internal criminal, Destroy a prying interloper or outside group, Prevent a terrible event from being discovered
- Secrets:** Ruthless enforcers maintain the silence, Silence is meant to protect them from abusive neighbors, All feel culpable or threatened by a terrible hidden truth, They're actually trying to communicate but aren't understood
- Places:** Cultural center building or meeting hall, Crime scene with no talking witnesses, Burnt home of talkative member, Hidden festival

CLASS HATRED

Whether divided by wealth, race, religion, or simple geographic tribalism, two or more of the classes in this location hate each other. They will go out of their way to make life miserable for their enemies, even at the cost of their own well-being. Some hatreds are born of old wrongs, but most soon become matters of custom and bitter resentment.

- Enemies:** Outside troublemaker, Revenge-mad group member, Cynical group profiteer, Zealous preacher of hate
- Friends:** Young lovers of the wrong classes, Frustrated peacemaker, Group leader worn down by hate, Elder who remembers a better time
- Schemes:** Kill a hated class leader, Frame the enemy for an atrocity, Destroy business or resources vital to the enemy, Drive the enemy out of an area
- Secrets:** Both sides are actually puppeted by one master, The hatred is reinforced by local churches, The hatred was started to conceal a terrible truth, The hatred is destroying both groups
- Places:** Ethnic or religious center, Typical business for a group, Rigidly-divided neighborhood, Protest march against the enemy

CORROSIVE VICE

The locals here enjoy their entertainments far too much. Drugs, flesh, fights, dice, booze, and every other base enjoyment is indulged beyond reason by all classes. The extensive poverty that it encourages produces both the providers and the consumers of these vices.

- Enemies:** Icy drug smuggler, Amoral brothel madame, Gambling kingpin, Liquor tycoon
- Friends:** Temperance crusader, Rehab clinic owner, Escapee from a slave brothel, Semi-reformed gambling addict
- Schemes:** Keep a vice illegal so legit businesses can't crowd the market, Eliminate a hostile politician or community leader, Rub out a rival provider, Normalize a depraved new vice
- Secrets:** The keep-it-illegal crusaders are on the provider payroll, The head of law enforcement is addicted, The providers have a huge blackmail vault, The elite want the poor kept anesthetized by vice
- Places:** Dilapidated crack house, Brothel for the elite, Raucous horse race track, Club full of sodden locals



CORRUPT POLICE

Local law enforcement is hopelessly corrupt or incompetent. Some might be nests of nepotism and city machine favoritism, where supporters are given no-show jobs and sinecures. Others might be infested by cops on the take or run by aspiring politicians who want to make friends with the city's underworld elite.

- Enemies:** Sadistic cop bully, Blackmailing detective, Organized crime puppet, Urban warlord police commissioner
- Friends:** One honest cop, Victim of police corruption, Idealistic young district attorney, Outsider federal investigator
- Schemes:** Take down a gang because they're not paying protection, Assassinate or frame a troublemaking politician, Blackmail or turn a federal investigator, Beat down a troublesome neighborhood leader
- Secrets:** The cops are the mob's owned muscle, The locals take their criminal problems to a trusted gang, The cops sell indulgences to would-be criminals, The cops are a political party's muscle
- Places:** Shadowy precinct building, Cop-protected crime den, Business being shaken down for contributions, Police union hall

CREEPING PLAGUE

The site is teeming with a particular pervasive sickness. The illness might currently be in abeyance but about to burst forth soon in a wave of contagion and suffering, or it might be a long-standing sickness with large pools of victims in the area. Some neighborhoods might be centers for the contagion, but too poor or isolated to concern the city's elite.

- Enemies:** Embezzling city health official, Anti-vaccination crusader, Doom-crying religious zealot, Pollution-spreading industrialist
- Friends:** Baffled outside health official, Local-born physician trying to deal with it, Industrialist being unfairly blamed, Widow of a victim
- Schemes:** Spread or increase production of the toxin causing it, Blame an unpopular person or minority for it, Destroy medical centers blamed for spreading it, Riot in demand for treatment and cure
- Secrets:** The sickness doesn't actually exist and is being used to bilk funding, The "cure" will eventually turn it into a more virulent plague, The local elite are hoarding treatment or vaccines, The plague is being used to wipe out undesirables
- Places:** Hospital sick ward, Dreary treatment center, Empty social establishment, Sinister toxin refinery

CRIME RIDDEN

The site is overrun by crime, both serious and trifling. The local police are helpless to halt the incessant violence and theft. Locals have become numbed to the situation, developing patterns of behavior to minimize their danger. The crime may be the consequence of organized criminal groups, a widespread acceptance of such behavior, or simple hate between locals.

- Enemies:** Ruthless gang boss, Amoral white-collar crime kingpin, Crime-preaching street demagogue, Brutal enforcer of local terror
- Friends:** Struggling cop crusader, Brutalized crime victim, Quixotic neighborhood watch leader, Former criminal trying to go straight
- Schemes:** Crush the last traces of police resistance, Spread organized crime to a new place, Smash a rival organization, Foist blame for the crime on an unpopular group
- Secrets:** The elites somehow profit from the crime, No politician can survive without crime boss blessings, The crime was dumped on the site by a remote enemy, The elites are actually the criminals
- Places:** Shadowy fence's shop, Demoralized police precinct, Criminal bazaar openly on the street, Fortress-like local residence

CRIMINAL CULTISTS

One of the local criminal gangs is actually a cult devoted to an eldritch power or an alien race. New or lower-ranked members may be ignorant of the true nature of the enterprise, but the gang's leadership is fully committed to their diabolical masters. Ordinary ambitions for wealth and power often give way to more arcane motivations for their actions and rituals.

- Enemies:** Deviant religious leader, Latest in a line of secret high priests, Gang boss who has made bargains, Alien entity masquerading as a boss
- Friends:** Gang defector who saw too much, Victim of a strange occult crime, Rival gang member seeking help, Baffled police detective
- Schemes:** Sacrifice a rival gang's leadership, Steal an important occult artifact, Drive out or suborn the police on their home turf, Forcibly enlist local residents in their occult worship
- Secrets:** Gang tags and rituals have occult significance, The gang has access to sorcerous powers to aid their crimes, Gang members become other than human, The gang is just a sacrificial cat paw for another circle of sorcerers
- Places:** Gang stronghold with alien-inspired interior, Site of a bloody ritual of reprisal, Vacant lot used for rites, Dive bar with strange clientele

CRUMBLING STRUCTURES

The site is physically or institutionally falling apart. Physical damage may be the consequence of shifting land, earthquakes, sinkholes, increasing water content in the soil, or persistent disrepair. Institutional collapse may be the result of incompetent officials, a decadent populace, lack of resources, or some other societal plague.

- Enemies:** Heartless slum lord, Malicious official, Corrupt "urban renewal" administrator, Looter of abandoned structures or weak institutions
- Friends:** Desperate structure inhabitant, Beleaguered institutional reformer, Civic campaigner, Aspiring new entrepreneur
- Schemes:** Force eminent domain on behalf of a profiteer, Destroy a troublesome institution from within, Cause a problematic building to be destroyed, Plunder an institution of its wealth and respect
- Secrets:** The collapse is the result of a botched attempt at reform, The institution is much weaker than it appears from the outside, The locals have a grudge against the institution, The crumbling is the result of a recent disaster
- Places:** Dilapidated factory, Rotting tenement, Bustling but ineffectual office, Decaying building of former grandeur

CRUSHING DESPAIR

The locals have given up. Whatever the cause, they no longer have any hope for the future, and seek to numb themselves with transient pleasures and destructive distractions. Corruption, crime, loss, and oppression are seen as inevitable facts of life, and they will resist any attempt to persuade them otherwise as merely a cruel attempt at deception.

- Enemies:** Purveyor of chemical distractions, Predatory loan shark, Political machine boss, Heartless industrialist employer
- Friends:** Crusading preacher, Embattled community leader, Successful expatriate returned home, Local determined to break free
- Schemes:** Quash a troublemaking local leader, Spread a profitable addiction among the locals, Shut down a project that risks empowering locals, Discredit a source of hope as a mere trick
- Secrets:** The local elites rely on a crushed populace, The locals were once rich and important but lost it all, Faith and community were ruined by a sequence of betrayals, Constant plans for renewal always disappoint
- Places:** Abandoned church, Decaying crack house, Riotous illegal drinking hole, Street with half the houses empty

CULT BEACHHEAD

A cult from a more distant site has formed a beachhead at this location. Recruiters and a skeleton leadership have moved in recently and are working to enlist more members into the cult, focusing on those souls most amenable to the group's purposes. The cult is relatively fragile yet, reliant on only a few members, but they often have substantial backing from their parent group.

- Enemies:** Successful cult businessman, Inspiring religious leader, Compelling new musician or performer, Personal development guru
- Friends:** Clergy for dwindling local faith, Displaced local forced out of the new cult lair, Suspicious society grandee, Relative of a cult recruit
- Schemes:** Recruit or blackmail an important local authority, Seize control of a building or organization important to the cult's purposes, Rob or extort a wealthy victim to fund the new cult's needs, Eliminate a suspicious or too-knowledgeable local authority
- Secrets:** The cult masquerades as a renewal movement, The cult only needs to be active here long enough to perform a vital ritual, There are actually two mutually-hostile cults forming new chapters here, The cult is trying to revive an old and vanished chapter here
- Places:** Newly-erected church, Storefront social organization recruitment center, Empty lot for impending construction, Public festival

DAMNABLE SAVIOR

A malevolent cult leader, alien impostor, or eldritch abomination is masquerading as a local savior. Whatever problems plague the site are supposedly to be resolved by this entity's noble work, and they likely have a great deal of support among the locals. The actual work they do may require substantial sacrifices from the natives, and some of those sacrifices may be rather literal in nature.

- Enemies:** Smiling self-improvement guru, Suspiciously generous plutocrat, Zealous political demagogue, New religious leader
- Friends:** Long-time local social worker, Fellow crusader against the problem, Disillusioned former aide, Victim of their "help"
- Schemes:** Turn the blame for the problem on an enemy or rival, Solve the problem in exchange for complete local control, Kill or discredit local leaders who question their motivations, Solve the problem through a horrific eldritch rite
- Secrets:** The savior isn't human, The savior has tried this before in a different place to horrible ends, The savior or their minions are the ones causing the problem in the first place, The savior's plans will result in an even worse calamity
- Places:** Worshipful public meeting, Church or social center teeming with devotees, Location emblematic of the site's major problem, Fortified offices or home of the savior's organization

DARK UNDERCITY

The site is riddled with unused subway tunnels, sewer pipes, natural caves, built-over structures, or other hidden passages. These places are nests of crime and desperation, shadows where the law-abiding do not go and where grim things can pass without the troublesome oversight of the law.

- Enemies:** Paranoid crime boss recluse, Police chief who "owns" the tunnels, Street urchin beggarmaster, Bitter social worker seeking a brutal purge
- Friends:** Urchin tunnel dweller, Literal deep-cover cop, Missionary to the undercity, Watchful homeless drunk
- Schemes:** Engage in a tunnel war with rivals, Use passages to extort connected shops, Rob secret underground pit arena, Frame someone for a crime and bury the truth in the tunnels.
- Secrets:** There's a huge cache of dead 'missing persons' down there, Criminals hid a massive heist take somewhere below, The dwellers have their own parallel police, The cops are backing a gang to "clean out" the others down there
- Places:** Disused subway tunnel, Sewer drain waterfall, Buried building hall, Concealed gang hideout

DARKENED DOOR

There is a portal to a Kelipah somewhere at the site, most likely to a particularly unpleasant one. Something may be creeping through the gate, or it may be under the care of a devoted cult, or the portal may be sealed for now but weakening under the effects of time or a cult's machinations. The Kelipah beyond may not even be miscible with human existence, and whatever comes out is certain to be unwelcome among the locals.

- Enemies:** Escapee from a hellish world, Seal-breaking cult zealot, Local possessed by a will from beyond the gate, Blindly reckless sorcerer
- Friends:** Heir to a seal-guarding family, Local aware of illegal digging, Victim of a Kelipah escapee, Scientist picking up odd readings
- Schemes:** Reach a precious artifact in the Kelipah, Escape from the Kelipah into a delicious world, Widen the door to absorb a building or whole town, Infect local reality with some aspect of the Kelipah beyond the door
- Secrets:** The door is not to a Kelipah but is to a different time or planet, Opening the door will cause great local destruction, The door is accessible only when the stars are right, The door is one-way
- Places:** Mossy overgrown arch in the forest, Abandoned subway tunnel that sometimes isn't, Alleyway that twists in alien ways, Nexus of cabalistic streets and monuments

DECAYING INDUSTRY

The site was once almost entirely reliant on a single critical industry. Something happened to cripple that enterprise, however, and the site is either careening toward disaster or has already landed in poverty. The locals may still nurse dreams of restoring the lost business, while some may furiously seek to blame convenient enemies for its departure.

- Enemies:** Furious community leader who blames the wrong people, Saboteur employed by an industry rival, Extortionate union boss, Anti-industry media crusader
- Friends:** Duty-driven founder's heir, Struggling mayor, Impoverished retiree, Economic development PR flack
- Schemes:** Use eminent domain to seize impoverished neighborhood for a profiteer, Stop merger that would save the industry, Plunder the last factory of its contents, Crush vital new industry to protect old elites
- Secrets:** A treacherous executive sabotaged things for personal profit, Locals are trying to bribe the feds for a government bailout, The industry has left numerous secret pockets of toxic waste, Locals think a fabulous treasure is hidden in one of the structures
- Places:** Abandoned industrial site, Grimy town diner, Hidden toxic dump, Massive empty factory

DEMAGOGUES

The site is plagued by one or more charismatic leaders who goad their followers into various degrees of folly or violence. These demagogues might be representatives of traditional institutions or they may be zealous revolutionaries determined to overthrow the status quo. Whatever their origins, they drive their adherents on to disaster for the sake of their cause or their own personal profit.

- Enemies:** Foaming religious zealot, Anarcho-populist cell leader, Racist rabble-rouser, Cynical sheep-shearing mountebank
- Friends:** Frustrated former demagogue assistant, Disillusioned follower, Target of the demagogue's anger, Displaced local leader
- Schemes:** Commit a grand theft and frame the enemy, Assassinate an enemy of the demagogue, Shut down an investigation into the demagogue, Overthrow a local institution
- Secrets:** The demagogue is delusional, They are actually plundering their followers, They are really a catspaw of the elite, They have turned a legitimate complaint into a license for mad excess
- Places:** Riotous popular meeting, Club dominated by followers, Smoke-filled back room, Demonstration marching through the streets



DEPRAVED CLERGY

At least one of the important religions in the area has become infested with debauched or corrupted clergy. Such institutions are usually powerful and wealthy enough to attract the interests of the immoral, though some small churches might merely offer privacy for the enjoyment of things that the wider society would punish. Some congregations may be ignorant of the sins of their pastors, while others might willingly abet them.

- Enemies:** Smiling cleric with inward foulness, Bloodthirsty fanatic, Avaricious money-grubber, Tortured addict of vile sins
- Friends:** Congregant who knows too much, Suspicious religious superior, Local asking too many questions, Victim seeking help
- Schemes:** Collect slaves or victims for the clergy's enjoyment, Silence an apostate before they can talk, Loot a religious charity finances, Kill or discredit an outside investigator from a parent organization
- Secrets:** The cleric pretends to be a reformer while blaming another church, The cleric hates the faith and seeks to discredit it, The church is vital in supporting many locals, The church has a noble reputation for past virtues
- Places:** Whitewashed church building, Secret ceremonial room. Church program broadcasting studio, Dungeon for apostates and victims

DISASTER SITE

The location was the site of a major disaster. A recent calamity can still be felt, while older disasters were so profound as to permanently scar the site. The locals have tried to accommodate to the new conditions, but many find it difficult, and much that was important here was destroyed or damaged in the event. Fires, floods, earthquakes, plagues, hurricanes, or droughts might all have marked the site.

- Enemies:** Religious zealot blaming the sinful, Local official using the disaster as a power-grab excuse, Slum lord housing evacuees, Greedy "collector" of damaged goods and land
- Friends:** Determined aid worker, Local trying to make a new life, Disaster relief official, Wearied medical worker
- Schemes:** Plunder wealth left unguarded by the disaster, Mobilize the unhomed for a dark cause, Blame an unpopular group for the catastrophe, Use the trouble as cover to eliminate existing authorities
- Secrets:** The disaster was man-made, Local elites are stealing the aid, The aid or reconstruction officials are incompetent, There's reason to think the disaster will happen again
- Places:** FEMA camp, Neighborhood scarred by the disaster, Ragged reconstruction site, Ruined monument from before

DRUG EPIDEMIC

The site is plagued by an epidemic of drug addiction. Much of the local street culture and business revolves around the drug and its sale or manufacture, with regular violence over the income it brings. The site is probably either a major manufacturing area for the drug or a significant point of entry for outside imports. Official notice is often deflected with well-placed bribes or persuasive threats.

- Enemies:** Bloody-handed drug kingpin, Corrupt local police official, Gang-backed local politician, Mad chemist brewing up something special
- Friends:** Former addict, Police internal affairs investigator, Frustrated community leader, Determined local religious figure
- Schemes:** Develop a new and "better" drug version, Create an untouchable import/export channel for the drug, Crush or buy off a problematic local figure, Smash a rival operation
- Secrets:** The dealers want to keep it illegal to prevent legitimate competition, The drug is something unknown in other areas, The drug seems harmless until it isn't, The drug really is harmless but the gangs aren't
- Places:** Drug processing site, Rehab clinic, Corner drug market, Addict's squat

ELDRITCH RADIATION

An uncanny miasma infects the site. A subtle poison might lurk in the winds, an unnatural color might gleam from the waters, or a pervasive supernatural curse might radiate from a central artifact. Whatever the specifics, some sort of occult power is affecting the locals, usually in highly deleterious ways. If the radiation has started recently, the changes might still be ongoing and leading toward some truly horrific transformation.

Enemies: Excavator of a forbidden thing, Cult priest of the radiation, Monster created by the miasma, Mad student of its impossible effects

Friends: Worried health official, Local gossip who's noticed too much, Suddenly-busy clinic physician, Artist sensitive to the effects

Schemes: Keep the radiation source exposed until the locals are fully under its power, Sacrifice to the source to increase its strength, Use the source to produce a mighty occult working, Destroy an outside group that threatens the source

Secrets: The radiation is perceptible only to the supernaturally-aware, The radiation makes a victim stronger in some way, The radiation's effects are being used by a local profiteer, The local elite are distant from the radiation and its noticeable effects are a mark of low class

Places: Secret pond of uncanny colors, Underground chamber with half-unearthed artifact, Clinic full of radiation sufferers, Shop catering to the special needs of the afflicted

ENTRENCHED POVERTY

The site is shockingly poor, and has been for a long time. Multiple generations have been born into deep privation, surviving on welfare, black market labor, or crimes that largely plague the poorest. Education is usually minimal to nonexistent, and the few legitimate jobs that exist often end up as patronage prizes for the relatives of local officials.

Enemies: Predatory gang boss, Corrupt official who profits off poverty, Slum owner stealing housing aid, Political boss using patronage as a weapon

Friends: Aspiring entrepreneur, Returned local boy who made good elsewhere, Earnest social worker, Hardscrabble subsistence farmer

Schemes: Crush a new business that threatens their control, Steal incoming relief or renewal money, Corrupt or suborn a new relief group, Make an example out of a local who's trying to buck the system

Secrets: The locals should be richer but somebody's stopping them, Poor locals are used as fodder for a cause or business, The locals have a culture hostile to success, Local elites hate them and want them kept down

Places: Welfare office, Food pantry, Black market business, Scrubby home garden

EXPLOITATIVE INDUSTRY

The major industry in the area brutally exploits its workers. It may have complete control over the local government or the government may simply not care about the people it is exploiting. The industry might be too important to the area to risk its departure, or the locals might not be wanted for employment by other businesses.

Enemies: Merciless foreman, Cold-blooded CEO, Pet government regulator, Sadistic young heir to the business

Friends: Crusading reporter, Interested business rival, Misused worker, Investigative IRS auditor

Schemes: Conceal local pollution from outsiders, Smash attempted union organization, Indulge in depraved amusement for its executives, Steal something useful from a local owner

Secrets: The local elite have been bought off by the company, The business has made government regulators its enforcers, The locals can't imagine life without the industry, There's a union but it's a tool of management

Places: Unsafe factory floor, Crumbling company houses, Company-owned store with elevated prices, Pollution-scarred patch of land

FEUDING ELITES

The elites of the site have fissured into two or more groups that are at war with each other. Government, business, and social leaders in the place are struggling over control, wealth, or unsatisfied grudges and they've largely abandoned their duties. Locals are used as foot soldiers and catspaws in the struggle, with many forced to find patrons simply for day-to-day protection from the strife.

Enemies: Threatened hereditary mayor, Avaricious business leader, Blue-blood socialite, Violent criminal boss

Friends: Small merchant caught in the crossfire, Former henchman of a leader, Desperate local peacemaker, Outside government investigator

Schemes: Seize or destroy a rival's power source or business, Mobilize a group of criminals on their behalf, Neutralize an outside force or agency that's tamping down the struggle, Plunder an institution before their rivals can pry them loose

Secrets: The struggle was triggered by an outsider, The hate was always there but stifled by a now-absent power, One faction is or seems to be much nobler than the other, The struggle isn't really about the thing it seems to be about

Places: Tense public meeting, Club for one faction only, Rigidly-policed territory border, Office empty of its proper occupant

FORBIDDEN FLESH

Some group at the site offers carnal pleasures unacceptable to the wider populace, though perhaps tacitly tolerated so long as “decent people” are undisturbed. Whatever this vice is, it’s calculated to grind through providers at a brutal rate, and the owners and operators are forced to constantly “recruit” more “talent”. Most of them have extensive ties with local government to ensure their activities are unbothered by law enforcement.

- Enemies:** Clean-cut professional slaver, Addiction-inducing pimp, Loan-sharking procurer, Esoteric religious cult leader
- Friends:** Anti-trafficking crusader, Relative or lover of a victim, Transsexual sex worker trying to get out, Determined local clergyperson
- Schemes:** Collect new stock from a vulnerable population, Apply blackmail to a local official, Hide an ultra-secret club for the elite, Drive out a troublemaking church or group
- Secrets:** Some providers are gladly willing to work in the trade, People think the trade is in something milder than what it really is, Law enforcement is entirely suborned by the trade, The trade is only among a scorned minority
- Places:** Sleazy red light district, Innocent building with foul interior, Gruesome recording studio, Prison-like “housing”

FORCED RELOCATIONS

Something happened recently to forcibly relocate a large number of people at or to the site. They may be citizens displaced by a recent disaster or locals forced from their homes by eminent domain, rural poverty or increased housing costs. Those displaced are vulnerable to exploitation, particularly if their new neighbors dislike or resent them. Cultural or racial differences can lead the dispossessed to form tight communities where outsiders are not welcome.

- Enemies:** Exploitative community “leader”, Violent local who despises the newcomers, Industrialist who wants what land they have left, Cynical machine politician
- Friends:** Local struggling to make a new life, Native trying to help the newcomers, Wearied outside aid worker, Local peacemaker
- Schemes:** The natives seek to expel the newcomers, The newcomers are trying to seize local control, One side is seeking to foment a riot, One side wants to cause an atrocity and blame the other
- Secrets:** Something precious was left behind, The newcomers are actually richer than the locals, Some locals were displaced by the newcomers, Someone is trying to prevent the restoration of their former home
- Places:** New social club, Storefront church, Makeshift encampment, Crowded tenement

FOUL FAITH

An important local religion has been thoroughly infiltrated by a cult, assuming it wasn’t always a nest of evil. The outermost adherents may not be aware of the church’s true nature, but the clergy and all the more important members are fully committed to its unholy rites. Membership in this faith is perhaps expected for the site’s elite, or it may be a path to riches for its adherents, or a voice of support for its downtrodden members. The price is always in terrible things, however, whether the victims are its own members or the unbelievers who surround them.

- Enemies:** Avatar of the malevolent god, Popular demagogue cleric, Alien cleric, Priest made inhuman by his services
- Friends:** Believer of a competing faith, Concerned relative of new member, Escapee from the congregation, Suspicious tax investigator
- Schemes:** Consecrate a place with an atrocious rite, Destroy a rival faith and its believers, Create a front organization to snare new converts, Satisfy the nameless urge of its abhorrent deity
- Secrets:** The faith is a vital supporter of local social services for its own purposes, The ordinary believers have no idea of the truth, The faith is extremely exclusive and seeks only the elite, The faith presents itself as a secular philosophy
- Places:** Subtly-desecrated church, Remote ritual site, Hidden unholy shrine, Secret fane in an important building

GANG INFLUENCE

One or more gangs have effectively taken control of the site. What government exists is either hopelessly cowed or actively cooperating with the gang. Citizens are aware of their true rulers and seek to make terms with the criminals or simply try to avoid their notice. No one cares to talk to investigators or outsiders save for a few desperate or foolhardy locals.

- Enemies:** Suave and polished capo, Savage street tyrant, Corrupted government official, Gang troubleshooter
- Friends:** Honest cop, Local pushed past their breaking point, Outside government investigator, Relic who remembers better days
- Schemes:** The gang seeks to crush the last government resistance to them, The gang is trying to kill a traitor, They’re seeking to import a large supply of illegal goods, A lieutenant is seeking to depose the gang leader
- Secrets:** The gang originally formed to combat corrupt officials, The gang pretends to a Robin Hood benevolence, The gangs are in a fragile alliance, The gangs are seeking to expand elsewhere
- Places:** Gang-dominated club, Politician’s office, Unreported crime scene, Illegal goods warehouse

HATEFUL TRADITION

The locals have some tradition or cultural habit that is profoundly harmful to them or others around them. They may scorn education, hate those of different races, glorify criminal behavior, nurse an eternal grudge against another local group, despise a neighboring religion, or otherwise cultivate beliefs that do no one any good. These beliefs are usually cherished as signs of group belonging and will be defended fiercely as “authentic”.

- Enemies:** Bigoted community leader, Local crime boss, Flint-hearted pastor, Brawny community enforcer
- Friends:** Open-minded native reformer, Outsider trying to get by, Frustrated cop, Victim of the tradition
- Schemes:** They want to quash a reformer, They want to attack traditional enemies, They want to seize wealth or power enough to aid the group, They want to make a new innovation fail
- Secrets:** The tradition was originally at least somewhat justified, The tradition doesn't exist– it's just a stereotype their neighbors hold, Local elites profit by the maintenance of the tradition, The tradition was challenged recently to no success
- Places:** Decaying school, Crime-ridden tenement, Ruthlessly-contained neighborhood, Burnt residence of a hated type

HORRIFIC WEALTH

Some supernatural power is bestowing vast wealth on its acolytes. Either through the special advantages this magic gives them or the occult exploitation of the wretched locals, these leaders are being made fabulously wealthy by their evils. Lead may be turned into gold through foul sacrifices, or humans might be rendered down into exotic drugs or mindless thralls. This wealth usually comes with a price, however, either in service to an outer power or scrupulous adherence to unclean faiths.

- Enemies:** Rags-to-riches Faustian businessman, Soulless plutocrat, Diabolical crime boss, Heir to the family's way of getting rich
- Friends:** Victim of occult plundering, Scion of a toppled rival's family, Worker who saw too much, Health inspector with concerns
- Schemes:** Snare expendables such as prisoners or bums for conversion into riches, Perform a ritual their patron demands as recompense, Sell a new and illegal substance their arts produce, Operate a hidden facility with slave laborers
- Secrets:** The wealth is used in ostensibly philanthropic ways, The wealth is hidden from public view, The enemy desperately needs the wealth just to avoid some horrible fate, The enemy is being squeezed by others who don't realize who they are extorting
- Places:** Smoking factory, Hidden illegal workshop, Grossly ostentatious mansion, Charnel pit for victims

IMPENDING DOOM

Something horrible is going to happen to the site soon, and at least some of the natives can see it coming. Unstable land shifts, unrepairable river levees, collapsing local industry, unlivable pollution, or even a civil-war level of ethnic strife might be plainly in the cards for the place. Some locals might be struggling to prevent it, others might deny it exists, some blame their favorite enemies for it, and a few are ready to take cold-blooded advantage.

- Enemies:** Doom-preaching religious zealot, Gang leader planning for anarchy, Doom-bringer who refuses to acknowledge what they're causing, Local convinced their hate object is to blame
- Friends:** Cassandra-esque scientist, Vigilant reporter, Government official with early warning, Local observer who's seen the signs
- Schemes:** Trigger the doom in order to profit by it, Conceal the doom from an outside investigator, Steal the money meant to halt the doom, Destroy the person or organization that can stop the doom
- Secrets:** What the enemy is doing is hastening the doom, Fixing the doom would impoverish the local elites, Worsening conditions create more profit for the natives, The apparent doom isn't the actual calamity that's going to happen
- Places:** Slowly-collapsing civil engineering, Religious rally to beg divine mercy, Outskirt area already scarred by the doom, Confused disaster response headquarters



INHUMAN MASTERS

The site is controlled by entities that are not human. The outer facade of government or custom may seem to be intact, but the authorities are aliens, monsters, occult horrors, or in the direct service of such creatures. Locals may have suspicions about the truth, and some may even realize the nature of their true masters, but none dare risk the consequences of prying too deeply. These inhuman entities often have purposes unhealthy to their servants.

- Enemies:** Leader of many disguise-wearing horrors, Alien priest of socially-embedded cult, Mayor hopelessly enslaved by an alien monster, Supernatural entity masquerading as a human
- Friends:** Conspiracy theorist, Civil worker who saw too much, Minion asked to do strange work, Relative of a victim or thrall
- Schemes:** Reproduce their kind or make more thralls from the locals, Create a device to communicate with allies or make the place more "homey", Eat as many humans as possible, Destroy a threat to their privacy or power
- Secrets:** Some locals know but are magically bound from speaking of it, Some locals know but willingly collaborate, The masters require a supply of human victims for some end, The masters provide something that makes the locals not look too closely
- Places:** Alien dwelling chamber, Secret creche for reproduction, Home with strange interior, Semi-fortified government building

LICH LAIR

The site is home to an ageless monster that long predates the modern inhabitants. The creature may be some form of undead, or an alien intruder, or a local entity that simply does not know how to die. Such a creature may be sleeping, its subtle emanations provoking strange events in the area, or it may be active in preserving its privacy or control over the locals. Unlike the Inhuman Masters tag, however, the lich is much more interested in concealing itself and preventing disturbances than active command of the populace.

- Enemies:** Classic lich or vampire, Prehuman spirit entity, Survivor of a lost antediluvian race, Castaway alien exile
- Friends:** Victim of the entity's eldritch emanations, New owner of sensitive real estate, Relentlessly inquisitive local, Relative of a victim of the lich
- Schemes:** Rise from its slumber through the work of minions, Acquire the resources or lives it needs as food, Destroy a building or group that threatens its privacy, Recover a vital relic stolen by the ignorant
- Secrets:** The lich is the ruler of a parallel Kelipah-shadow of the site, Former human natives used to worship the lich, The lich craves certain types of company, The lich has bred or made loyal minions
- Places:** Hidden passages below the cemetery, Chamber beyond a secret door, Caverns in the nearby hills, Deep cellar beneath city hall

MASSIVE RITUAL

The site is being primed as the location of a truly enormous ritual. Building geometry, street layouts, concentrations of people and industry, and other features of the location are being brought into harmony as part of a tremendous work of occult power. Some rituals may require the entire physical geography be molded, while others might only need the right masses of people enlisted. The resulting effect may be subtle, but its successful execution is bound to result in some sort of terrible summoning, lasting curse on the land, or warped apotheosis for the high priest who enacts the rite.

- Enemies:** Crazed Masonic architect, Occult-wise tycoon, Mayor-cum-high priest, Diabolical performer
- Friends:** Resident displaced for rite, Relative of new cult enthusiast, Engineer concerned over senseless digging, Conspiracy theorist who's right
- Schemes:** Arrange carefully-coordinated local disasters, Seize a local building that's a linchpin of the rite, Destroy a local structure that interferes with the spell, Create a large-scale "celebration" that triggers the magic
- Secrets:** The ritual has already failed with impending dire consequences, The ritual's preparations cause echoes of eldritch anomalies, The ritual is embedded in part of a public celebration. The ritual masquerades as a performance or public art piece
- Places:** Baffling tangle of streets, Strangely-gutted building, Defiled church, Huge concealed ritual chamber

MIGRANT TENSIONS

The site has recently received an influx of migrants. Some might be looking for better jobs, while others might favor the local climate, low taxes, cheap land, or some other point of allure. For small communities this influx can change the character and culture of the town overnight, provoking fear and anger from locals who see themselves suddenly becoming political, cultural, or racial minorities in their own homes. These tensions can easily provoke antipathy or outright violence.

- Enemies:** Bigoted local reactionary, Colonization-minded migrant leader, Ruthless native social elite, Migrant political machine boss
- Friends:** Resident with ties to both groups, Cooperative group leader, Peacekeeping police chief, Local religious leader
- Schemes:** Migrants seek to take over local government, Natives try to effectively outlaw the migrants' culture, Migrants try to drive out natives from "their" neighborhoods, Natives seek to terrorize the newcomers
- Secrets:** One group considers itself plainly superior to the hick / infidel / one-percenter / atheist / prole others, The migrants have no other real choice of places to go, The natives are being swamped by newcomers, The migrants want to make the place the same as the one they left
- Places:** Newly-built migrant social club, Native-only bar, Old house full of new people, Shop catering to a different language or culture

OLD GRUDGES

Two or more groups in the site hate each other. It may no longer be possible to distinguish the web of crimes and abuses between the two, and neither group cares to be specific. They've hated each other for as long as they can remember, and they intend to keep it up. Differences in religion, wealth, ethnicity, or race may serve as convenient excuses, but the loathing is such that either will gladly harm themselves so long as their enemies suffer more.

- Enemies:** Merciless old patriarch, Survivor of the latest infamy, Arms dealer selling to both, Politician backing one side
- Friends:** Romeo or Juliet, Survivor of the latest infamy, Religious peacemaker, Entrepreneur who sees the benefits of cooperation
- Schemes:** One side seeks bloody revenge for a recent injury, One side seeks to use city government to dispossess their enemies, One side wants to destroy an enemy memorial or church, One side wants to make a bloody example of aspiring peacemakers
- Secrets:** The grudge is kept going by outsiders who profit by it, One side really is much worse than the other, Status is earned by attacks made on the enemy, Talking of peace is bad for your health
- Places:** Ruthlessly-divided neighborhood, Improvised street fortifications, Church that's more a fortress, Monument to a group's "martyrs"

PERVASIVE TREACHERY

Betrayal is ordinary at all levels at the site. Everyone has their own interests in mind, and agreements will be kept for exactly as long as it remains immediately beneficial to do so. The locals justifiably assume that betrayal will happen at the first convenient moment. Naive outsiders are especially relished as excellent marks. Local institutions are riddled with graft and self-serving and no one expects them to be any different.

- Enemies:** Honey-voiced clergyman, Smiling political boss, Earnest industrialist, Genial gang boss
- Friends:** Frustrated entrepreneur, Cheated outsider, Horrified government investigator, Dogged religious missionary
- Schemes:** They want to make a disaster so they can steal the aid, They want to rob an outsider of ownership of a new business, They seek to bribe or corrupt an outside investigator, They're trying to smash a traitorous lieutenant
- Secrets:** The natives have long been abused or oppressed by outsiders, Deceiving another is esteemed as a mark of prowess, All the locally-made goods are adulterated, The natives consider themselves superior to stupid outsiders
- Places:** Shoddily-constructed public building, Work site that never gets built, Multi-layered security checkpoint, Mansion too rich for a government paycheck

PLUTOCRATIC CONTROL

The local rich own the site, whether figuratively or literally. The scions of the great are untouchable, with even government officials bowing to their wishes and deferring to their whims. In some locations this might be the result of old money, with ownership of the land and important industries having passed down from their predecessors. In other locations, the rich may simply have bribed and suborned so many others that there's no power left to oppose them.

- Enemies:** Decadent heir, Grasping industrialist, Merciless utopian dreamer, Nouveau riche tyrant
- Friends:** Unbribed official, Downtrodden local businessman, Wretchedly-misused minion, Determined local clergy
- Schemes:** Seize control of the last major source of wealth at the site, Break the only official who resists their bribes, Indulge in an unspeakable vileness to sate jaded hungers, Destroy a business that has broken from their control
- Secrets:** Their wealth is hollow and will collapse at the first real setback, Their wealth saved the site some time in the past, Their wealth exists only due to control of government regulations that bar competitors, Their wealth is completely committed to maintaining local control
- Places:** Fabulous estate, Downtrodden worker's home, Smoke-belching factory, Exclusive social club

POISONED GROUND

The site has been profoundly poisoned by reckless pollution or toxic natural phenomena. The locals may be too poor to leave the poisoned ground or they may not realize that it's the environment that is causing the current rash of illnesses. If the pollution is man-made the creator may be too wealthy or close to the government to shut down.

- Enemies:** Reckless industrialist, Illicit experimental scientist, Corrupted government inspector, Cheating water or waste processor
- Friends:** Investigative journalist, Concerned native resident, Guilty henchman, Environmental crusader
- Schemes:** Step up pollution production for profit, Conceal enormous accidental chemical release, Pressure local hospital into covering it up, Silence troublesome investigator
- Secrets:** The pollution is being blamed on a harmless industry, The pollution is too subtle to easily track, Local officials profit by the pollution, The locals' jobs are somehow reliant on the pollution being produced
- Places:** Smoking factory, Hidden pit full of barrels, Concealed sewer outflow pipe, Hidden lab with vats of chemicals

POLITICAL ZEALOTS

At least one group of locals nurses an extremely impractical yet violently enthusiastic political program. They are convinced that their particular prescription is the remedy to all society's ills, and any attempt to oppose them is proof of the foe's diabolic evil. Public spokespeople carefully hew to the legal limits of speech, while private communications encourage more vigorous action against their opponents.

- Enemies:** Pro-sharia fanatic, Violent secessionist militia leader, Neo-Luddite enviro-terrorist, Volkisch race-supremacist leader
- Friends:** Hard-up local politician, Apostate member, Victimized "enemy of the people", Moderate-minded believer
- Schemes:** Terrorize local law enforcement into docility, Destroy a monument or institution important to the enemy, Infiltrate and seize an existing major party's leadership structure, Steal the money or weaponry needed for the cause
- Secrets:** The group is being backed by outsiders who profit from their actions, The leader is a cynical fraud bilking his followers, The group has excellent PR and appears benign to outsiders, The new militancy is from an inner circle unknown to the rank and file
- Places:** Raucous street rally, Club they effectively own, Well-fortified headquarters, Secret operations room stocked with weaponry

PREDATOR ENTITY

Something hungry lives at the site, and it preys on humanity. Some entities desire human flesh and blood, while others subsist upon minds, souls, dreams, or other such insubstantial things. These predators may have human allies to assist them in their hunt, or they may be dangerous lone entities that devour all who learn too much. The most vulnerable humans are favored as prey, but a lack of fodder may provoke a terrible rampage in supposedly safer quarters.

- Enemies:** Voracious vampire, Alien devourer, Cannibal cult leader, Summoned entity run loose
- Friends:** Shaken escapee, Relative of a victim, Cop who discovered the remains, Local desperate for help
- Schemes:** It wants a specific victim, It seeks to seize a captive populace such as in an asylum or prison, It wants to destroy an organization that hinders its hunts, It wants to reproduce and needs more food to do so
- Secrets:** It eats something insubstantial and leaves its victims terribly changed, Its victims later aid its hunt, It only devours a particular class or type of person, Corrupt local officials pay it off in flesh for its protection or favor
- Places:** Dead-end alleyway, Secret charnel house, Site of hideous slaughter, Kitchen for human flesh

PUPPET LEADERSHIP

The site's leaders are not who they seem to be. The local authorities are helplessly in thrall to an outside power which controls them through wealth, threats, or tempting promises. Agents of the kingmaker have carte blanche in their activities, and no one can gain a position of real authority without the blessing of the site's true ruler.

- Enemies:** Intimidating crime boss, Mesmerizing religious leader, Bribe-dispensing capitalist, Machiavellian blackmailer
- Friends:** Political candidate who learns the truth, Traitorous henchman, Suspicious outside investigator, Enemy of the puppet-master
- Schemes:** Eliminate a rival power base from the site, Punish a local official who refuses to cooperate, Acquire more of whatever they use to keep control, Reward an obedient servant with a greater prize
- Secrets:** The puppetmaster is new at the site, The catspaws bitterly hate their controller, The controller is keeping a violent struggle from breaking out, The kingmaker's rule will crumble if pressed at all
- Places:** Shadowy back room, Secret club, Innocuous city hall office, Storehouse of the kingmaker's tool of influence

RACE HATRED

One or more racial or ethnic groups hates another at the site. If the two groups are equal in power, the hatred is usually expressed in violence, crime, and daily hostility between the groups. If one is able to oppress the other, the lives of the smaller group will be made as miserable as possible. Any attempt at revenge or resistance will be punished with the tacit blessing of local law enforcement.

- Enemies:** Brutal supremacist enforcer, Corrupt city official, Popular racist demagogue, Fanatically vengeful victim
- Friends:** Civil rights campaigner, Multiracial community leader, Hard-bitten survivor, Differently-minded local
- Schemes:** Burn down or destroy an important social center, Intimidate or kill a troublemaking group, Drive "interlopers" out of a neighborhood, Seize a new wealth opportunity exclusively for their own people
- Secrets:** The groups seem indistinguishable to outsiders, The hate is being fanned by outsiders who profit, The hate is preventing a golden opportunity from happening, The groups are evenly-matched in their local influence
- Places:** X-only social club, Neighborhood of one kind exclusively, Burnt home of a multiracial family, Dilapidated tenement

RECRUITMENT CENTER

A diabolical cult is using the site as a recruitment center for their efforts. Some population or group there is uniquely susceptible to the cult's blandishments, either through ethnic affinity, shared ambitions, or a desperate need that the cult satisfies. The cult may be keeping a low profile, concentrating solely on recruiting members for service elsewhere in the region, or it may be making an aggressive play to control the levers of power at the site.

- Enemies:** Seductive performer, Expansionist "gang" boss, Sinister missionary of a new faith, Employer who recruits for more than the job
- Friends:** Pastor of a dwindling church, Social worker who's seen trouble, Escaped cult member, Victim of an offer they couldn't refuse
- Schemes:** Use sorcery to bind people's minds, Infiltrate and pervert an existing group to their creed, Summon up an entity to help "persuade" people, Bind new recruits into service by forcing them to commit an atrocity
- Secrets:** The cult really does improve their lives at first, The cult is intertwined with a genuinely innocent group, The cult is a major political power, The cult works more by press-ganging than persuasion
- Places:** Newly-built temple, Secret chamber in a front organization's building, Remote rural training camp, Social services center

RELIGIOUS CONFLICT

Two or more religious groups loathe each other at the site, and go out of their way to hinder each other. Where one is particularly strong, the other will be oppressed and prevented from expressing their faith publicly by law or tacit consequences. The conflict may be between separate religions, or it may be a case of all unbelievers being second-class citizens. In some cities a faithful minority might be kept downtrodden by a larger non-believing majority.

- Enemies:** Unmerciful clergyman zealot, Brutish religious cop, Violently-inclined atheist, Aspiring martyr for the cause
- Friends:** Temperate believer, Worried outside religious superior, Local peacemaker, Member of a multi-faith family
- Schemes:** Destroy the enemy's church, Disrupt an important holy rite or procession, Libel the enemy with the "truth" about their secret acts, Kill important leaders or clergy
- Secrets:** They're the same religion but different sub-sects, They both hate unbelievers, One faith has no idea what they did to provoke the hate and is confused in its response, The local elite largely belong to only one of the sides
- Places:** Church with armed worshipers, Vandalized cemetery, Memorial to a holy figure, Church-run social center

SECRET NEXUS

The site is a nexus of eldritch power. Sorcerers may be capable of feats far beyond their normal capacities in certain places, or supernatural entities might find unusual power if they make their lairs there. As a consequence, the local occult world is likely to have an intense interest in ownership of the nexus, and struggle is to be expected for its control. This conflict usually plays out in the shadows, but some groups enlist mortals to be their catspaws.

- Enemies:** Reckless sorcerer seeking power, Voracious alien entity, Eldritch being that emerged from the nexus, Ineffable guardian of the site
- Friends:** New Age enthusiast, Curious local historian, Disturbed local witness to the struggle, Victim of the nexus' dangerous power
- Schemes:** Perform a rite to seize the ambient power of the nexus, Steal an artifact crucial to controlling the power, Develop minions or slaves changed by the power of the nexus, Destroy the current entity that controls the nexus
- Secrets:** The nexus links a distant Earthly location, The nexus only manifests when the stars are right, The nexus is sentient and has its own goals, The nexus is manifest in a particular person or object
- Places:** Hidden chamber humming with energy, Remote location warped by the power, Building designed to channel the force, Tunnels in the patterns of the force

SENSELESS VIOLENCE

The locals can't seem to get enough of killing each other. The homicide rate is enormous for a site of its size, and the local police seem largely incapable or uninterested in checking the violence. The bloodshed might be largely restricted to a certain class of people or certain criminal groups, with the local cops indifferent to who kills who among them. At other sites, it might be endemic through the population, or even the product of a corrupt police department.

- Enemies:** Police chief-slash-gang boss, Illicit arms supplier, Homicidal criminal warlord, Indiscriminate vigilante
- Friends:** Police internal review investigator, Outside government inspector, Local peace campaigner, Local being hunted by killers
- Schemes:** Seize a cache of military weaponry, Get their enemies disarmed by the law, Kill a troublesome politician or cop, Make a near-military assault on an enemy-held neighborhood
- Secrets:** Firearms are stringently regulated for the law-abiding, The gangs are proxy armies for feuding politicians, The cops are just one more gang with restricted turf, The gangs are seeking to seize full control of local government
- Places:** Heavily-trafficked gun shop, Emergency room full of bodies, Constantly-active funeral parlor, Scene of a random drive-by shooting



SLAVE TRADE

Human beings are bought and sold as slaves here. They may be foreign immigrants too frightened to appeal to the law or too badly abused to dare oppose their captors. Others might be locals convinced by violence or history that all resistance is futile. Some are used in brothels or other sex work, while others toil away in the fields or in sweatshops. The locals may be aware of the situation, but the victims are unsympathetic and inspire little desire to aid them.

- Enemies:** Flint-hearted brothel madame, Grasping sweatshop owner, Leathery plantation farmer, Wealthy immigrant exploiting their kinsmen
- Friends:** Escaped slave, Relative of a vanished person, Investigative outsider reporter, Clean police detective
- Schemes:** Kill and bury a group of slaves before they can talk to investigators, Catch an escaped slave before they can reach the authorities, Import a large group of new victims, Hold a private auction of "servants" for the city's elite
- Secrets:** The slaves look just like the locals, The slaves are made to masquerade as a "specially protected" class of dependents, The slaves vote in blocks sold by their owners to local politicians, The slaves are kept from mingling at all with the locals
- Places:** Factory with chained doors and barred windows, Field of stoop laborers, Huts that lock from the outside, Brothel with drugged and listless prostitutes

SUBORNED MEDIA

The local media is completely supine and is a willing lapdog to the local elite. Whether governmental or private, the local authorities get whatever stories they want to get out of the newspaper or television station. Their most egregious grafts and misuses of power will be passed over in silence, when their opponents aren't pilloried as the culprits.

- Enemies:** Bought-and-paid-for TV exec, Mayor who owns the local newspaper, District attorney who manufactures crimes when the wrong stories run, Gang boss who fact-checks with pliers and electrical wire
- Friends:** Idealistic cub reporter, Aspiring new media market entrant, Obstinate blogger, Samizdat printer
- Schemes:** Manufacture a cover-up of a recent atrocity, Punish a media figure who said too much, Crush a new media crank who can't be bought, Recover stolen evidence that proves media complicity with the elites
- Secrets:** The media pretends to be hostile but never touches dangerous issues, The media's got enough blackmail material to take out the local elite if it gets used, The elite are beginning to fight over control of the stories, The media's being threatened by an upstart news source
- Places:** Bustling TV studio, Ominously quiet newsroom, Locked vault where the real facts are kept, Plush executive office

TERRIBLE PACT

Someone has made a diabolical pact at the site, promising some sort of service or sacrifice to an eldritch power in exchange for an unclean desire. Given the alien behavior of otherworldly entities, this "pact" may be nothing more than the cultist's deranged conviction that their service is part of an actual bargain, but they are at least convinced that they are getting something in exchange for their servitude.

- Enemies:** Eternally-youthful sybarite, Tycoon who owes everything to it, Vengeance-crazed summoner, Hereditary pillar of the community
- Friends:** Suspicious impending sacrificial victim, Vanquished rival, Loved one worried about recent changes, Unwitting facilitator of their pact
- Schemes:** Acquire a specific person their patron seems to demand, Continue to provide sacrifices in order to avoid a horrible consequence, Use their unholy gifts to ruin a rival utterly, Make way for the manifestation of their patron
- Secrets:** The pact is hereditary and may not be wanted, The pact is delusional and the entity mindlessly hostile, The pact has made its devotee other than human, The entity is getting more and more demanding of its devotee
- Places:** Bloodstained sacrificial chamber, Cavern where unholy rites are performed, Manor made opulent by gifted riches, Headquarters of a mighty business

TRAITOROUS HUNTERS

A cell of warriors against the powers of the night has turned traitor here, either as a single Judas or a group's concerted betrayal of humanity. These investigators haven't simply given up the fight, they've actively turned to serving the outer powers. Some miserable wretches may have been laid under alien compulsions and dark magic, while others just want something that only the unholy powers can give to them. They often retain enough polish to their outer seeming to lure in "comrades" insufficiently equipped with suspicion.

- Enemies:** Hunter repaid in a loved one's "resurrection", Venerable elder terrified of death, Broken investigator wanting only pleasure, Demented hunter who imagines himself master of these dark powers
- Friends:** Remaining faithful investigator, Suspicious ally, Minion of the cell who doesn't realize his friends have turned, Horrified son or daughter
- Schemes:** Sacrifice fellow investigators to their patron, Betray a faithful hunter to a hideous fate, Seize secret control of the community, Destroy a hated cult with the help of their dark master
- Secrets:** They think they're still righteous, They bitterly regret their fall, They have new and hideous gifts, They struggle among themselves
- Places:** Disarmingly homey residence, Unsafe safe house, Occult library for "research purposes", Secret monument to the valiant fallen

TWISTED BUREAUCRACY

The site's bureaucrats run the location for their own benefit. Ostensible civil servants have webbed the local elected officials and other authorities into a mesh of blackmail, bribery, and intimidation until the unelected bureaucrats largely are left to their own devices. No-show jobs and other sinecures are common, as well as casual extortion of locals who can somehow never get a review of the bureaucrat's choices. The bureaucracy may be inherent to the local government, or it might be an outgrowth of a particular political machine— one that doesn't share well with others.

- Enemies:** Faceless office clerk with hidden power, Spineless blackmailed official, Aspiring power behind the mayor, Blindly utopian reformer
- Friends:** Outside governmental investigator, Good-government crusader, Politician seeking outside help, Victim of bureaucratic caprice
- Schemes:** Shut down a business that refuses to pay bribes, Seize an enemy's home and property through spurious eminent domain, Siphon off a vast wealth of tax money, Prevent a vitally-important project from happening until paid off
- Secrets:** The bureaucracy runs its own hires and cannot be made to fire anyone, The bureaucracy is controlled by a particular group at the site, The bureaucracy frames politicians for its misdeeds, The bureaucracy rotates "elected" positions among its minions via vote fraud
- Places:** Indolent city office, Bureaucrat's spacious mansion, Office where the lines never move without bribes, Secret room with the real files

TYRANNICAL ELITES

The local government or authorities are unalloyed tyrants. Every aspect of the site is run with their interests in mind, and dissent is punished in brutal fashion. These elites might rule by virtue of control of the site's prosperity, legal system, or "elected" government, or they may simply have such force at their disposal as to permanently silence any troublemakers.

- Enemies:** Political machine boss, Plutocratic company town owner, Merciless criminal kingpin, Dreaded religious leader
- Friends:** Naive new resident, Victimized rebel, Guilty traitor to the elite, Leader of a rival power base at the site
- Schemes:** Punish a group that is resisting the elites, Loot public funds for the elite's benefit, Destroy an institution or person who is strengthening the rabble, Create a facade of legitimacy around a fixed election
- Secrets:** The members of the elite all hate each other, The elites are new and the former rulers have been cast down, The elites are all roughly equally matched in influence, The people are convinced the elites deserve to rule them
- Places:** Opulent manor, Imposing city government tower, Militarized police station, Stinking city jail

VAST GRAFT

Theft and corruption are a way of life among the site's leadership. Every ambitious local knows that the fast track to wealth and power is to get a position with the local authorities. These men and women methodically plunder the taxes and government grants they receive, keeping the lion's share for themselves and passing out smaller tastes to those businesses and people who cooperate with their wishes. Even heinous crimes can be hushed up for a bribe.

- Enemies:** Glitteringly corrupt mayor, Cynical neighborhood alderman, Political machine bagman, Graft-enriched construction company owner
- Friends:** Distressed government accountant, Frustrated tax collector, Suspicious outside investigator, Cheated local business owner
- Schemes:** Loot a charity for personal profit, Cover up the dangerous corners cut in an important local infrastructure building, Buy off or kill a persistent troublemaker, Protect a murderous lackey who makes them money
- Secrets:** The locals feel no outrage over the graft and consider it only normal, The machine steals from one disfavored group in order to finance amenities for another, Local criminals are untouchable as long as they pay "taxes", Most civic construction is somehow dangerous due to malfeasance in building it
- Places:** Crumbling stadium, Impure water purification plant, Building stripped of its interior fittings, Luxuriant government building

CREATING ADVENTURE TEMPLATES

Some types of adventures are easier to create than others. The classic dungeon crawl is a relatively simple thing to generate on short notice, with many GMs requiring nothing more than a blank map and a handful of interesting encounters to stock it. The result may not be deathless art but it's enough to keep the game going, and the GM can whip it up rapidly when events suddenly present the need for a dungeon. This kind of fast creation is important in a sandbox campaign where the GM may not be entirely sure where the PCs are going to end up halfway through any given session.

Investigative adventures, such as those that are common to Lovecraftian horror games, are harder to run. There are simply more moving parts in a basic investigative adventure than there are in a standard dungeon crawl. The GM needs to keep more facts in mind at once and handle the activities and time lines for antagonists and other participants in the situation, and small details that would be mere stage dressing in an exploratory game can turn out to be vital clues in an investigative campaign. Many GMs have a very hard time keeping all these things straight, and it isn't practical to ask them to whip up a serviceable investigative adventure on short notice..

This chapter provides you with the tools you need to ease that burden. The template system provided here shows you how to divide the work of adventure creation up into those parts you can do at leisure, between game sessions, and those parts you need to manage at the table when the PCs suddenly pick an unanticipated direction for their evening's entertainment. If you know exactly what the PCs are planning to do beforehand, you can manage everything between sessions, but the system as designed is intended to be flexible enough to handle a game session's little surprises.

ADVENTURE TEMPLATES

Adventure templates are pre-made frameworks that you design during the downtime between sessions. They give you the dramatic skeleton of an investigative adventure that you can drop down on top of a regional site, inserting the local Friends, Enemies, Schemes, and other specific details into the necessary slots of the template. With a template, you can have a full evening's gaming generated in five minutes at the table, plus an investment of time while away.

Templates create fairly tightly-structured adventures, with certain assumptions about how the scenes will flow. Some readers may be uncomfortable with this plot-arc-esque intrusion into the pristine sandbox of their games, but it really is a necessary compromise for most GMs. The great majority of GMs have a very hard time juggling all the clues, antagonists, time lines, and historical events of an investigative adventure, and structuring the game to give a little heavier framework to play can make these challenges much more manageable for them. The players still have perfect freedom to choose which sites and challenges they choose to investigate, but once the adventure starts, things tighten up a little.

Templates are made up of *scenes*. There are certain default scenes that are usually part of any template, while others can be added as desired. GMs who want something particularly outre might stick

scenes together in ways unanticipated in this chapter, gluing events and situations together. Still, there is a basic frame that provides the backbone of most investigative adventures. This frame involves the default scenes of the Hook, the Introduction, the Investigation, and the Resolution.

Hook scenes revolve around appraising the PCs of the adventure's existence. They're the means by which the PCs learn that something interesting is in the location, often with whatever initial leads or clues are necessary to direct their first investigation into the matter. Sometimes an explicit Hook scene isn't necessary, as the PCs have been alerted of something wrong at the site by clues or hints they picked up in earlier adventures.

Introduction scenes involve the PC's first physical visit to the area, where they meet the important NPCs and learn the lay of the land. Introduction scenes give players options for their further investigation and allow them to form a basic idea of the subjects and people relevant to the adventure. Introductions are usually low-violence, low-tension affairs, where the pieces of the mystery are put on the table for the players to consider. More dramatic introductions are also possible, such as when the PCs find themselves suddenly immured in a dangerous situation they can't easily escape without resolving the mystery.

Investigation scenes involve prying into secrets, crime scenes, hidden deeds, secluded locations, and other potential sources of enlightenment. Some investigation scenes will be obviously predictable; if the hook involves a Friend sending word of a peculiar set of disappearances in the area, it's very likely that the PCs will seek them out to gain more information on the situation.

Other Investigation scenes will emerge in play as the PCs decide to turn their attention toward particular topics. You'll need to prepare specific Investigation scenes for those clues and leads you provide in the Introduction, and it can be helpful to have a few others on hand for those hints that the PCs might reasonably be expected to pick up on their own.

Resolutions occur when the PCs finally act on the information they have gathered. The heroes brace the foul sorcerer in his swamp, reveal the mayor's depraved appetites to the authorities, or flee the cult-infested town with a precious artifact in their grasp. A GM can usually predict the most obvious and likely confrontations, though as with all scenes there remains the chance that the PCs will aim their efforts in an entirely unanticipated direction.

These are the four basic types of scenes that appear in almost all investigative adventures. Still, many GMs need more than this to flesh out a properly exciting adventure, and in these cases other scenes can be attached to the basic framework.

Ambush scenes occur when the local powers of evil decide to do something about the troublemaking investigators. In many adventures, ambushes occur only when the heroes have incautiously tipped their hand, and it may be that the PCs can avoid the scene with sufficient

BUILDING YOUR WORLD

discretion in their investigation. Ambushes may take the form of physical violence unleashed by cult servants or monsters, or they may involve the manipulation of local authorities to imprison or kill the PCs.

Escape scenes revolve around a desperate attempt to evade an unstoppable enemy or a frantic retreat from some catastrophic outcome. The enemy might be an overwhelming number of frothing cultists, an eldritch abomination immune to the heroes' weapons, or the pursuit of misguided local lawmen that the PCs are reluctant to kill. Escape scenes also kick in when the heroes ultimately fail to stop a sinister plan and must rapidly decamp from the area before being consumed by whatever horror has blighted the location.

Conflict scenes are occasions of direct combat or struggle between the PCs and some opponent. The conflict may be abstract, with the PCs forced to topple a corrupt local official in order to get at his secret master or it may be very physical, with the heroes and a few brave locals trying to stop a cult ritual with a blaze of gunfire. PCs being who they are, it's very likely that at least some other scenes will suddenly transform into conflicts. Some GMs running more physically-flavored games might stack up adventures that involve direct confrontation between the PCs and their enemies, with a whole string of conflicts to be hacked and hammered through before the final foe can be reached.

Respite scenes are chances to recover and rearm. A Friend might be able to supply substantial aid to the heroes, or a secure place to recover after some particularly brutal conflict. Other hidden locations or unsuspected locals might also be able to provide some notable assistance if the heroes are canny enough to discover them. Most players will be primed to expect hideous treachery in the face of an ostensible respite, but a prudent sandbox GM should just let the rational facts of the situation determine whether or not an offer of aid really is sincere.

This scene list isn't meant to be an exhaustive catalog of all the elements you can put into an investigative adventure, but it does provide a basic set of building blocks for creating your adventures quickly and easily. Once you've built your adventure you'll be familiar enough with its parts and principles that it will be much easier to loosen up and extemporize a little during actual play.

BUILDING A TEMPLATE

When building a template it can actually be most convenient to work backwards from the end of the adventure. Start with a Resolution, choosing one of the sample scenes provided or brewing your own. Imagine the climactic conflict of the adventure, the grand outcome that spells the bloody doom, wretched defeat, or heroic triumph of the PCs. It's not necessary to think about how they got there yet or why this event is happening, just ponder what kind of suitably adventurous climax the Resolution might involve.

Now that you've imagined the crown of the adventure, identify its component parts. It happened at a place, no doubt, and it involved an antagonist trying to do something or being prevented from doing something. It might have had other evildoers involved, or victims, or precious MacGuffins. Parcel out the important parts of the resolution, identifying the elements you'll need to account for in earlier scenes

as you go on with building the adventure. You might get flashes of inspiration later on, adding in other parts to the Resolution as your ideas coalesce.

For each component part, assign it an Investigation scene. This is the scene that alerts the heroes to element's importance or existence. The sample Investigation scenes provide ideas about how to get this information into a hero's hands, but you can always create your own town gossip, dusty tome, or abandoned cabin to frame the information. If you have a lot of clues to pass to the PCs you might put more than one into a single investigative scene.

You might also choose to daisy-chain your Investigation scenes, making it a multi-step process to first find out about the element and then find out where or how to locate it. You can lard the chain with other types of scenes, throwing in cult ambush Conflicts or sudden monstrous Ambushes or whatever else you require. The only real limit is your willingness to juggle these elements in play.

Now take your Investigation lines and tie them up into an Introduction. The Introduction scene should alert the PCs that these investigative topics exist and that they're worthy of their attention. An abandoned cabin in the forest is a fine place to put a clue, but if the PCs never learn the cabin is there and important then they're unlikely to take much interest in it. It's not necessary to put the Investigation scene clues up in neon lights, but the Introduction should clearly point to all of them. At the least, they should point toward people or places that would naturally lead to the scenes.

Finally, choose a Hook scene that will lead into the Introduction, whether it is a message from a friend, a chance meeting on the road, an observed occult phenomenon centering on the place, or some other clear indication that something is worth investigating in the area. It may be that the heroes will move directly into the adventure due to other entanglements, or find out about events from a source at another location. The precise means of alerting the players isn't all that important, so long as it gets them to the Introduction.

The framework you've just created is a perfectly serviceable adventure. From this point you can start to do the trimming and tightening you need to turn it into a final template and you'll have a fine evening's fun out of it. Still, if your creative energy is still abundant you can potentially add more zest to things by adding additional scenes to the adventure's mix.

For instance, you can start creating a few alternate Investigation scenes that give the PCs alternate means of discovering important elements. These Investigation scenes may or may not be explicitly tipped in the Introduction, and you might include them simply because it seems likely the heroes might try them. If the adventure revolves around a house of sinister, clannish country folk, you might think it possible that the heroes will just march directly up to the house and try to prowl it in person. Creating an Investigation to cover this possibility might be a productive use of your prep time – and if it turns out you don't need the scene, well, just file the serial numbers off and save it for the next time you need a country house encounter.



You might create a Conflict or two, anticipating likely flashpoints for violence or social struggle. You can attach Conflicts to particular Investigation scenes, tipping off violence if the heroes botch their information-gathering or decide to go in guns blazing. If the adventure's antagonist is an influential local, a Conflict scene might be triggered when he tries to use his pull to interfere with the heroes' investigation. Anticipating the ways in which he'll try to trouble the PCs and the things they might do to counter him can save you time and effort when running things at the table.

An Escape scene is sometimes useful if the adventure revolves around stopping a particular bad thing from happening. There's no guarantee that the PCs are actually going to be successful in stopping the event, so you may need to take a few minutes to think about the consequences should they fail. The PCs might have to beat a hasty retreat from whatever they've failed to prevent. Aside from a botched resolution, the PCs might also have to make an Escape against some malevolent power roused by an Investigation, or wiggle out of the imprisonment or entanglements created by a failed Conflict.

Ambush scenes are relevant when the antagonist has the minions or sorcerous resources to attack the PCs directly. Ambush scenes are generally created on a use-as-needed basis; they may or may not happen during an adventure depending on how subtle the heroes are in their investigation. If the antagonist has ties to a larger organization, they may be tipped off about the danger of the PCs if the group has had encounters with them in the past. Not all Ambushes need to be "beatable"—PCs simply need to flee from some of them.

TIGHTENING THE FRAMEWORK

Now that you have a basic frame for your template, it's time to clean it up and get it ready for use at the table. The guidelines here presume that the template is intended to be generally applicable to many of your locations, and so some parts of it will be necessarily vague. If you're building this template for a specific location you can fill in the necessary elements as you go along.

First, look through the scenes and identify any maps you're going to need. For many scenes, no maps will be necessary. If the PCs are exploring a ruin or sneaking through a cult lair, it might be very important to have a clear idea of the location's layout, but most scenes use places as simple backdrops. In those cases it's easy enough to just extemporize something if it turns out to be necessary. Some scenes might be too vague to map yet. The Places they involve may yet to be determined, and could be anything from a remote forest glade to a downtown office building. For these situations, just make a note that you'll need to pull a map from your resources when it actually comes up during play.

Once you've identified the cartography you need, check the scenes and identify any that are likely to need combat statistics for an NPC. Conflict scenes might need properly documented thugs or eldritch horrors, and the antagonist himself is probably going to need combat stats, given the predilections of PCs. It might seem difficult to assign statistics to elements that have yet to be specifically identified, but you're really just putting in stats that fit their role in the adventure or scene. Thugs are thugs the world over, and one eldritch horror's

BUILDING YOUR WORLD

gnashing beak does about as much damage as the serrated tentacles of another. If you really do need unique statistics for an enemy, you can pull them when you run the adventure. Most foes will do just fine with the default statistics.

Now take a pass and identify the minor NPCs, victims, and other locals in the adventure. Assign them names and an identifying trait or two. You may need to tweak these when you run the adventure, but having a list close to hand will save you time and effort.

Once you've set the details of the template, it's time to identify those bits that you'll need to insert during play. If the template involves an occult artifact meant to be inserted from the location where it's run, make a note of that. If the antagonist needs a particular motivation to explain the Resolution, then record that in your notes. Use this step as an opportunity to quickly remind your future self of the parts you're going to need to add in during play.

With the template suitably tightened, the final step is to walk through it from Hook to Resolution. Does the Introduction provide clear pointers toward the Investigation scenes? Do the Investigation scene clues all add up to direct the heroes to the Resolution? Is failure treated as a real possibility, and any negative outcomes addressed by an Escape if needed? Can you mentally trace the progress of the investigation from start to finish?

By the time you've completed this step you should have a fully functional template that's ready for insertion whenever your campaign needs it. With five minutes to fill in the blanks and smooth the rough joins you should be able to turn it from a template into an actual adventure, and if you have the luxury of prep time to handle the job you should be able to swiftly and easily polish it into a fine evening's play.

RUNNING THE TEMPLATE

It's inevitable that the adventure you create will not run exactly as you planned. It is certain that the PCs will find a shortcut, hare off after an irrelevant lead, botch an investigation, or have a sudden flash of brilliance that derails the entire flow of the adventure.

This is completely fine and to be expected. The purpose of creating the template isn't just to give you a clear roadmap to adventure, it's also to get you sufficiently familiar with the situation so that you can extemporize those bits you need. If you know how all the parts are supposed to fit together, you're going to be able to come up with good answers when the PCs start randomly throwing pieces around.

The key thing to keep in mind when running an investigative adventure is the need for *progress*. The PCs need to be getting somewhere with the investigation or have a clear idea of where or who they need to go to in order to get somewhere. Players who can get no information tend to start doing inadvisable things out of frustration, trying progressively more unlikely angles in order to try to get *something* out of the situation.

You need to keep the vital clues of the adventure in mind during play. The elements of the Resolution need to get into PC hands somehow if they're ever to finally confront the antagonist and resolve the adventure.

There are two different methods you can use for this as GM, depending on the philosophy your group shares and the kind of experience they want from the game.

In the first method, you ensure that the PCs are given clear leads to the Investigation scenes they need to progress the adventure. No part of the Resolution should require a lucky guess to discover or a randomly-successful skill check to unearth. You give the players a perfectly fair chance to get the information they need.

And if they fail, they fail. They have a certain amount of time to gather the information they need and reach a successful resolution, and if they don't manage it then the antagonist's plan will come to fruition. In cases where there is no explicit plan to stop but only some dark horror that must be overcome, then there will come a certain point where no practical chance of overcoming the evil remains.

The players need to understand that they have failed. Whether by a sudden Escape scene or a horrific newspaper headline, they need to know that this particular adventure is not going to have a happy ending and that it's time to clear the area. They might be able to come back later with fresh resources, but for now the adventure is over and they need to get away while they still can. Without this kind of explicit warning the PCs risk a downward spiral of further desperate attempts at success as they grasp for something that just might not be practically possible. Failure can be particularly bitter when there's no clear way to avoid it.

This style of play is particularly suitable for those groups that enjoy the sense of impending doom that often hangs over Lovecraftian fiction. The knowledge that failure is entirely possible helps add significance to their efforts and make a win feel like an actual accomplishment rather than the natural ending of an adventure. Choices mean more when the specter of disaster is always hanging over the group.

The downside of this style is that it has the potential to eat up prepared content at a very fast clip. If the PCs manage to utterly botch an adventure a half-hour into play then you have to have something to occupy the rest of the evening. You can bring out a different template and hope the survivors have better luck with this one, but it still leaves you with the need to *have* that different template ready. Later, you can go back and trim the back half of the first template, giving it a fresh front end and saving yourself the prep time you put into it, but that's not something most GMs can do on the spot. If you take this hard-line style with your adventures, you're going to need to have a healthy stock of content ready to deploy.

The second method involves a similar set-up to the first, with clear lines provided to the Investigation scenes and the important clues they hold. Unlike the first method, however, the PCs are all but guaranteed to get the clues they need. Even if they botch their investigations or fail the best routes to get the information, they will eventually come up with the vital leads and correct conclusions that they require. They may be missing very useful information that they could otherwise have obtained, and they might not have all the data they need to make good decisions during the Resolution, but they will eventually get there if they keep trying to push onward.

For each Investigative scene, identify the crucial clue and provide a failsafe way of getting the information. Maybe a reluctant cultist will spill the beans, or a secret informant pass them the information, or maybe paranoid thugs will attack the investigators and accidentally hand over the very thing or knowledge that they were trying to protect. Even if the PCs fail the more elegant or discreet way of getting the clue, this failsafe will ensure that it ends up in their hands.

This information does not come without a price, however. For each failsafe that you trigger, something bad happens. In the case of a thug attack, it might be the attack itself that is the unfortunate outcome. In other cases, the informant might be killed, the antagonist might be tipped off to the heroes, the cult might choose to summon an extra abomination, a friendly NPC might be murdered, or some other ugly consequence will flow from the failsafe.

The heroes are certain to reach the Resolution if they keep pushing ahead, but if they botch too many investigations and pull too many failsafes, the Resolution might become an entirely Pyrrhic moment. It's important that the PCs be able to see the connections between the failsafes and the unfortunate complications, or else it can look like the situation was hopeless from the start. That can be valid fun for certain kinds of groups, but most players prefer to feel that failure was the consequence of a choice more specific than simply the one to involve themselves in the adventure.

The advantage of this style of play is that the players always get to see the full adventure. As the GM, you can be reasonably sure that your preparation will be enough for a full evening's play and you don't need to have backup material ready in case of catastrophic failure. The sort of mistakes and fumbling that might otherwise detonate an adventure can be saved with a failsafe or two. The final Resolution might be harder or friendly NPCs might suffer for the heroes' ineptitude or bad luck, but the PCs will get to the end one way or another. Some players can get exceptionally frustrated by outright failure, and this method saves their fun from this outcome.

The disadvantage is that it lessens the tension and significance of player choices. A degree of worry is preserved over the consequences of failed investigations and fumbled rolls, but the players know that as long as they keep pushing onward, they'll eventually reach their goal. Some players need the spice that comes from the risk of catastrophic failure, and this style of adventuring can be a little bland for them.

Whichever style you prefer, it's important to make sure the players agree with it and are aware of it. If early failure is a real option in the game, it's important that the players know it, and know that it's time to run when you clue them into the disaster. If progress is a given, they need to know that each failsafe they trigger is just going to make the final confrontation that much harder or cost them something in allies or resources.



AFTERMATH AND CLEANUP

Adventures have consequences, good and bad. Even the most catastrophic failure might have a silver lining in information gained or occult relics salvaged, while a glorious success might still cost the life of a beloved NPC or require the expending of some irreplaceable resource. Once the heroes have dealt with the Resolution of the adventure or finished play for the evening, it's time for you to handle the larger outcome of the session.

First, assign experience points to the survivors. Simply surviving for a session merits a standard experience point award, provided the PCs were actually trying to accomplish something in line with their abilities. Some GMs may want to hand out bonus XP up to half of a standard award for particularly effective play, depending on the specific goals the PCs had and how well they accomplished them. Other GMs may abolish experience points entirely, simply telling the group when their PCs advance a level.

The table to the right lists the standard reward for an adventure along with the total XP required to reach a new level. The awards listed on the table are calibrated to rapidly advance a hero through their first few levels before starting a slower climb toward higher peaks of attainment.

The experience awards are also calibrated to the highest-level PC in the group. In Lovecraftian games it's perfectly normal for a hero to die, and some groups prefer to bring in new PCs at first level. By awarding these green investigators a share of experience equal to that of their more experienced brethren, they rapidly rise in experience to equal their peers. This rapid advancement also allows a new hero to risk absorbing an unusual amount of mental trauma, because they know that their next level advancement will be coming soon along with its reduction of their Madness score.

Some GMs grant XP for every game session that passes, while others only give it at the end of an actual adventure. The choice you make will depend on the pacing you want for advancement, with shorter campaigns generally profiting from the first method if the PCs are meant to experience a fairly wide level range during the campaign.

Once you've assigned experience points, update the site where the adventure took place. It's very likely that some Enemies and Friends have perished, some Schemes have been foiled, and it's possible that even some Places may be no more. You don't need to replace these lost or mutilated elements if it doesn't seem necessary, but you should note down the current state of affairs in the place for future reference. You might make the PCs' accomplishments the seeds for some future trouble, with surviving enemies growing stronger and swearing revenge.

It's important that the PC actions have some visible, tangible consequences in the game world. This stage of cleanup is your chance to give them that, with some sort of evidence that what they did there was meaningful and important. A cultist mayor might be replaced by an upright candidate, or a clan of inbred slave-servants of an elder power might finally be freed of their eldritch shackles, or the annual town fish fry might be reported a grand success instead of the apocalyptic occasion of a fish-man raid for sacrificial fodder.

HIGHEST PC LEVEL	XP GIVEN PER SESSION	XP NEEDED TO ADVANCE A LEVEL
1	2,000	2,000
2	2,000	4,000
3	4,000	8,000
4	4,000	16,000
5	8,000	32,000
6	8,000	64,000
7	16,000	128,000
8	24,000	256,000
9	32,000	512,000
10+	32,000	+256,000 per level

Given the genre, it can be tempting to be “grimdark” about the PCs' efforts. An evil overthrown might seem most fittingly replaced by an even worse blight. While some groups relish this kind of nihilism in their play, it tends to breed a certain detachment from the game; if nothing the PCs do ever makes a real, visible improvement to things, then why should they risk lives and sanity to try? Not every outcome needs to be an unmixed blessing, but the PCs should usually have evidence to suggest that they are a significant force for good.

CASH AND PRIZES

The resource rules in *Silent Legions* are intentionally loose, as a modern-era RPG rarely has the coin-centric interest in cash that a fantasy game does. Still, the end of the adventure is a good time to assess the PCs' wealth scores and make any adjustments necessary.

Mythos treasures are notoriously hard to fence, given the way that many of the jewels are cursed, the precious artifacts are malevolent, and the grimoires are worthless to those not steeped in occult lore. Still, sometimes the PCs come into cleaner cash, either as a reward from a grateful ally or as the honest takings from a successful adventure.

These rewards and plunder can be represented as **wealth tokens**, each one worth a particular level of wealth— an Average reward, or a Rich favor, or even a Plutocratic trove. The PCs can spend this token in lieu of their own resources to buy something they need. If necessary, a token can be broken down into two tokens of one level lower, but they cannot be combined into a higher level.

Tokens can also be spent to permanently increase a PC's base wealth through careful investment, assuming the group allows the hero to spend them that way. The cost to raise a Penniless character to Struggling is one Affluent reward. Raising Struggling to Average is one Rich reward, and from Average to Affluent requires either two Rich rewards or one Plutocratic one. Going from Affluent to Rich requires four Rich rewards or two Plutocratic, and attaining truly enormous levels of personal wealth is entirely up to the GM, though it probably requires as many as half a dozen treasures of ineffable value. The GM can always adjust these guidelines to suit their own circumstances.

SCENES AND CHALLENGES

The following pages include lists of sample scenes, tools for fashioning bit-part NPCs and crimes, and examples of challenges for the PCs to overcome in the course of their adventures. While they are provided in table form, a GM should always feel free to pick and choose as wished.

The simplest way to assemble a template is to roll a Resolution scene, roll three Investigation scenes, roll an Introduction scene, and then roll one Hook scene to give PCs an entry point. But if you're going to use these tools effectively, it's important to understand how to stitch these results together. If you try to simply glue them together and throw them at the table, you'll find it very hard to run it in play.

First, take the results as prompts and basic ideas rather than as strict forms to be bolted together precisely. It's almost certain that you're going to have to make significant changes in the material to make everything fit together gracefully. This is especially important when you're building a blank template, and you aren't entirely sure what site you're going to have to drop this down on.

As a general rule, blank templates need to be simpler and more direct than templates premade to fit a particular site. Without the specific details of a location to inspire your creativity, you might find it difficult to hook a template together with particularly intricate joins or novel twists. If you don't have inspiration about these things, it's perfectly fine— just make a plain, simple template with clearly-defined roles.

Second, once you've sorted out a few basic ideas about each scene, unify the Actors, Enemies, Secrets, Friends, and other elements named by the scenes. If two scenes both refer to an Actor, for example, it's probably best to make it the same person if that's at all plausible. If multiple references to a Friend appear among the scenes, it's probably the same Friend.

If you haven't got a specific site in mind for this template, you might want to assign placeholder identities to these characters to simplify your tracking. If a friendly Actor and a minion of the Enemy Actor are both involved in the situation, you might use the quick-roll Actor table in this section to create Annie Blythe, the cheerful young fry cook with an interest in the occult, and Joseph Grindell, the earnest philosophy professor with extremely unsavory friends. Personalizing these roles this way can make it easier to track the evolution of your adventure, and they're sufficiently generic to fit in most locations.

You want to avoid a multiplicity of irrelevant characters or components. You can always sprinkle in red herrings or unimportant bit characters during play, but when you're designing a blank template, you want to focus on the important elements of the adventure.

Finally, you want to decorate your basic framework with any extra scenes you might find interesting. In some cases, the scenes you rolled will explicitly call for a Conflict or an Ambush or an Escape. While you can always ignore these instructions, you might choose to flesh out these scenes just so you have something on hand. A blank template's Conflict or Ambush might even be something you could pull into another adventure on short notice, just changing names as needed.

CHALLENGES AND THEIR USES

The challenges given in this section are meant to help you make life harder for the PCs. They're divided into four different kinds of challenges most appropriate for particular character classes, but that's simply as a convenience for you in ensuring that different characters have different chances to shine.

Challenges are meant to explain why a given scene is actually liable to test the PCs. Many of the template scenes given in this section are fairly straightforward— the PCs go someplace and find something, or the PCs seek out an Actor and ask something. Challenges explain why that's easier said than done. There's a cluster of sinister-looking ruffians lounging around the place the PCs want to examine, for example, or the Actor they find isn't interested in cooperating unless the PCs persuade or bribe him sufficiently.

Most scenes deserve at least one challenge, and particularly long or drawn-out affairs might deserve several. Failing a challenge isn't meant to be an automatic failure of the scene. The PCs may not be able to intimidate or defeat the ruffians, for example, but they might just simply come back around later after they've gotten bored or dispersed. That delay might cost them precious time, but it still gives them a chance to inspect the area. In the same fashion, an Actor who simply refuses to play along might goad the PCs to find some more amenable source of information, even if that fellow might not be as trustworthy or capable as the source they originally tried to tap.

Challenges are simply a tool and a convenience for you as a GM, giving you a fast answer as to why this situation is a problem for the PCs. Some scenes might not need any challenge at all, such as a Hook scene or a Respite scene. As with any other tool in this section, you can simply use them as a springboard for your own creativity.

THE VIRTUES OF SIMPLICITY

Particularly for a GM running a sandbox game, designing simple and relatively direct adventures is often the best course to take. Grand and sprawling storylines are excellent fun for a lot of people, but the dynamics of a sandbox campaign threaten to make a lot of such work wasted effort, or worse, a temptation to railroad the PCs into obedience.

Instead, adventures are better designed as bite-size events and interludes, ones which can be settled in one or two sessions. Longer adventures threaten to limit the benefits of the sandbox structure because the PCs will tend to feel obligated to finish what they've started, and if a single adventure takes up the bulk of a likely campaign lifespan they'll miss out on the fun of more freewheeling occult exploration.

So don't feel obligated to create some complex, multi-part plot arc all in one sitting. Grand stories will evolve naturally during the course of play, as these small adventures come together in a pattern of recurring enemies, old friends, familiar perils, and coherent PC choices expressed within the sandbox. The end result will have consistency and direction because the players supplied it, and the path it takes will be the result of the players' priorities and interests. So long as you can give them a good evening's fun, your preparations will be more than enough.

RESOLUTION SCENES

Resolution scenes tie up the climax of the adventure, the crucial point at which the heroes overcome the Enemy or are forced back in retreat. As the GM, you should use the Resolution as a cue to where the Enemy actually wants to end up with their plans. They may never get anywhere near this conclusion if the PCs are sufficiently canny early in the adventure, but it's the basic direction in which they're aiming.

If you begin your template creation with the Resolution, its best to start it light. Don't try to explain too much and don't try to make too much sense of the initial roll or choice. You'll need to generate Investigations, Introductions, and Hooks before you can really start stitching things together and getting a clear idea of the kind of adventure you're creating.

If you're creating a blank template for later use, you want to keep this slightly indistinct feel through the end of the creation process. The end result should be something almost like a literary plot formula, ornamented by those specific NPCs, crimes, and details you generate as part of the process. Think of the elements as archetypal components; the Enemy could be any antagonist, the Friend could be any ally, the Place could be any scene backdrop. Resist the temptation to particularize things any more than is strictly necessary.

Once you've assembled all the pieces to your template, then you can come back and start trimming and polishing things for a better fit. You might add some of the challenges given later in this section, or flesh out the extras with combat stats that you know they're likely to need, or

give the main antagonist an interesting set of occult powers to influence the way the Investigation scenes play out. Keep in mind that this scene might never happen in actual play. Players have a remarkable ability to derail GM plans, and if you're too committed to seeing these events happen you might find yourself fighting PC choices.

If you're designing the template for a specific site and already have particular Enemies, Friends, Schemes, and other details to slot into it, you can be much more specific about them. You can take advantage of your forewarning by smoothing out a lot more of the bumps and imprecisions that the process will create.

Whether with Resolutions, Investigations, or any other scene, allow yourself a little slack. It's just not possible to pin down every detail or nuance of a scene, or come up with a pre-arranged set of events that will completely satisfy any questions at the table. You're going to be making some ad-hoc decisions no matter how heavily you prepare.

The best use of your time is in understanding the big picture and the general way in which the parts of the adventure interact. If you know that the Enemy needs three specific things for their ritual, you can keep your attention on those things during play. If you know a particular Actor is going to try to stop the PCs, you can insert the attempt at whatever appropriate time might emerge in play. If you understand the basic parts of your plot, you'll be able to simply and easily manufacture details as your players' actions might require.



D12**TIME-SENSITIVE RESOLUTIONS**

1	A Scheme has actually already come to fruition, and a Friend is threatened by the consequences. The investigation reveals that it's too late to stop the horror, but gives the PCs the clues they need to realize the Friend is in danger and must Escape before the Enemy can capture or kill them.
2	An Enemy is struggling to maintain control of a Place that is vital to their Scheme. A Friend is interfering, but doesn't realize the scope of the threat. Investigations will reveal the tools the Enemy is using which must be confronted and neutralized.
3	A Friend faces death due to a Scheme unless its parts are investigated and disabled before the Enemy can enact them.
4	An Actor has some item critical to the Enemy, and must be found through investigations before the Enemy can find them.
5	A Crime is about to be committed by the Enemy against an Actor or Friend in order to advance a Scheme. The clues of the investigations point toward this grim purpose.
6	The Enemy is dead or gone, but a headless Scheme runs wild toward ruin, now uncontrolled and without constraint.
7	An Enemy seeks to rouse a long-dormant power in order to advance their Scheme, and requires certain components or allies that can be revealed by investigations.
8	The remnants of a failed Scheme have scarred the locals, creating an entirely mundane tragedy that will occur as a consequence of the Scheme's fallout if the PCs aren't able to piece together warning clues from the investigations.
9	A Place is serving as the cradle to a new Enemy, who will rise if the clues of the investigation can't be pieced together in time.
10	An Enemy seeks to destroy a Friend or an object which is impeding its Scheme. Investigations will reveal the existence of the threat and the means by which it intends to do this.
11	The Enemy awaits a particular time at which a ritual can be performed to further a Scheme, and the Investigations reveal the necessary Actors, Places, or physical components of that rite.
12	An eldritch horror will be released from its imprisonment at a particular time, and another Enemy seeks the components of a ritual to control it as soon as it emerges. The Investigations show both the elements and the fact that the same ritual can be used to re-bind the entity if used in time.

D12**RESOLUTIONS WITHOUT TIME PRESSURE**

1	The Enemy is furthering a Scheme that requires the maintenance of a Secret. The PCs must get proof of the Secret they've acquired through investigations to a particular Friend, and the Enemy means to stop them or eliminate the Friend.
2	A hidden Place contains the key to a Scheme. The Place's existence and the nature of the key is revealed by the investigations, and the PCs must reach it and obtain the crucial object by overcoming the Enemy's vigilance and concealment.
3	The Enemy has a secretly loathsome nature that has been carefully hidden from the world. The clues of the investigation reveal the Enemy's identity and crimes, albeit in a way that the mundane world would never understand or should be kept from understanding. Only the PCs are capable of halting the Enemy's atrocities.
4	The Enemy is impervious to whatever harm the PCs can do. It's surrounded by too much political power, too many minions, or is simply supernaturally invulnerable. Its identity may be obvious, but to hurt it, the PCs need the investigation's clues.
5	An Enemy has won in the site, and now has almost-complete control of the situation. The loss of a key item or ally would collapse this control, and the investigations will tip off the PCs both to the entity's control and the particulars of the key.
6	An Enemy has retreated here to recover after a defeat or setback, and is using a Scheme to further their control of their new home. The investigations reveal both the reason for the Enemy's flight here and the nature of the tools being used.
7	The Enemy plots a Scheme that will result in the site's destruction. The investigations show its critical elements.
8	There are two Enemies that are opposed here, with an Actor holding the key to destroying both. Investigations reveal this enmity and the existence of the Actor, who may be oblivious to the nature of what they hold.
9	The Friend that has aided them in crushing an Enemy's Scheme is revealed to also be an Enemy, and seeks to betray the PCs now that they've served their purpose. The investigations give hints of this treachery but don't spell it out.
10	The Enemy is absorbed with some schism in its ranks that is impeding the execution of a Scheme. A disloyal lieutenant may masquerade as a Friend, or a true Friend may take advantage of the opportunity to seek to destroy the entire group.
11	A Friend seeks to use the PCs as unwitting catspaws to distract the Enemy in a suicidal bid to destroy it or its Scheme.
12	An eldritch instrument is being examined by the Enemy with the belief that it can further a Scheme. The Investigations reveal the provenance and nature of the instrument and the place where it is being held.

INVESTIGATION SCENES

Investigation scenes tend to be the meat of an adventure. In these scenes, players attempt to extract something from the shadows of confusion and ignorance, whether that something is a hidden fact, a physical clue, a person who can help them, or an object vital to the plot. There is almost always something that threatens to stymie their attempt to do so, even if it's nothing more than the challenge of identifying the really crucial fact in among a cloud of irrelevancies. In the table below, this vital macguffin is called "the clue".

When choosing an Investigation scene, you need to identify this vitally important clue that PCs are supposed to get from the situation. Then, depending on the style of gaming you're using as discussed earlier in this section, you will know what needs to get into the PCs' hands if the scene failsafe triggers, or you'll know what crucial element the PCs are going to have to do without if they simply fail to obtain it.

This important thing should be fairly transparent in its meaning. A certain number of red herrings and ambiguous clues are all well and good, but identifying what things are going to be ambiguous to a group and what things are going to be outright impenetrable is a hard distinction to make. A GM needs to know their group and know what kind of puzzle-solving abilities they have in order to scale this properly. It's best to err on the side of transparency unless you're confident you can give them the right level of enigmatic challenge.

Instead, this clue should be clear if the PCs are able to overcome whatever challenge stands between them and obtaining it. It might be

encrypted or ciphered, it might involve obscure historical references or literary allusions, it might rely on knowledge of occult particulars, or it might just happen to be in the pocket of a half-human abomination but if the PCs can crack those complications the ultimate direction should be fairly obvious.

The tables here provide example scene frames for Investigations that focus chiefly on macguffins or important places, and those that focus largely on people and events. There will be times when the table you want to use will be obvious, but you should be willing to entertain even odd results for at least a brief consideration. A certain amount of randomness in choosing a frame helps give an organic, lifelike feel to the flow of events and helps prevent them from becoming a more rigid enactment of expected tropes and genre progressions.

In most cases the PCs won't know exactly what they're looking for until they find it. The Introduction scene is expected to aim them in the general direction of each Investigation, but it may not be able to tell them much about what they'll find there. At most, it might suggest that something useful could be found at a particular place, or through talking with a particular witness. Only after the PCs arrive and start digging will they discover the thing that makes it worthwhile.

Depending on your degree of creative energy, you might choose to string Investigations sequentially, allowing the Introduction scene to aim at only one or two Investigation leads, and then allowing the clues of one to feed into newly-opened Investigative opportunities.

D12

INVESTIGATIONS OF OBJECTS OR PLACES

1	The clue is in an abandoned Place, where one or more challenges lie between the PCs and obtaining it.
2	Obtaining the clue is trivially easy, but parsing it or identifying the importance of an object requires visiting a Place, where further information is under guard of one or more challenges
3	The object is obtained relatively easily, but an Actor is needed to make its significance clear, the situation complicated by that Actor's motivations and potential challenges to reaching them.
4	The clue is tied up with a local Secret, such that finding it means discovering the Secret and drawing attention from those that don't want the Secret revealed.
5	A Friend is actively trying to get the clue to the PCs or other related allies, but their attempt is being hindered by the actions of the Enemy or some intrinsic challenge to the exchange.
6	The clue is at a Place, but exists in a form that is incomprehensible without completing at least one of the other Investigations.
7	Agents of the Enemy is already at the Place, also looking for the clue.
8	The Place where the clue is supposed to be is remote, and a challenge exists in order to reach it, or an Actor must be convinced to guide them to it.
9	The clue is currently in the ownership of an Actor who has no intention of giving it up, albeit at least one way exists to convince them to peacefully hand over the item, whether by cash, favors, or dealing with a particular problem they have.
10	The Place has been ransacked by Enemy agents who are even now departing with the clue in a way that leaves a perceptible trail to follow. The PCs must catch up with them in time and take it back, either through violence or trickery.
11	The clue is somehow dangerous to its possessor, and has been locked away or hidden away not just to keep it safe, but also to keep bystanders from being harmed by it. Challenges face those who would attempt to reclaim it.
12	The Place where the clue is has been sealed up by public order, whether due to it being a crime scene, its advanced state of dereliction, its owner's desire for it to remain undisturbed, or some other reason. Some group stands watch over it, such as police or hired watchmen, and they may be innocent bystanders to the situation.

D12**INVESTIGATIONS OF PEOPLE OR EVENTS**

- 1 The clue is in a Place in possession of an Actor who has a reason not to admit their possession of it, perhaps due to threats by an Enemy, rivalry with a Friend, or their own actions in obtaining it.
- 2 The event was hushed by local police, and getting the facts requires either the cooperation of an Actor involved in the investigation or a stealthy inspection of local police records.
- 3 The Actor involved has been kidnapped by agents of the Enemy and taken to a remote Place. They mean to keep him or her out of events until the Scheme has come to completion, but they'll kill him or her if necessary to preserve their silence.
- 4 The event was disguised as a different kind of happening, and only a careful inspection of the Place where it happened reveals the clue related to its true nature.
- 5 The Actor the PCs seek has been killed, and they arrive in time to deal with a challenge related to the murder, either in the form of a tardy assassin or some dangerous consequence the murderer left behind.
- 6 The event is known only to a few, and an Actor must be persuaded or "convinced" to help the PCs learn about its details or gain access to the site where it occurred.
- 7 The Enemy's agents are also searching for the Actor, and the PCs risk running into them at the place the Actor is supposed to inhabit. They may realize they have company before a certain confrontation. Clues at the site lead to the Actor's hiding place.
- 8 The event was related to a Secret in the location, and those that are trying to protect the Secret will also try to dissuade the PCs from examining the event.
- 9 The Actor has been killed or kidnapped, and an agent of the Enemy is serving as an impostor to ensure that any inquisitive troublemakers are aimed in the wrong direction. Overcoming a challenge will clue the PCs that something is wrong.
- 10 The event is actually ongoing, or its aftermath has not completely shaken out, and the PCs find themselves suddenly drawn into it when they attempt to investigate.
- 11 An Actor is involved in a Secret at the site, and is convinced the PCs' curiosity is actually directed toward the Secret.
- 12 The clue is in a Place where an unrelated event recently occurred. PCs who go there will find themselves caught up in the event, and their interest will be mistaken by participants for allegiance to their rivals or involvement in the situation.



INTRODUCTION SCENES

Where the Hook catches the PCs' interest and alerts them that something interesting is going on at a site, the Introduction gives them a clear sense of where they should be going next. Introductions can be as direct and simple as an ally handing them a list of people to interrogate, or it might be as involved as a multi-part search of several different locations to find the names of all the people involved in a certain classified government research program in a city.

The goal of the Introduction is simply to give the players a clear sense of where they ought to be looking for further clues. Each of your Investigation scenes should be clearly foreshadowed by the information the PCs pick up during the Introduction. Some groups will require only a pointed insinuation to pick up these hints, while other groups might require something barely short of an engraved invitation. As the GM, you'll have to judge your own group to determine how aggressive you should be with your hinting.

What you shouldn't be is stingy with the leads. You might drop a few red herrings into the mix or add a few irrelevant names to the list of persons of interest, but the PCs should not be left groping for some way forward after completing the Introduction. If the scene involves challenges, failures should likely result in the Enemy being warned about the PCs' interest, or in making the actual Investigation scene more difficult due to the consequences. Failing an Introduction challenge should not result in the complete loss of the lead.

Players being players, it's very likely that they'll sometimes mistake a bit of decoration for a crucial clue, and think that a particular person or place really is of vital importance to the plot. It can be tempting to realign reality a little so that all their effort isn't in vain. GMs who aren't committed to a strict sandbox integrity might do so, and there's no crime in it, but there are ways to make such mistakes fruitful without challenging the facts you've already established for the plot.

When the PCs start haring in the wrong direction, it's going to make waves. PCs tend not to be the quietest, discreetest investigators possible, and that same determined enthusiasm that sees cultists where none exists and finds red herrings to be delicious is also the enthusiasm that can attract Friends, agents of the Enemy, or scenes of Ambush or Conflict related to the plot. The Enemy might notice their search for his dark machinations, and send minions to scare off the PCs, coincidentally giving the heroes a link to the real point of interest.

While the basic template assumes a single Introduction scene that leads to multiple Investigations, GMs with extra time and energy can make multiple Introductions instead, each one pointing in a new and useful direction. Some Introductions might be contingent on the completion of an earlier scene, so the PCs won't find out about the Iron Tablet of Leng until after they break into Professor Schliemann's laboratory and read the sinister archaeologist's notes. A GM can web these scenes together in multiple ways, and offer different points of entry for them.

D12

THE INTRODUCTION

1	The PCs stumble into the scene of a fresh Crime committed by an Enemy to advance or protect a Scheme. Multiple clues are visible that direct them to further Investigation scenes—physical artifacts, witnesses, police reports, or the like.
2	A Friend is willing to give them leads to the Investigation scenes, which they acquired as part of a recent social or physical Conflict that they won. The Enemy wants a rematch, and the Friend and possibly the PCs will be involved in yet another Conflict related to their strife.
3	The PCs find themselves ensnared in a short Conflict with an agent of the Enemy, who thinks they're easy pickings or has noticed their interest in affairs. A Friend notices the strife, and offers leads to the Investigations.
4	A Friend is trying to unveil a Secret to the public, and gives the heroes leads on the Investigations. These leads will actually direct the group toward the Resolution instead of proof of the Secret.
5	A Friend wants them to help unravel a Crime against an Actor related to them somehow. Investigation of this Crime will lead the PCs toward the Investigation scenes and the ultimate Resolution of events.
6	An Actor has a grudge against an agent of the Enemy, though doesn't realize the nature of his rival. He wants the PCs to help unveil the culprit's evil, and offers the Investigations as leads to be followed.
7	An agent of a former Enemy defeated by the PCs is spotted at the site in service to the new Enemy, and overcoming them or beating a challenge to rifle their possessions will provide clues that lead toward the Investigations.
8	Occult events have occurred that point toward the Investigations, though to the common eye they might seem like mere curiosities or crazy reports. The PCs have enough information to spot their true significance.
9	An Actor known to a Friend was last seen in circumstances related to one or more Investigations, but has fallen prey to the Enemy. Pursuing their whereabouts will take the PCs to the Investigations.
10	A Friend gives the PCs the results of their own research which aims the PCs at one or more Investigations. They're still looking into things; if the PCs don't dissuade them they'll discover a useful clue for the heroes, but will perish hideously.
11	A Friend directs the PCs to an Actor who might know more about affairs. The PCs will find the Actor dead after having arranged things to point others toward the Investigations should he or she be slain.
12	A Friend points the heroes toward a site wholly controlled by the Enemy without realizing it. The site involves a Secret related to the location, and if successfully infiltrated will reveal leads to the Investigations that must be made.

HOOK SCENES

These are the basic entry points for your players, the hooks that alert them to interesting goings-on at a particular site. Unlike most other types of scenes, there's not necessarily a challenge or obstacle of some kind embedded in these scenes. Their whole point and purpose is to clue the players in to an adventure opportunity, so designing them as something the players can "fail" rather than defeats the goal.

This is not to say that a Hook scene necessarily has to be *safe*, or that the PCs shouldn't have any opportunity to get extra forewarning or additional information from clever handling of the situation. Still, the basic goal of the Hook is to get the players aware of the possibilities that await them in a particular location.

In play, a GM sometimes find that a Hook is left hanging for quite some time. Particularly if the PCs have more than one potential adventure to deal with, the PCs sometimes have to leave an adventure hook neglected for several sessions, if not permanently. This can complicate matters, but there are certain tricks a GM can use to salvage matters.

One trick is to make sure that your hooks aren't necessarily as time-sensitive as the adventures they're attached to. The high priest might be ready to call forth the damnable powers at the next new moon, but don't start the clock ticking until the players actually pick up the hook. Or if you do elect to have matters progress regardless, make sure the players know that the hook is perishable. Sandbox choices are a

wonderful thing, but the PCs need to realize that a choice actually must be made before it really becomes meaningful to them. If they choose to deal with the missing persons epidemic in Shelbyville rather than the mysterious letter from New Brainerd, it should be a reasoned choice to deal with one problem before another, one made while aware that the latter might spiral out of hand before they can get to it.

There may also be times when you have two fully-fleshed adventure templates ready, both with nicely-done Hooks. You offer both to the PCs, and they pick one. What do you do with the other?

In some cases, you can simply let it be. Some Hooks are relatively time-insensitive. If the PCs choose to handle some other problem first, matters will probably stay roughly the same for the week or two it takes the heroes to settle the other matter. Even if they choose some entirely new, unrelated task to deal with afterwards, the Hook will probably be applicable and whatever Friend or circumstance that beckoned them will still be around to lead them to the Introduction.

If that isn't the case, however, just clip off the Hook and replace it. You don't need to trash the entire adventure or re-plot everything. Just slice off the person or event that was originally enticing the players and replace them with some fresher, newer consequence of events at the location. The modular structure of an adventure template lets you swap things in and out as needed, both Hooks and deeper elements.

D12

THE HOOK

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Among the personal effects of a defeated foe, the heroes find a document pointing to a Secret at the site, possibly with a clue toward a Friend there who might know more. |
| 2 | A Friend from the site sends word asking for help due to intimations of a Secret or a recent Crime involving them. |
| 3 | The heroes stumble across the remains of a Crime connected to a Secret at the site, or suddenly find themselves in the middle of the Crime in progress. |
| 4 | A foe retreats to the site or has visible business there, and the heroes' pursuit is calculated to lead them into a hint of the site's Secret, leading into the Introduction of the adventure. |
| 5 | The last reported location of a desired MacGuffin was at the site, where it actually plays an important role in the site's Secret or is somehow important to its Enemy. |
| 6 | The site's Enemy wants to bait the heroes into a trap, and so attempts to lure them into an Ambush there by setting them up through another type of Hook. The PCs have a chance to spot the Ambush by overcoming a challenge. |
| 7 | The site's Enemy needs victims or recruits, and just happens to pick the heroes for an attack that is decidedly less overwhelming than it should be. The assailants have some sort of clue that traces back to the site. |
| 8 | An ally of the heroes has a Friend in at the site who is reporting something related to its Secret. The ally can't respond, but the heroes might be able to. |
| 9 | The heroes need to visit a Place at the site for a mundane reason, where they find themselves present for a Crime or able to observe the aftermath, which hints at a Secret. |
| 10 | Malevolent psychic resonance or prophetic dreams afflict the most sensitive PC, drawing their attention toward an important Place at the site. The nature of the sending is influenced by the Secret going on there. |
| 11 | A newspaper article or other public document has features to it that alert the PCs of the unnatural events at the site, though an innocent reader wouldn't notice anything amiss. A Friend is pointed out in the article in a context that makes them an appealing contact for the party. |
| 12 | The investigators discover that they need to acquire something that is only available at a certain Place or from a particular Friend. The something may or may not have anything to do with the rest of the events at the site. |

AMBUSH SCENES

Ambush scenes are hard to write well for a GM, and easy to get wrong. While most players of Lovecraftian horror games are cheerfully willing to handle a little cruel fate and hopeless misfortune, most of them prefer to have their choices be the basic reason behind a disaster. An ambush out of nowhere can do brutal damage to a party of heroes, and can feel like an arbitrary sort of punishment for getting involved in the adventure at all. Even so, it's possible to avoid this frustration with a little care in arranging an Ambush scene.

Is this Ambush an integral part of a scene? Is it something you need to have in as part of an Investigation or Conflict? Then make sure the PCs have a chance to spot it before it goes off. You can afford to be somewhat generous about this and give the PCs a better chance of recognizing their peril than the circumstances might otherwise require because ambushes can be a fast ticket to a total party kill.

Heroes in *Silent Legions* are *fragile* compared to many other game systems. Giving a group of enemies a free round of attacks on a party is often enough to knock several characters out of the fight, and once a PC is down the heroes can't usually flee without leaving a comrade behind— a fate often worse than death. Of course, the bitter nature of the struggle might force the heroes to abandon a friend, but it's not a situation you necessarily want to set up as an inevitability.

Given that cult thugs and eldritch abominations aren't usually trained assassins, it's often possible to run an Ambush scene as a slower, sloppier sort of assault on the PCs. Much like the narrator's experience in

Shadows Over Innsmouth, the ambushers might simply start pounding on a locked door, giving the heroes time to flee out the window. They might start to cluster around the PCs in a darkened alleyway, alerting them to their impending danger. A reckless cultist might fire early, warning the heroes before they can be boxed in on the street. A genuine straight-no-warning hit by disciplined professionals should be a very rare and very frightening experience for PCs.

Ambush scenes are often best saved as consequences for failed Investigations or botched Conflict scenes. If the players know they've screwed up in a way that alerts the enemy, they'll be ready for unfriendly visitors and feel at least some degree of ownership of any ensuing bloodshed. Their losses and injuries will feel like something they brought on themselves, and something they could have avoided had they shown a little more caution or skill.

Even a complete party wipe need not necessarily be the end of an adventure. A well-placed Escape scene might find the heroes awakening in the clutches of the cult, their wounds bound and their lives preserved for more fruitful uses. This sort of second chance should be used sparingly, both because most players hate having their heroes captured and because it can seem like a *deus ex machina* to save the PCs from the consequences of their misfortune. Of course, just because they have an Escape scene available doesn't necessarily mean they succeed at it.

In summary, use Ambush scenes cautiously. They can add tension and thrills to an adventure, but they can also cut heroic lives very short.

D12

THE NATURE OF THE AMBUSH

1	An Actor is used as bait to lure the PCs with promises of truths about a Secret. Some inconsistency in the enticement might tip off the PCs that something is wrong.
2	Minions of the Enemy are called the next time one of them spots the PCs in an isolated Place. It takes some time for them to assemble, and the PCs might notice the sudden influx of people.
3	The most competent available minion of the Enemy is sent to deal with the PCs in a drive-by attack or sniping attempt. They won't bother to fire a control shot into downed PCs, so even the mortally wounded might survive, and they won't hang around long enough to invite concerted response.
4	Servants or workers around the PCs are replaced with minions of the Enemy and used to attack when the time is ripe.
5	The Enemy threatens a known Friend or ally of the PCs in order to goad them to come to their aid, and then attempts to deal with them all. The PCs will be aware they're heading into danger, however, and may choose not to respond.
6	The Enemy tries to sabotage the PCs' car or force it into an accident, perhaps explosive in nature.
7	The Enemy's minions attack at night, seeking to murder the PCs in their beds. Locked doors and other precautionary measures will give the PCs a little time to react.
8	The Enemy's agents fake an urgent message from a Friend asking them to meet them at some isolated location, with predictable intentions of mayhem. The imposture is not perfect, however, and the Friend is actually safely at home.
9	The Enemy uses an object or person the PCs are known to desire as bait to lure them into an ambush.
10	A Place is laced with booby-traps to kill the PCs when they come to investigate it. The Enemy's minions might actually tip the PCs off about the place's importance, accidentally thinking the PCs already know about it.
11	The ambush is actually a purely coincidental attack by locals for reasons unrelated to the Enemy, but still serving their plans. The locals might be muggers, angry partisans of the Enemy, or those who mistake the PCs for dangerous troublemakers.
12	The PCs have screwed up very badly and angered the wrong Enemy. A small group of professional assassins is stalking the PCs and will strike at the most inconvenient time possible, but are more interested in dropping them all than doing control shots.

CONFLICT SCENES

Conflict scenes usually come in one of three different flavors: social, physical, or legal. Something happens in the adventure to force the heroes to deal with an opposing force, one that wants to impose its will on the PCs through the means at its disposal. This could be overt violence, but in a civilized area there are other ways to fight.

Social conflicts involve cutting the lines of cooperation and trust that the heroes need to operate in the area. The Enemy or some troublesome Actor tries to convince Friends or other allies that the heroes are harmful. They might try to paint them as agents of the power they seek to oppose, as dangerous criminals who threaten all around them, or as simple bumbling incompetents unworthy of help.

Social struggles can often be defused by a well-placed Socialite PC, who has the skills and talents necessary to calm an uncertain ally. Even without the benefit of special abilities, however, the PCs might be able to assuage a worried ally by some demonstration of their dedication or feat of skill. The situation is more challenging when the Enemy goes for a broad-based whispering campaign or public effort at discrediting the heroes, but most players can figure out a way to live with the general obloquy of a community.

Physical conflicts are similar to Ambushes, but with less surprise. The Enemy or some troublemaking local has decided to make life painful for the heroes and is ready to use violence and physical effort to ensure that it happens. There's usually at least some degree of forewarning involved for the heroes, and some chance to escape the brawl.

Most Enemies will have human agents to apply this suasion, but eldritch horrors and occult abominations might also be dispatched to settle a troublesome investigator. These otherworldly entities are not famously subtle as a general rule, and quick-thinking PCs should have a chance to notice their impending trouble before it's too late to run.

Legal conflicts are relatively rare in the genre's source texts, but they can provide a change of pace for the heroes and a little novelty in the opposition they face. When dealing with an unholy high priest most PCs are ready to see foul curses and monsters arrayed against them. They're rather less equipped to deal with a restraining order, and a lawsuit for slander can involve an awkward discovery phase.

Fortunately for the PCs, most cult officials tend to lack the clarity of mind to wage effective lawfare, though this isn't necessarily the case for more mundane enemies. Worse, a lawsuit or other direct legal maneuvering can focus an unwholesome amount of attention on an Enemy's doings, and prove counterproductive in the end. Such suits and orders might be entered, but are often dropped before serious discovery can take place.

Blackmail, bribery, and cult influence are usually more fruitful in applying legal trouble to the heroes. A cult that has a firm grip on local law enforcement can cause all manner of problems for a group of heroes— and any attempt to fight back directly against such forces can leave the heroes as wanted fugitives throughout the entire region. The worst enemies are often those the heroes just can't fight.

D12

THE FORM OF CONFLICT

1	The Enemy or an agent tries to poison people's minds against the heroes with lies and slanders, or misinterpret their actions so as to leave them untouchable.
2	A Friend wants to do something extremely foolish and counterproductive in order to achieve their goal, and the heroes need to talk them out of it before it's too late, or stop them if they discover the act in progress.
3	An important Actor has a deep dislike for the heroes for some reason they can't control. They refuse to give the help or permission the heroes need unless they can be convinced or bribed to relent.
4	A local Secret impinges on the heroes, some consequence or side-effect that complicates their efforts.
5	The thugs of the Enemy seek out the heroes to intimidate or thrash them into breaking off their investigations. The intended violence is unlikely to be lethal unless the Enemy is confident they can get away with it without stirring up yet more trouble.
6	The Enemy is massing their physical forces to stop the PCs, visibly gathering thugs, cultists, followers, or other agents.
7	The Enemy is turning their forces on a Friend or ally, using physical violence or intimidation to force them to submit or flee from the location.
8	The Enemy tries to destroy something important to a Friend, ally, or hero. Arson, vandalism, or explosive sabotage might be used to destroy a home, wreck a car, or otherwise hinder the heroes.
9	The Enemy or their minions attempts to get the heroes into legal trouble, provoking their arrest for something the PCs have done in their investigations.
10	The Enemy applies legal pressure to a Friend, threatening a lawsuit or some other colorably legal action against them to force their cooperation or their betrayal of the PCs.
11	The Enemy produces legal documents extorted or tricked from an Actor or Friend, permitting them to seize a building, beggar an ally, gain conservatorship of a vulnerable person, or otherwise complicate the situation.
12	The Enemy, an Actor, or even a desperate Friend or ally uses their legal authority to pressure the heroes and advance their own interests, threatening jail or denying necessary legal permission for something of importance.

ESCAPE SCENES

Like Ambushes, Escapes tend to be contingent scenes, situations that come about due to some misstep. Of course, that misstep might not be that of the heroes; it's possible that an ally or Friend could end up in dire circumstances and be in need of heroic rescue.

As many veteran GMs have noticed, players tend to hate having their characters captured or imprisoned. The powerlessness and defeat inherent in that process tends not to be the sort of experience that people play RPGs to enjoy. For some players, even a clean and heroic death can be preferable to a miserable imprisonment in some deep dungeon. As such, you should avoid scripting your templates such that the PCs will be compelled to be captured.

Even so, Lovecraftian gaming comes with a somewhat larger amount of expected PC suffering than is normal to some other genres. Players in a Lovecraftian game expect horrible things to happen to their PCs, and many of them are much more game for adventure-imposed bad consequences than they would be in some other style of RPG. You'll need to know your own group's preferences to figure out whether or not they're ready to play along with some narratively-imposed bad luck.

Of course, sometimes a GM can see it coming in the way that a plot has been designed. The Enemy might have a good reason to want to capture and interrogate the PCs, or they might have the intention of arranging a snare for the heroes. An Escape scene can be just as much about avoiding capture or accomplishing a rescue as it is about breaking out of a cult's makeshift dungeon.

When running Escape scenes, it's important that the players understand that it's actually time to escape. For some groups, noticing the growing numbers of shadowy shapes around their hotel is a prompt to break out the firearms and barricade the doors for a fight, and not a cue to start running for the exits. While it's not in the sandbox ethos to script an outcome to any given fight or desperate stand, if the situation is just obviously untenable for the PCs, you should make sure the players realize that. Don't hesitate to flatly inform them that their PCs can tell that the opposition is too strong to beat in a square fight. If they still insist on bracing for impact, just apply the snare as planned and let whatever happens, happen. They knew their chances and they made their choice. And after all, maybe they'll come up with a brilliant save for the situation in the best heroic style.

Also, when you're running Escapes, have some room for different stages of escape or evasion. If the PCs turn tail and flee from a mob of armed cultists, the immediate outcome shouldn't just be successful flight or unsuccessful pinning. The two groups might be making opposed Constitution/Athletics rolls for a long run or Dexterity/Athletics for a short sprint, but a single success or failure might just increase the distance between them or expose the PCs to a few reckless shots from the hastening pursuers. Perhaps the environment turns in their favor with a fence and an open gate to slam in the cultist's faces, or it could be that one PC is lagging and the rest need to fall back or leave him behind. Allow two or three stages of success or failure before the final resolution. It builds tension and gives PCs room to fail a time or two without failing the entire scene.

D12

THE ESCAPE THE HEROES NEED TO MAKE

1	The heroes need to literally run. The Enemy or some unstoppable force pursues them and they need to flee on foot or in a vehicle before it can catch them.
2	The structure around the heroes is collapsing, on fire, or about to explode, and something is standing between them and an easy exit from the place.
3	The structure around the heroes is being swarmed by agents of the Enemy, and the PCs need to get away before they're trapped and killed or captured.
4	The PCs fall, wander, or are bewitched into a dangerous location which they must then escape.
5	A Friend or ally is captured and kept at a well-guarded Place, from which the PCs must successfully extract them.
6	The PCs are being kept as sacrificial fodder at a Place, but the guards are of the general attentiveness and efficiency to be expected from crazed occult zealots. One makes a mistake that gives the PCs a chance to escape.
7	The PCs have accidentally wandered into a Place or situation that appears harmless, but is actually connected to the site's Secret, and it suddenly turns dangerous around the heroes.
8	The situation suddenly flips as a seeming triumph by the heroes is rapidly inverted by the appearance of an invincible Enemy or circumstance, perhaps due to some final vengeful self-sacrifice by the Enemy.
9	A haven or Place of security is suddenly besieged by the Enemy or otherwise threatened, and the heroes must get some bulky yet critical object out of it before it is destroyed or captured.
10	The heroes are waylaid by law enforcement personnel, security guards, or other probably-clueless sorts who don't realize the gravity of the situation, but threaten to detain the PCs until it's too late. Direct violence is unlikely to have good results.
11	A Secret reaches out to ensnare the PCs, some combination of events forcefully thrusting them into a circumstance related to that Secret, and presenting danger if they can't get free in time.
12	A Friend accidentally or under compulsion leads the PCs into a trap, only realizing the nature of the peril just in time to give the heroes a chance to escape.

RESPIRE SCENES

Respite scenes don't always need much in the way of development. They're the lulls in the action, the moments or places where the PCs can stop to catch their breath and bind their wounds. Most adventures don't allow much time for respites. Even those with no explicit time pressure tend to have events going on that goad the PCs into quick responses. Still, many of them allow for a day or two of downtime amid the investigations in order to refresh spent Expertise and regain those hit points lost in the pursuit of dark truths.

Given the nature of Lovecraftian gaming, players tend to be paranoid about respites. The working assumption for a lot of players is that anybody who looks safe, harmless, and helpful is simply a setup for later betrayal. While a GM can play to that genre trope, it's often more useful to foil expectations by making a safe place actually as safe as it seems to be. In the longer term, the threat to such a place, the loss of it, or the harm delivered toward those who helped the PCs can add an extra measure of engagement with the events of the adventure.

The respites below offer some example set-ups for inserting a lull in the structure of a template. The PCs can always just check into a generic hotel or spend a day camping in the trackless wilderness, but the scenes below are meant to tie in a little more closely with the larger adventure.

NPCs and other actors met during a respite might turn into recurring helpers or allies in later events, and in the unfortunate case of PC mortality it might be possible to enlist them as replacement PCs—particularly if they're somehow indebted to the heroes for past favors.



D12

THE RESPITE

- 1 An Actor somehow affiliated with the Enemy bitterly regrets their choice, and seeks out the heroes to offer help and some manner of temporary shelter where he or she knows that the foe won't be looking.
- 2 A Place turns out to be an unusually safe location, with an Actor there willing to help the heroes and shelter them from unfriendly attention.
- 3 A Friend has a cabin, bolthole, hideaway, or other secluded spot where the heroes can bunk down and have some hope of security against their foes.
- 4 A Place controlled by the Enemy actually has a hidden area that the foe hasn't yet discovered. The PCs can shelter there with some expectation of privacy.
- 5 Some form of cavalry suddenly arrives in the form of a Friend or an allied Actor. While they haven't the strength to overcome the Enemy directly, they can keep watch and protect the heroes long enough for them to get some rest.
- 6 A Friend the heroes aided in an earlier adventure just happens to turn up in a position to help the PCs, both with some temporary security and possibly with some other favor within their power to grant.
- 7 Some cult or outside actor with a reason to hate the local Enemy finds it useful to keep the heroes alive as a weapon against their foe. An Actor in their service offers shelter to the PCs, sincerely wanting to aid them for very dark motivations.
- 8 The Enemy's attention is skewed in the wrong direction by some coincidence or Friend. The PCs have a little time to rest.
- 9 The Enemy is forced to focus its attention on a ritual, internal politics, or some other element of housekeeping to maintain its Scheme. While so absorbed, the heroes may act without interference.
- 10 Some hostile action against the Enemy, either by a Friend or a random foe, distracts them from the PCs for a brief time.
- 11 A Secret related to the site entangles the Enemy and becomes at least partially clear to the heroes. This distraction gives the heroes the opportunity to briefly regroup.
- 12 A treacherous lieutenant of the Enemy thinks that this is the time to act, and arranges to help the heroes by keeping the forces of their master away from the investigators for a time.

INVESTIGATOR CHALLENGES

An Investigation scene involves the discovery of an important clue that will help lead the PCs toward the Resolution scene. Some Investigation scenes come with their own intrinsic challenges, and surviving or bypassing these problems will naturally give the heroes the clue they need. Other times, a GM needs a little help in figuring out how to make the clue's attainment a real challenge for the players.

These challenges are meant to spice up the basic scenes, providing you with the sort of problems and complications that might hinder the heroes. They're divided into four different types, matching the character classes, each one relating to the kind of problems that the class would be best-suited for handling. Of course, there's no need that the problem actually be solved by that class, or even that it be solved in a way that uses that class' skills. If there's a cluster of cult guards around the building's only entrance, an investigator might find a way to lure them away long enough to get inside, but another PC might decide to just go in and batter them all senseless.

Some challenges will involve complex situations that aren't amenable to quick resolution. If there's an occult abomination creeping around the interior, it might take more than a quick Stealth check to prowl past it. A local who craves a particular object held by the town mayor might need an entire side-episode devoted to stealing it from the mayor's mansion before the challenge can be resolved. If you have a complicated situation, you should feel free to simply let the investigators unravel it in whatever way seems best to them.

If you do have a simple challenge, such as finding a hidden object, it's possible to reduce it to a simple skill check. Be careful not to hamstring player ingenuity in doing so, however. If the diary is hidden under the bed, and a player says that she's looking under the bed, she's going to find it without needing a Perception skill check. If the players describe a search or an action that would logically lead to success if performed with ordinary competence, then they're going to get results from it.

No challenge should be reduced to a matter of raw chance. If players feel like their success hinges entirely on how hot their dice are, their enthusiasm and engagement with the adventure will shrivel. If the *only* way to succeed at the challenge is to roll high, then something is wrong. Even a failed skill check should result in the simple progression of events, and not some kind of categorical brick wall on the players' progress.

If the players make the skill check, great— they succeed in dealing with the challenge and can move on in the scene. If they fail, describe the complication that stymies them or the places that they've searched that have proven fruitless. At this point, the players will either come up with a new angle of attack on the problem, leave the situation for later resolution, or start milling around in frustrated confusion.

If they start doing the latter, give them a clear direction of action that would make sense to their PCs. It might be a suggestion to try a different investigative lead, a reminder of a local ally they haven't contacted, or some other means of progressing their investigation. Frustrated players tend to start pounding the scenery just to get some forward motion, so you want to forestall that whenever possible.

D20

INFILTRATING A PLACE

1	The site is unusually well-sealed and locked.
2	There's a lot of bystander activity around the site.
3	The site has a good electronic security system.
4	The site has residents that are there around the clock.
5	The site has guards that stand regular shifts.
6	The site is occupied by dangerous watch-animals.
7	The site has only one easily-usable entrance.
8	The site is an active place of business at all hours.
9	The site is set back with little cover for an approach to it.
10	The local police are keeping an eye on the site.
11	The site has been closed up recently for some reason.
12	The interior is unexpectedly tightly-sealed.
13	There's some particularly fearsome guardian at the site.
14	Low-tech security measures are in copious use.
15	Someone's inside, watching the most likely entrances.
16	A nearby site is constantly active and can see intruders.
17	The site has natural hazards or dangerous debris around it.
18	The site's important parts are hidden within its structure.
19	The real site of interest is different, with leads found here.
20	Reroll; this challenge is only clear after the PC is inside.

D20

FINDING AN IMPORTANT OBJECT

1	Someone's trying to palm it in front of the searcher.
2	It's hidden in plain sight to make it seem unimportant.
3	It's behind or beneath a heavy object, recently moved.
4	It's been buried, with the nearby earth disturbed.
5	It's been broken or torn, but the pieces remain.
6	It's been disguised as a less significant object.
7	It's been put up high, above the normal plane of view.
8	It's been stuffed into a book or other nearby object.
9	It's buried beneath a drift of unimportant objects.
10	It's been hidden behind a brick or other structural object.
11	It's next to similar but irrelevant objects.
12	It's inside a chest or coffer, probably locked.
13	It's hidden under a cushion or bed, hastily stuffed there.
14	It's been thrown into the surrounding brush or area.
15	It's been ruined, but a crucial part can be reconstructed.
16	It's in the possession of someone who wants to keep it.
17	It's hidden behind a wall hanging or painting.
18	It's been hidden inside the walls or structural spaces.
19	It's been carried off by a pet, wild beast, or vermin.
20	It's behind a secret door or hidden entrance.

SCHOLAR CHALLENGES

Scholarly challenges are best used in two situations. In the first, you know the PCs will get their hands on a particular book or get access to a specific source of data. The scene allows for no reasonable way to deny them access to this information, for it seems obvious in the context that they should be able to get it or find it with reasonable effort. How is the GM to make this a challenge?

The challenge here lies not in getting the information, but making sense of it once it's obtained. The table to the right gives examples of the kind of information that might be gathered, and the way in which it could puzzle the PCs. For many of these challenges, the most practical way of handling it is as a skill check. A Scholar PC might also be able to use their class abilities and Expertise to conquer such a challenge.

But what if they fail or haven't the right skills to deal with the challenge? Some of these clues are amenable to guessing— if they can't skill-check their way into understanding what the cryptic note's meaning is, then the players might have their own clever ideas about what the allusions mean. In other cases, however, there's just no plausible way for them to make any sense out of a document they've failed to parse.

In this case, hand the investigator a lead toward a person who *would* know how to read the material. Transform the scholarly challenge of parsing it into the social challenge of convincing someone else to do it for you. It may be that the only person competent to do it is glad to do so, but too distant to give a quick answer. They may require significant payment, or a favor to be paid later, or it might be physically dangerous to go where they are and ask them. As with investigative challenges, always give the PCs a path forward, even if it's a rough one.

In the other situation, a scholarly talent is needed to recognize a factual falsehood, supply an esoteric skill, or know a vital fact to make sense of a situation. The map may be marked with a dozen caves, but the scholar knows that one of the twelve isn't on any of the standard maps of the area. The alien engine is breaking down and some technician is needed to fix it before it combusts. The mayor is speaking of how much he admires Dr. Froelich, but the scholar knows that their two families have hated each other for generations. For these challenges, the scholar is called upon to provide some data or skill the group needs.

With situations like this, there's rarely time or convenience to send out or help. Furthermore, the situations are often such that there's no real way to "roleplay around the problem". If the PCs can't make the skill check to remember the fact or fix the engine, then there's usually not a lot they can do to recover the situation through more direct actions. Some groups might have the ingenuity to do so, but these kinds of situations can present a brick wall if handled incautiously.

With that in mind, make sure that this second class of challenges doesn't stop things cold if they're not overcome. The alien engine might combust, but it doesn't explode to kill everyone. The mayor's deception might pass unnoticed, but that just means the PCs get an ugly surprise when they announce their cooperation with him to Dr. Froelich. Failure at these challenges should likely just present the PCs with a new, potentially much worse situation to navigate.

D20 INFORMATION TO OBTAIN

1	A diary scripted in a private cypher created by the author.
2	A text with a double meaning formed by literary allusions.
3	Information written in a rare ancient language.
4	A complex mathematical formula with occult significance.
5	A computer file encrypted with assailable tech.
6	A USB drive containing cryptic documents.
7	A pattern of meaning in seemingly-random written texts.
8	A map to an important piece of information or evidence.
9	A photograph with a subtle detail of great importance.
10	A sound recording that contains vital data.
11	A prehuman relic that actually serves as a kind of "book".
12	A crude diagram-map that requires interpretation.
13	An object with a hidden inscription of needed data.
14	A partial text that shows the way to the rest of itself.
15	A note referring to things known to the intended receiver.
16	A text that could only have come from a specific place.
17	Music encoded with necessary information.
18	Special significance encoded in a building's architecture.
19	Data embedded in a now-antiquated computing device.
20	Reroll; the object is almost illegible due to damage.

D20 HIDDEN FACT OR NEEDED SKILL

1	Recognize an animal's poisonousness or dangerousness.
2	Recognize a lie about local historical events.
3	Recognize the residue of an occult ritual or event.
4	Notice a concealed blood kinship between actors.
5	Realize that a legal pronouncement is totally invalid.
6	Know that a geographical claim is actually false.
7	Remember an old feud between two families or groups.
8	Recollect an old atrocity related to the current event.
9	Notice the signs of a particular disease or sickness.
10	Know how to operate a complex type of machine.
11	Have expertise in a particular handicraft or profession.
12	Spot the inconsistency in a map the group finds.
13	Notice the odd interior dimensions that conceal a space.
14	Find the error that proves a text is a forgery.
15	Repair the object that hides a vital clue.
16	Notice the components of a poison or drug.
17	Find the records that lead to an important fact.
18	Sift out the irrelevant data around a significant datum.
19	Spot a particular sign or symbol of a specific group.
20	Detect an intentional error in a text that points to a thing.

SOCIALITE CHALLENGES

Socialite challenges come up when the PCs are obliged to deal with NPCs who have something they want. This may be information, or access to a location, or an object the PCs need for the completion of the adventure. While it's possible that these actors may be gladly willing to assist the PCs, more often some form of inducement is necessary to get their cooperation.

The tables to the right are broken down into two major classes of motivations: desires and fears. While it's possible to roll only one of the two for a given NPC, you might roll both for them, to find out both what it is that they desire and what it is that they fear. With this knowledge in mind, you'll be able to give the PCs clues as to the kind of stimulus that might best produce a cooperative NPC.

Social challenges can be boiled down into a simple Charisma-based skill check if necessary, but the context of the challenge and the particular threats and blandishments the PC offers are very important. It's asking a little much of the player to show silver-tongued eloquence in their roleplay, but they should at least describe the kind of conversational gambit they're attempting, whether it's something as simple as a polite request for assistance or something as ornate as a fully in-character oration touching on a half-dozen specific arguments.

As the GM, you should take these arguments and inducements into account and then decide what the best and worst likely outcomes are for the PCs. A brilliant argument might be so good that even at the worst skill check, the NPC will reluctantly impart a few crumbs of knowledge. A deeply inept plea might give even success at the skill check a very limited sort of result. Once the PCs have made their argument and used whatever relevant class powers they choose, they should roll the skill check. Success means the positive end of outcomes, with higher rolls giving closer-to-ideal results. Failure means the negative side of the likely results, with lower rolls being more complete failures.

When rolling these checks, have a mind for PC attributes and skills as well as their player's eloquence. A PC with a Charisma of 3 and no relevant skills might make a great argument, but his character has all the natural charm and suasion of a shoggoth. Even his best result is going to be tempered by that. Conversely, a hero with high Charisma and good social skills is going to be able to make a good case for his wishes, even if the player is tongue-tied and stammering.

Socialite challenges tend not to "dead end" as hard as some other sorts of challenges. If the PCs know that a particular NPC has information they need or an ability to help them, they tend to find ways to "convince" this NPC to play along. Honeyed words and golden reason are best, of course, but sometimes the application of large amounts of money or the threat of large amounts of pain can work just as well. These choices may well have consequences to a PC's bank account or a hero's wanted status, but they can often soften all but the hardest hearts.

In a pinch, a GM can always send the PCs on to a different NPC who might reasonably have the same power to aid them. Of course, if this NPC was the best choice, they'd have gone to them first, and so things might be even harder or more expensive to arrange with them.

D20 PEOPLE WHO WANT SOMETHING

1	They want money, because they are naturally greedy.
2	They want money, because someone is extorting them.
3	They want money, because they desperately need a thing.
4	They want money, because it's a sign of respect from PCs.
5	They want revenge, though the "guilty" one is innocent.
6	They want revenge, because they're too weak to get it.
7	They want revenge, but they can't be seen getting it.
8	They want peace, and the PCs seem to threaten that.
9	They want peace, and the PCs seem able to enforce it.
10	They want a thing, and someone else owns it.
11	They want a thing, and someone else stole it from them.
12	They want the truth, and someone else is hiding it.
13	They want to hide a thing, and fear the PCs will find it.
14	They want to waste PC time, out of simple spite.
15	They want protection, and fear someone involved.
16	They want protection, from someone they've wronged.
17	They want help, to accomplish something here.
18	They want help, to advance in their profession.
19	They want help, to thwart some sort of rival.
20	They want sex, because a given PC is irresistible to them.

D20 PEOPLE WHO FEAR SOMETHING

1	They fear violence against them if they help the PCs.
2	They fear violence against a loved one if they help.
3	They fear their connections to events will be revealed.
4	They fear their professional negligence will be shown.
5	They fear a piece of blackmail will come to light.
6	They fear their addiction or perversions will be known.
7	They fear their adultery will become common knowledge.
8	They fear their great financial woes will become known.
9	They fear their recent crimes will become plain.
10	They fear another person present with them.
11	They fear for the well-being of their kin and group.
12	They fear to acknowledge something occult or alien.
13	They fear that they will betray an involved friend or lover.
14	They fear a great mistake they made will be known.
15	They fear the consequences of aiding the PCs.
16	They fear an important city official's displeasure.
17	They fear one of the PCs for their own strange reasons.
18	They fear that they will lose their job if they give help.
19	They fear that the PCs are working for enemies or rivals.
20	They fear that they will be the next victim of events.

TOUGH CHALLENGES

Tough challenges are both the simplest and the most potentially disruptive challenges you can offer a group. At their most basic, these challenges are a group of hostiles to be defeated with violence. A monstrous abomination rolling across a lawn does not invite diplomacy, and so flight or gunfire are two clear choices. PCs usually have a very good idea of how to deal with these challenges.

When placing hostiles, however, a GM needs to make sure that violence is not a foregone conclusion. PCs in *Silent Legions* are very fragile compared to some other games. Even at higher levels, the Slaughter mechanic means that there is no such thing as a “safe fight”. Every time the PCs go into combat, there is a non-trivial chance that one or all of them will end up bleeding out after the first exchange of blows. If you design your adventures so that straight-on combat is all but mandatory in a scene, you will end up cycling in new PCs at a rate unacceptable even in a Lovecraftian game.

The only time combat should be a foregone conclusion is as a consequence of an earlier choice or mistake made by the PCs. If the PCs manage to botch their investigations badly enough to draw cult notice and earn an assassin on their trail, then so be it. If they intentionally choose to open fire on the knot of cult-tattooed longshoremen guarding a dockside warehouse, then they’ve made their choice. But you should not shove them immediately into such situations, especially if the PCs are still low-level characters with limited hit points.

Instead, present them with the challenge and let the PCs make their own decisions on whether or not to engage directly. Many will find some way around the foes, while others will engineer a situation where they have the upper hand in any ensuing fight.

Animate hostiles aren’t the only dangers that threaten a group’s hardihood, however. There are times when places or objects themselves can be potentially lethal, and the table to the right offers some suggestions if a GM wishes to make a given location more hazardous than the usual run of places.

Information on poisons and diseases can be found in the Bestiary chapter. Traps are more straightforward. Some of them might be spotted by a Wisdom/Perception skill check, with the difficulty varying with the talent of the trapsmith. Others might be obvious, and simply require sufficient swiftness or strength to bypass.

Most traps with a decent chance of killing an ordinary person should do about 2d6 damage, with a 1d6 Slaughter die. This damage is enough to kill a common meddler, though not certain to doom them, and it’s enough to do significant hurt to even a higher-level PC. Provided that the entire group isn’t caught in the trap, someone should still be conscious and ambulatory, able to attempt to patch the wounds of mortally-injured comrades and drag them out of whatever situation got them hurt.

If the trap-layer is a cultist or sorcerer, the consequences may be worse than mere injury. Long-lasting curses or the sudden announcement of PC interference to a high priest can be more hazardous than a grenade.

D20 HOSTILE OPPOSITION

1	Locals convinced the PCs are guilty of a recent crime,
2	Locals paid to rough up any nosy troublemakers.
3	Locals in service to a cult who deal harshly with outsiders.
4	Vicious dog or other trained attack animal.
5	Wild beast that’s gotten into the place.
6	Eldritch horror related to local cult.
7	Vigilant watchmen hired to keep out outsiders.
8	Zealous bodyguards who shoot at small provocations.
9	A mutated animal with unnatural qualities.
10	A victim of occult powers transformed into a monster.
11	Locals out to rob outsiders of their belongings.
12	Silencers who try to trail and ambush nosy sorts.
13	Intimidating thugs who try to scare off troublemakers.
14	Angry, violent relatives who object to questioning.
15	Criminals seeking to hide evidence of their acts.
16	Ambushers who try to lure victims into a bad position.
17	Angry townsfolk who blame the PCs for recent events.
18	Cult lieutenant operating with henchmen here.
19	Hunting party that mistakes the PCs for a rival group.
20	Reroll twice; both groups are here, maybe fighting.

D20 ENVIRONMENTAL DANGERS

1	An explosive booby-trap on some enticing object.
2	Bad flooring precipitates a potential plunge.
3	Structural weakness in stairs or ladders.
4	A tripwire trap triggers an explosion or deadfall.
5	Intense heat or flame due to some machinery there.
6	Toxic fumes from industrial processes or chemicals in use.
7	A festering disease clinging to some object.
8	Occult radiations that warp and burn a victim.
9	Spores or vapors from plant life that choke the unwary.
10	Hidden blades to cut careless investigators.
11	An arson trap to ignite an important object if disturbed.
12	The needed object is put in a precarious, dangerous place.
13	Rickety structures and a significant fall if they break.
14	Toxic dust or residue taints tools or objects within.
15	Covered pits await, perhaps storage with rotten covers.
16	Removal of an important object triggers a crude trap.
17	The location is full of gas fumes and threatens explosion.
18	Everything is pitch-dark and there is debris around.
19	A precarious structure will collapse if violence ensues.
20	Structural elements will collapse the second time tested.

ONE-ROLL ACTOR CREATION

The tables here provide a quick method for generating the particulars of an Actor you might need for a template. Just roll one of each type of die and check the corresponding table. Two different D12 tables are provided, and either one can be used depending on whether you need a dubious victim oppressed by a problem related to the situation or some antagonist with an advantage to challenge the investigators.

D4 AGE

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Unusually young for their position. |
| 2 | Youthful, perhaps someone up-and-coming in their role. |
| 3 | Aged or mature in their position. |
| 4 | Decrepit, perhaps past their prior glories or still holding on. |

D10 PROFESSION

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Street criminal, prostitute, thug, pickpocket, or the like. |
| 2 | Government official, cop, or agent of the state. |
| 3 | Teacher, professor, or other education worker. |
| 4 | Doctor, nurse, home health aid, or health care worker. |
| 5 | Day laborer, fry cook, landscaper, or low-status blue collar. |
| 6 | Programmer, technician, IT officer, or other tech. |
| 7 | Carpenter, plumber, or skilled blue-collar worker. |
| 8 | Musician, singer, dancer, or other entertainer. |
| 9 | Businessman, clerk, banker, or other white-collar job. |
| 10 | Retired or invalidated out; roll again to find original job. |

D20 MEMORABLE QUIRKS

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | A profoundly annoying vocal tic or repeated word |
| 2 | Immaculately well-kept or fashionable clothing |
| 3 | Visible plastic surgery done in poor taste |
| 4 | Missing limb or large visible scar |
| 5 | Great love for animals, possibly with numerous pets |
| 6 | Pronounced sexual or ethnic minority identification |
| 7 | An unusual odor related to their work lingers about them |
| 8 | Always forgetting things or fumbling simple matters |
| 9 | A habitual nervous tic of motion |
| 10 | Voluble scorn for a local ethnicity, class, or political group |
| 11 | Inappropriate clothing, to a greater or lesser extent |
| 12 | Always asking for favors or "loans", whether petty or large |
| 13 | Has implausible dream they pursue in an ineffectual way |
| 14 | Remarkably well-prepared for whatever situation they find |
| 15 | Extremely laconic, preferring to communicate in gesture |
| 16 | Facial tattoos, piercings, or other aggressive body mods |
| 17 | Takes an unreasonable liking or disliking to one PC |
| 18 | Has a strikingly unusual physical feature |
| 19 | Always talking and thinking about their family |
| 20 | Extremely bland character, interested only in their work |

D6 SOCIAL STANDING

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | An outcast, either from profession or personal qualities. |
| 2 | An unproven person or untrusted newcomer |
| 3 | A solid and reliable community member |
| 4 | A local pillar who yet nurses secret sins against propriety |
| 5 | Formerly honored, but now in less repute |
| 6 | Loved and admired by many, envied by other peers |

D8 RELATION TO SITUATION

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | A random bystander who stumbled into the event itself |
| 2 | Someone with a job related to some part of the situation |
| 3 | An unwitting pawn necessary to someone's plans |
| 4 | A reluctant participant induced by threat or profit |
| 5 | Someone with a relative or friend as a victim of it |
| 6 | The person responsible for hiding it or investigating it |
| 7 | Someone who stumbled over its fallout or remains |
| 8 | Someone now in hiding, thought dead or silenced |

D12 THE PROBLEM THAT DRIVES THEM

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Violence is threatened against them or loved ones. |
| 2 | They owe much money to someone in the situation. |
| 3 | Someone involved has dire blackmail on them. |
| 4 | They feel a great debt of honor towards someone involved. |
| 5 | They're addicted to a thing someone involved provides. |
| 6 | They cooperated in a crime, and now dare not resist. |
| 7 | They need a favor, and must serve to win it from someone. |
| 8 | Someone involved can ruin them financially if they wish. |
| 9 | They make terrible choices on a disturbingly regular basis. |
| 10 | A ferocious ambition can only be aided by one involved. |
| 11 | They want revenge, and someone involved might aid it. |
| 12 | They're badly mistaken about someone involved in it. |

D12 THEIR ADVANTAGE IN THE SITUATION

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | A great deal of money and the services it buys |
| 2 | Personal prowess and a capacity for great violence |
| 3 | Community love and their quick cooperation with them |
| 4 | A group of friends who'd do anything to help them |
| 5 | Access to illicit goods and weaponry when needed |
| 6 | Knowledge of a secret useful to them in opposing the PCs |
| 7 | A network of relatives useful in dealing with the problem |
| 8 | A splendid capacity for deception and treachery |
| 9 | A fearsome protector who will punish any who hurt them |
| 10 | Sanction as a local official or government agent |
| 11 | Access to an occult power or sinister magic |
| 12 | Blackmail about the PCs or their friends and allies |

ONE-ROLL CRIME CREATION

Some of the template elements require a crime. The tables below can be used to generate the particulars. Not every table will be needed in every case, but you can mix and match the remainder as your situation requires. Two D12 tables are provided, one dealing with witnesses and the other covering the investigation of the crime site. You can use both or either depending on whether any witnesses exist for the crime.

D4 IT WAS DISCOVERED BY...

- 1 It was reported to the police by bystanders or survivors.
- 2 A relative or neighbor of the victim discovered it.
- 3 It was discovered by police accidentally or unintentionally.
- 4 Only a very few people even now know that it happened.

D10 THE POLICE ATTITUDE IS...

- 1 Indifferent. They're not really concerned about it.
- 2 Goaded. Someone important wants this solved.
- 3 Restrained. Someone important wants this hushed up.
- 4 Corrupt. One or more cops are somehow involved in it.
- 5 Dutiful. They expend a predictable amount of effort on it.
- 6 Conflicted. Some cops have reasons to want it unsolved.
- 7 Mistaken. They're haring in a completely wrong direction.
- 8 Careful. The investigation is taking them close to an elite.
- 9 Clueless. It's been lost in the paperwork or mislaid.
- 10 Zealous. They really want to solve this and act accordingly.

D20 A CLUE ABOUT THE CRIME IS...

- 1 A personal effect easily linked to the culprit is left behind
- 2 A trail is left to an insinuating location or object
- 3 A note to someone involved is on the victim or surrounds
- 4 The crime was performed in a characteristic way
- 5 The victim was specific to the culprit's needs or habits
- 6 The victim's cell has calls to someone involved in it
- 7 Video was taken by someone of the event or its aftermath
- 8 The victim had a related near-crime experience earlier
- 9 The victim talked about a troubling hint with others
- 10 The culprit was seen by others in the area near the time
- 11 The culprit has a record for similar or related activity
- 12 Some utterly impossible quality that points to the occult
- 13 Someone heard something important at the time
- 14 A cult or gang sign left nearby or on the victim
- 15 Unsuccessful scene arson with materials from the culprit
- 16 The victim's finances are somehow related to the culprit's
- 17 Fingerprint or DNA evidence is copiously available
- 18 A transparent lie from someone will lead toward culprit
- 19 Vehicle identification leads toward the culprit
- 20 Totally unimpeachable evidence that the cops can't use

D6 GOSSIP OR NEWS ABOUT IT IS...

- 1 Completely wrong, full of false details and culprits.
- 2 Confused, but largely blaming the victim for events.
- 3 Very quiet, with few people having heard of it.
- 4 The facts are the talk of the town's gossip mongers.
- 5 It draws useful inferences and leads for those who listen.
- 6 Whispering of a clue even the cops haven't noticed yet.

D8 THE SEEMING TYPE OF CRIME IS...

- 1 Street violence. Beatings, muggings, random murder
- 2 Calculated assassination, not for mere robbery
- 3 Burglary of the victim's home or office for something
- 4 Kidnapping, possibly for human sacrifice or ransom
- 5 Sexual violence, potentially for occult motivations
- 6 Extortion, probably kept semi-secret by the victim
- 7 Fraud, perhaps the bilking of marks to fund a cult
- 8 Arson or some other form of large-scale property damage

D12 THE WITNESSES WERE...

- 1 Nonexistent. Nobody but the criminal saw anything at all.
- 2 Silent. Those who saw have reason not to talk about it.
- 3 Untrustworthy. Someone saw something, but is a liar.
- 4 Post facto. Nobody saw anything until after it was over.
- 5 Wrong. They saw something but took it the wrong way.
- 6 Malicious. They twisted what they saw to hurt someone.
- 7 Partial. They saw only part of what happened.
- 8 Conflicting. Reports differ on crucial points.
- 9 Late. No one speaks up until after the PCs are involved.
- 10 Ideal. Someone saw everything clearly and correctly.
- 11 Unhelpful. They want money or a favor to talk.
- 12 Fake. An attention-seeker is simply making up stories.

D12 THE CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION IS...

- 1 Botched. The police got nothing useful from the scene.
- 2 Spoiled. Someone came along and muddled the evidence.
- 3 Faked. A misleading clue or scene was arranged by culprit.
- 4 Sealed. Kept very secret for some reason of discretion.
- 5 Delayed. They haven't gotten to it yet for some reason.
- 6 Desultory. They've given it only a cursory inspection.
- 7 Penetrating. They've concluded one very useful fact.
- 8 Mistaken. They've got a vital point very wrong somehow.
- 9 Lost. The report has been stolen, destroyed or hidden.
- 10 Thorough. All the reasonable clues have been cataloged.
- 11 Corrupted. Someone intentionally altered the report.
- 12 Superb. They have a perfect reconstruction of events.

AN EXAMPLE OF LOCATION AND TEMPLATE CREATION

It's time to prep for a new *Silent Legions* campaign. The GM decides to pick a stretch of East Coast seaboard for the region and picks out a healthy chunk of Maine for the initial backdrop. Among the towns and cities in the selected map area, he decides to plant a few purely fictional towns, including the small city of Ardmore. He doesn't know much about the place yet, so it's time to go to the site tags.

He rolls two site tags, choosing one from the mundane tags and one from the occult. The results are "Crumbling Structures" and "Secret Nexus". Ardmore is clearly in a bad way, poor and tumbledown, probably with a fishing industry that collapsed years ago without any jobs to replace it. But it's also a nexus of sorcerous power, and magic here is unusually strong. The GM decides to make just one entry each for Ardmore's Enemies, Friends, Schemes, Secrets, and Places, blending results from both tags and assigning names to the NPCs so created.

Silas Bracewell is the Enemy. A corrupt official in charge of the state's redevelopment fund for Ardmore, he actually uses the money and abusive eminent domain actions to destroy the homes and businesses of those who stand against him, while simultaneously never quite manging to build anything useful. He's seeking to tap the power of the site for his own sorcerous ambitions.

Josefina Lascaux is Silas' new assistant, a born-and-raised Ardmorer. At first, she was shocked and distressed by the way the man so clearly abused his position, but one night when she was about to confront him, she accidentally spied on a diabolical ritual the man was conducting. The uncanny powers he displayed terrified her, and she now pretends to be a perfectly dutiful henchwoman while secretly remaining a Friend to someone who can deal with such monstrous powers.

The Scheme is Silas' lust to destroy Calais Oil and Gas, a small oil transfer company that works the docks, topping off ships and filling small tankers for Canadian export. Calais is the last major employer in the city, and if it were to shut down, Silas' front company would have the pick of its desperate labor. Once he has the locals in his power, he can force them to work in buildings and places carefully designed to warp their minds with the power of the nexus. Of course, some will also transform into horrific monsters, but accidents will happen.

The Secret is that the nexus is actually sentient, an alien entity that currently exists only as an eldritch radiation field. It also absolutely hates Silas Bracewell. The more bodies that Silas forces into its field of effect, the more the alien is capable of embodying itself. If Silas keeps warping the locals the nexus will eventually have enough flesh at its command to violently manifest as a swarm-like hive entity composed of the twisted husks of Silas' supposed slaves.

For Places, the GM decides to make two: one fairly public and open, the other a secret place suitable for evil doings. The former is the Calais Oil and Gas loading dock, a worn and peeling place where Silas' minions scheme to cause tragic accidents. The latter is the Clough Building, a filthy tenement at the heart of Ardmore, where the inmates are all hopelessly twisted by the nexus' influence, which pulses with ferocious strength in the depths of the rotting building.

Next, the GM needs to cook up an adventure template. He's made up several towns so far, so decides to make a blank template that could apply just as well to any of them. He decides to start simple, taking a Resolution, three Investigations, an Introduction, and a Hook.

He rolls for a time-insensitive Resolution and comes up with a 7. The Enemy is plotting a Scheme that will result in the site's destruction. The GM decides that three clues point to this Resolution: a clue as to where the Scheme is taking place, a clue as to who the Enemy is, and a clue as to what the Scheme actually is. Each one of these clues will get its own Investigation scene.

The first clue is a thing, so the GM rolls 4. The clue as to the important place is tied up in the site's Secret, and learning the clue also involves discovering the truth there. The GM decides to roll on the Socialite table to find the challenge, and comes up with someone who fears they'll be the next victim of events. The GM decides to name this person Anna Perez, and notes it down.

The second clue reveals the nature of the Enemy, and is about a person, so the GM rolls on that Investigation scene table, getting a 1. The clue is in a Place being held by an Actor who has some reason not to let it slip. Clearly, this calls for a Socialite challenge again, and the GM discovers that the Actor wants revenge. The GM calls him Bart Linton. The Place remains undefined until the template is used.

The last clue is about the Scheme itself, and so the GM rolls for the Investigation scene, getting an 3. An Actor knows what's going on, but agents of the Enemy have kidnapped them and are holding them until the Scheme is complete. For the challenge here, the GM decides to go with an Investigator challenge. According to the roll, the place where the Actor is being held is guarded 24 hours a day. As a placeholder, the GM dubs this kidnapping victim Tariq Smith, who worked for a company secretly run by the Enemy.

Now the GM needs an Introduction scene to give the PCs some basic leads toward the Investigative scenes. A quick roll comes up 11; a Friend points the PCs toward an Actor, who will turn up dead when the PCs go to meet them. The corpse's personal effects will aim the PCs at the Investigation scenes. To complicate things, the GM decides that the cops will be arriving very soon after the PCs, and they'll have to work fast if they want to examine the scene before the police arrive or abstract themselves before awkward questions get asked. The GM decides that the corpse is Deanna Smith, Tariq's sister, who heard about events from her brother and dropped hints to the Friend. She's got a USB drive in her hand with a webcam recording of her brother talking about what he'd seen and dropping clues as to the Investigative scenes. He mentions Bart Linton being a go-between for the hidden boss, Anna Perez refusing to come out of her house any more, and he himself being "asked" by Bart Linton to visit a particular house in the countryside to "discuss his career with the company".

Finally, the GM needs a Hook, to alert the PCs that something is rotten in Ardmore. The GM keeps it simple; the Friend who asks them to talk to Deanna also knows a PC, and sends them a letter asking for help.

The plot that's been created is perfectly serviceable, and the GM takes a moment to assemble the necessary details. He decides that Tariq is probably being held in a regular house of some sort, and pulls some architectural plans off the web. He assigns combat statistics to the guards and decides where they're standing around and in the house. He also thinks about some ways that the PCs could lure them off or elude them, so the scene isn't an inevitable firefight.

He figures that Bart is actually a treacherous lieutenant to the Enemy, who did something horrible to someone Bart loved. Bart's playing along, waiting for the right time to give payback to the Enemy, but he himself is just as foul and malevolent in his ambitions.

Anna Perez knows the truth about the site's Secret and the Place where the Scheme is supposed to come to fruition. Whether from the Secret or from the Scheme, Anna is terrified, and must be convinced that the PCs can protect her or destroy the threat before she'll be willing to tell them where the Scheme is supposed to come about. While the PCs might use honeyed words to accomplish this, the GM decides that either the Secret or the Scheme will send someone or something to kill Anna during the meeting, forcing the PCs to either flee with her, kill it, or think of some other way to find out the location in question.

For the Resolution, the GM imagines that the PCs will come in loaded for bear, trying to disrupt whatever it is the Enemy is seeking to accomplish. The GM pulls statistics both for a relatively fragile human occultist and a monstrous abomination that mere mortal investigators probably won't be able to destroy. If human cultists are needed, the GM just recycles the statistics for guards chosen earlier in the template. And with that done, the GM takes some time to write the template down, listing the Actors he's created, mentioning their motivations and locations, and paperclipping the maps and stats he's devised to the sheet. The blank template is now ready for use.

And it's a good thing, for just that next session it turns out he's going to need to apply it to Ardmore. He hauls out his notes and starts slotting in the pieces.

The Enemy responsible for events is Silas Bracewell, seeking to bring his evil scheme of domination to fruition at the Clough Building, where the nexus is strongest. Anna Perez is the chief maintenance officer for the Clough Building, and has progressively come to realize that the building is somehow "haunted" or "aware", that its tenants are starting to complete each other's thoughts, and hunger for each others' flesh. She's hiding in her home, but the contagion is already affecting her, and several Cloughers are seeking her out to drag her back to the warm embrace of the Building. Anna can tell the heroes that something is horribly wrong in the Clough Building and that it's extremely dangerous for any outsiders to enter it. She can warn them that the building is aware somehow, though in reality it's just the oppressive psychic weight of the alien nexus.

Bart Linton is currently working down at the Calais Oil and Gas dock, plotting sabotage. If the PCs find him there, escape the fire he causes, and catch the man, he'll spin them a sob story about Silas Bracewell's evil ways and how he was forced to cooperate. He doesn't know where

Silas is right now, but can tell the PCs about the sorcerer's secret weakness against salt, and how it burns him like white phosphorus. He'll claim to be too terrified of the man to oppose him directly.

Tariq Smith is inserted into the plot exactly as he appears in the blank template. He's foreman on a demolitions crew employed by Bart Linton working for Silas, and noticed that the "condemned" buildings he was knocking down were perfectly sound. He told his sister Deanna about his surmises, but Bart lured him to a house out of town and is holding him until the Scheme is settled, planning to use him and his knowledge as leverage against Silas if necessary.

Deanna is also inserted as given in the blank template. She's a hometown friend of Josefina Lascaux, and told the woman a few parts of what her brother told her. It was enough to convince Josefina that time was running out to stop whatever was going on, and made her desperate enough to contact an old friend with some experience in such matters, seeking his or her aid in stopping the process.

With the template dropped in place, the GM now takes a few minutes to sand off the rough edges. The first thing he notices is that Silas' culpability is going to be pretty easy to discover if Josefina is his aid and already knows about his sorcerous ways. The GM rewrites her as an official in the mayor's office who feels that it's hopeless to turn to the local police for help in this situation. The GM also takes a few minutes to polish up the "Cloughers", the hive-minded human husks that operate under Silas' command while secretly gestating the awful mind of the alien. PCs who confront Silas at the Clough Building will find him trying to command the denizens to attack them, but his magic in the proximity of the nexus will be enough to trigger a manifestation of the alien. If the PCs can't kill him or somehow block the nexus within a few minutes, the creature will incarnate in the flesh of the Cloughers and probably slaughter the whole party.

At this point the GM now has a perfectly functional adventure. He can run it as-is, using the resources he's collected and answering PC questions and investigations from his knowledge of the events unfolding. He might add additional scenes if he wanted to bulk out the process, such as a Clougher Ambush, or an Escape scene rescue when Josefina is detected and seized for transformation by Silas, or an additional Challenge or two if the GM wants to up the difficulty on some of the scenes. A GM familiar with this sort of adventure can apply this tweaks at the table, on the fly, while even those that need more time can do as much if they prepare an adventure between sessions.

Whatever he or she chooses, a GM should resist the temptation to complicate things. When running a full-fledged premade adventure it's possible to have dozens of minor NPCs and subtle clues scattered about, all of them referenced and indexed in a 32-page booklet to help the GM keep track. Such adventures can provide several nights of play, or even longer in the case of premade campaigns. Adventures created using this system are meant to be much faster to develop and much quicker to play. The complexity they produce is the product of multiple adventures and multiple sessions of play, where many simple adventures stack on each other to create complex, epic tales of eldritch evil. If you focus on things one session at a time, you'll get there.



CULTS

SICKNESSES THAT NEVER SLEEP

Now that you've fashioned your own campaign region and stocked it with a supply of interesting locations, malevolent cults, and handy adventure templates, you have all you need to run your game. If you want to stop at this point, you've got plenty to supply your initial sessions of play. Even so, some GMs prefer to have a more structured background to their campaign, one where the various cults and sinister powers duel amongst themselves with rules more specific than the GM's own good judgment. This section covers the cult rules for ***Silent Legions***, allowing a GM to create extra action and dynamism in their campaign during the downtime between game sessions.

These rules are strictly optional. Some GMs are just fine with eyeballing the success or failure of offscreen cult plans, and even those who use these rules might find it best to override them occasionally when good sense recommends it. Still, others want something a little crunchier to guide their region's tragic development, and these rules allow them to put more structure into the slow damnation of their world. They also allow the heroic PCs to form their own secret organizations, leveraging the aid of allies and brave companions to build a protective cabal.

THE NATURE OF A CULT

These rules cover the creation of ***cults***. A cult may be a classic group of diabolical religious zealots, or it may be a sinister modern business, a lone abomination with its slave servitors, or any other significant power in the region. It may even be a beneficial and helpful organization, either one founded by the PCs or an existing group of allies.

Not every important group in a region needs to be a cult. Trying to adjudicate every tentacled monstrosity or devil-plagued town hall would be exhausting, and even very powerful groups might not be worth codifying as a cult unless you intend to make direct use of them between game sessions. Cults are meant to be the moving pieces in your campaign, those groups that are doing things and going infernal places. No more than three or four are usually useful for any single region, and some regions may have fewer still. You can always turn a group into a fully-statted cult later if it turns out they're important.

A GM creates cults to generate events and challenges between game sessions. Their schemings and struggles will create new realities in the campaign and give it a sense of motion outside the activities of the PCs. Players will come to understand that events will move whether or not they intervene, and that careless neglect of certain enemies is bound to bloom with unfortunate fruit. By using this system, a GM is given a basic framework of game realities and events that they can elaborate into adventure seeds and gripping news for the PCs.

THE ANATOMY OF A CULT

Cults have three main attributes measured from 1 to 7: Muscle, representing their talent at employing brute force and naked violence, Sorcery, indicating the breadth of their magical resources and eldritch allies, and Influence, measuring the degree of social and political power they have in the region and their ability to induce cooperation by the authorities. Minor cults tend to have low scores in these attributes, while world-spanning conspiracies might have ratings of 6 or even 7.

Cults often roll ***attribute checks***. To roll an attribute check, the GM simply rolls 1d8 and adds the relevant attribute. When two cults oppose each other, their checks are compared and the higher wins. If both are equal, it usually results in a tie with no further effects.

Cults also have ***Power***. Power is the currency of occult ambitions, and represents a nebulous mix of cash, arcane secrets, and willing minions. Cults draw Power from locations occupied by their strongholds and expend it to create new assets, further their dark schemes, and undermine their enemies. A cult deprived of its sources of Power will rapidly wither into helplessness. While it rarely comes up, a cult can stockpile no more Power than ten times their highest attribute.

Just as a PC has equipment, Cults have ***assets***. Assets are specific monsters, minion groups, special resources, or hidden strongholds that are in service to the cult. Cults buy these assets with Power and use them to strike at their enemies, fortify their homes, and fulfill the dark commandments of their masters. They can be lost in struggle with other cults, and some require a regular upkeep of Power.

The power of a cult is centered in the assets known as ***strongholds***. A cult can have no more than one stronghold in any given location; it may have multiple safehouses and satellite lairs, but these are all counted as part of its single main stronghold. A stronghold is necessary for a cult to draw Power from the location, though the existence of rival Strongholds in the same location limits the amount of Power that can be drawn. In addition, some locations are simply too small or trifling to provide significant amounts of Power. Even so, strongholds are vital to the cult. Those that lose all of their strongholds are effectively destroyed.

Finally, the cult has a ***goal***. Goals are related to the sinister ambitions of the cult, and may range from something as simple as the destruction of a rival organization to the more esoteric demands of ritual and occult sacrifices. Some goals require the expenditure of Power while others compel the cult to attack enemy assets or construct new edifices to their master's glory. Completion of a goal strengthens the cult.

CULT ASSETS

Most cults have at least one asset, if not more. Assets might be enslaved eldritch abominations, useful occult laboratories, squads of gang thugs, a trained assassin team, control of a profitable business, or any other specific resource that the cult's leadership can command. Assets without the "Hidden" quality are known to everyone in the region, including hostile cults. The general public may not be aware that they're actually servants of unholy evil, but the occult world is more attentive to such things.

Assets are specific to a location. They are organized or built in a particular place and cannot easily be moved to a different one. Some assets have the "Mobile" quality and can move to a new location once per turn. Others require use of the "Move Asset" action to replant them in a different place.

Assets have **hit points**, much as PCs do, representing their cohesion and effectiveness. An asset that takes damage is physically harmed, disorganized, demoralized, or otherwise hindered. An asset that loses all its hit points is destroyed or hopelessly compromised.

Assets often have **attack** and **defense**. The Attack describes what attribute checks and damage are rolled when the asset attacks a rival asset. Defense is the damage rolled when an asset successfully repulses an attack. Some assets might be extremely devastating against enemies, but easily disrupted by foes, while others may not be very useful in destroying a hostile power but are very dangerous to enemies who would dislodge them from their position. Some assets lack one or both types of damage, and instead provide a special benefit to the Cult.

Assets come in three types, matching the three attributes: Muscle assets for tools of brute violence and physical force, Sorcery assets for spells, monsters, and eldritch relics, and Influence assets for corrupt politicians, cult-backed performers, and flawless local reputations. Each asset also has a rating, with level 1 assets being small groups or minor entities, while level 7 assets being something on par with a standing army or a pet demigod. A cult cannot buy an asset with a higher rating than they have in that attribute. Thus, a cult with a Muscle score of 1 can't go recruiting a private army with a Muscle score of 7.

The pages that follow offer examples of all three types of assets, along with the Power cost to create them and any upkeep cost they may require each turn. The GM can always add new entries to this list or edit existing ones to fit their campaign.

CULT TURNS AND ACTIONS

A GM usually runs a **cult turn** once per game month, or once between adventures. This turn represents what the cults have been up to over the past few weeks, though turns can be run more often in times of dramatic activity, or less often when a region is largely quiet.

During the cult turn, each one takes one action. These actions represent schemes and efforts that take place offscreen, and are quick ways to abstract the success or failure of some plan. This section includes a list of common actions, but the GM can always create new ones. Anything that might be accomplished in a month might qualify as an action.

DETERMINING LOCATION POWER

To assign a location's maximum Power, simply consider its overall wealth, sorcerous significance, and population. A location that has nothing to recommend it would have a maximum Power yield of zero. One with just one interesting feature, like a hunting camp near a prehistoric stone ring that still has occult resonance, might have a Power yield of 1. Small hamlets or ancient places of power might grant Power 2, towns and major fanes might give Power 3, cities or locations of great power might grant Power 4, and the most impressive sites of population, wealth, and occult significance in the region might give Power 5.

A cult turn begins with a list of the cults in the campaign. The GM rolls randomly to pick a cult to start the turn and then progresses down the list, rolling over to the top until every cult has had the opportunity to act. This random process is repeated each new turn.

On their turn, each cult begins by collecting Power from locations that have a stronghold. The amount of power depends on both the stronghold and the location— the bigger the stronghold, the more power it can draw, and the more significant the location, the more power it has to offer. The lower of these two are used as the cap— a level 5 stronghold in a location that offers only 3 Power can only draw 3 Power. If more than one cult has a stronghold in the location, the maximum Power that the location provides is reduced by 2 points per additional stronghold. Thus, if three rival cults are fighting for control over a city that would normally offer 5 Power, none of them can draw more than 1 Power until at least one of the strongholds is destroyed.

Next, the cult pays upkeep on any assets that require it. If there's not enough Power to pay for all necessary upkeep, any lacking the payment will lose half their maximum hit points as damage, rounded up. Assets reduced to zero hit points are destroyed or hopelessly demoralized. Assets with the "Berserk" quality are more dangerous, representing entities or forces that require constant propitiation to be controlled. If they go out of supply, they become uncontrollable that turn and will automatically attack another asset in that location, using the "Attack Asset" action. The choice of target will be whatever seems most logical given the circumstances.

Next, the cult may take one action. The list in this section covers the most common actions, but you might choose to improvise if the cult wants to do something else of importance that should take a full turn to accomplish.

Once the action is complete, the cult may take a single Create Asset or Improve Stronghold action to represent its general growth and advancement. All assets and strongholds automatically begin with the Hidden quality, concealing them from other cults. An asset that loses its Hidden quality becomes a known factor to all other cults, as such secrets are too hard to keep once the veil of discretion has been pierced. While it lasts, however, the asset cannot be targeted for an attack by an enemy.

Finally, the cult pursues its goal. Some goals can be completed just by spending a sufficient amount of Power on it, while others require the destruction of enemy assets or expansion to new locations. If the goal is successfully completed, the cult gains experience points which may be spent to increase their attributes and may choose a new goal to pursue. A cult may abandon a goal if it proves impractical, but any investment of Power in it is lost and the cult is unable to perform any actions or construct any assets for one turn thereafter as it struggles with the setback and aligns with its new focus.

Once every cult has had a chance to act, the turn is complete, and you can adjust the local situation to reflect any new realities or recent upheavals in the region.

PCS AND CULTS

The actions of the player characters can have a substantial effect on a cult, even if they aren't represented by their own allied organization. The outcomes of adventures and PC choices have their own independent effect on a cult and its assets, quite aside from the system here.

If the PCs destroy a cult base of operations in a location, the cult will lose its stronghold asset there. If they kill a god-monster in the sewers beneath the city, that asset is lost to its owner, regardless of the asset's current hit points. If the PCs manage to forge a new alliance between their organization and a determined group of hunters in a new city, their faction will gain that asset without spending Power or a turn to do it. The actions of the PCs are applied directly to the cult during the course of an adventure, and no other die-rolling is required.

PCs may also eventually seek to establish their own "cult" in order to increase their reach in the region and deal with problems they may not have the time to personally address. Experienced PCs will gradually accumulate old friends, trusted allies, and indebted souls who owe them much for their aid. Out of these friends and a location cleared of occult influence the heroes can hope to found their own organization.

Most GMs should be open to this possibility as soon as the PCs have accumulated enough resources and allies to make it plausible. Some groups will have no interest in this, preferring to work alone, or to form no more than a background support organization that doesn't bother to use the cult rules. You should follow their lead on this, but if they do decide they want to have a cult of their own you should let them take the actions and adventures necessary to build it.

A starting PC cult will usually begin with a single level 1 stronghold, a rating of 3 in its best attribute, and 1 in its other two. It may also start with an asset or two, depending on what kind of allies the PCs bring to the enterprise. It may pick a goal in the same way as any other cult and may advance in attributes by spending the experience points that successful achievement of these goals will bring.

Like any other cult, these assets start the game Hidden. Even once they have been revealed, however, you should resist the temptation to have the other cults gang up on this heroic upstart. It's true that the PCs want to destroy all of them and smash all their unholy work, but from an individual cult's perspective, that's the exact same case with

all of their other rivals, too—rivals who are likely much more powerful and threatening than this new organization. The local cults may indeed come to hate the PCs more than they do each other, but this should be a matter of learned experience rather than automatic malice.

Just as with fighting a cult during an adventure, aiding a cult should also apply its effects outside of the system framework. If the PCs manage to enlist an expert sniper to their cause then their cult gains that asset, whether or not it could normally afford or be permitted to have it. The PCs are the wildcards in the cult system, the rule-breakers who can smash assets and create aid with a single evening's adventure. It's precisely that unpredictable prowess that stands them their best chance of survival in facing down the horrors of a blighted region.

CULT ACTION LIST

The entries below list some of the more likely actions a cult might take. When making your own, you can resolve any questions of success with an attribute check, with Power costs applied as seems appropriate.

Attack Assets: The cult picks one or more assets and launches attacks against one or more targets in the same location. Targets cannot be Hidden. If the defender has other assets in that same location, they may substitute another in place of the target, allowing other assets to shield them. Any asset used to attack or guard automatically loses the Hidden quality.

To make the attack, the both attacker and defender roll the attribute checks given in the asset's description. If it says "M vs. I", for example, the attacker rolls 1d8+Muscle and the defender rolls 1d8+Influence. If the attacker succeeds, the target takes the listed attack damage. If the defender succeeds, the attacking asset takes the listed defense damage. On a tie, neither take damage.

The attacker can strike with as many assets as they wish, regardless of their location, but an asset can only attack once per turn. A target can defend as often as they wish, assuming they have hit points left.

Cultivate Location: The cult tries to improve a single particular location, making it a more valuable source of Power. This usually requires cultivating a stronger base of cultists, deeper tendrils of influence, and greater control over the available wealth of the place. For very small locations, it might mean bringing in outside industry or devotees to populate the place.

Cultivating a location requires spending three times the improved Power level of the place; thus, to make a Power 1 hunting camp into a Power 2 cult recruiting center would require spending 6 points of Power. The cult then rolls 1d8 and adds the level of stronghold present at the location. If the total is greater than the new Power level plus 6, the attempt is successful and the site's maximum Power increases by one.

On a failure, the attempt is not yet a success, but the cult can attempt this action again on their next turn without spending any additional Power. If they choose to use their turn to perform some other action, however, their attempt falters and they must pay the Power over again the next time they try to cultivate the site.

Disband Assets: The cult safely releases one or more assets from service, removing them from their locations and no longer obliging them to pay upkeep. Assets with the Berserk quality cannot be peacefully disbanded. Cults that use such dangerous assets must either pay their upkeep or see that they are “tragically” destroyed in conflicts.

Hide Assets: The cult attempts to conceal one or more assets at a single location. One point of Power must be spent for each asset that is to be hidden. If no other cults have assets at the site, the attempt is automatically successful and each asset gains the Hidden quality. If one or more other cults are present, however, the actor must succeed on an attribute check against their rival, both using the better of their Sorcery or Influence scores. On a success, the concealment is successful, while on a failure the attempt is in vain and the Power spent is lost. If several enemy cults have assets in the location, it can be prohibitively difficult to actually hide anything there, as someone is bound to discover it.

Investigate Location: The cult investigates a single location for hidden hostile assets. The cult must have at least one asset in the location. Both they and the owners of any Hidden assets roll an attribute check of the better of their Sorcery or Influence attributes. If the investigator wins, all the enemy’s Hidden assets at that location lose the quality and become known. Note that the investigating asset may be Hidden, and retains this quality even if it fails to uncover the foe.

Move Assets: The cult moves one or more assets to a different location, assuming that such a shift is plausible for the asset. In a normal region, any asset can be moved to any other location, and each such move costs 1 point of Power. If the asset is not Hidden, any rivals in the target location may make an immediate free Attack Asset action against it with any assets they already have at the site. If the asset is Hidden, it moves without the enemy being able to prevent or detect its arrival.

Repair Assets: One or more damaged assets at a single location are given time to recruit, refit, and reorganize. This heals damage equal to 1d6 plus the relevant attribute of the cult— thus, a cult with a Muscle score of 5 repairing a Muscle asset fixes 1d6+5 hit points of damage. Stronghold repair always uses the cult’s best attribute. Any number of assets may be repaired by this action provided they are all at a single location, but each can only be repaired once per turn.

Serve Cause: The cult turns inward, dedicating itself to unholy prayer, fortification of its holdings, and cultivation of its assets. The cult gains Power equal to its lowest attribute.

Create Asset: The cult brings forth a new servant or establishes a new stronghold, whether by bribery, suasion, or summoning up the unholy powers of night. The cult must pay the Power cost for its recruitment and may not use it for any actions this turn, but it can be used for defense should another asset at its location be attacked. Only one new asset can be created each turn, and it must be created in a location where the cult already has at least one other asset. All created assets begin play hidden, with the exception of strongholds. A stronghold created in a location that already has a stronghold of a rival cult begins play without the Hidden quality, as it’s just too hard to build an entire new cult nexus without drawing the attention of an existing power.

Improve Stronghold: The cult fortifies an existing stronghold. A stronghold can be improved by only one level per turn, and it costs Power equal to the new cost of the stronghold. Thus, going from a level 3 stronghold to level 4 costs 8 Power. A damaged stronghold cannot be improved until it is fully repaired, and this action may be taken only once per turn.

ASSET QUALITIES

Some assets have special qualities as indicated on the tables that follow. Others, such as Hidden, can be applied by the right actions or special asset abilities. These qualities all share the same special handling rules regardless of type.

Attached: These assets may be “attached” to other assets at the same location. Assets with beneficial effects can be attached to allied assets, while hostile curses can be attached to non-Hidden enemy assets. This attachment is automatic and cannot be resisted, and may take place at any time during the owner’s turn. Once attached, this asset may not be removed, and is destroyed if the host asset is destroyed. It may be targeted separately, should an enemy wish to destroy a burdensome curse or eliminate a problematic blessing. Attached assets are always Hidden if their host is hidden and revealed if their host is revealed; the Hide Assets action need only conceal its host to hide it as well.

Berserk: The asset must be carefully contained and directed or else the cult runs the risk of catastrophic loss of control. An asset with the Berserk quality suffers the usual penalty the first turn that upkeep is not paid on it; it loses half its maximum hit points, rounded up. On the second consecutive turn, however, it loses no hit points. Instead, it runs wild, becoming an uncontrolled asset that will attack the weakest asset in the location each time the former owner’s turn comes up. It automatically penetrates any Hidden quality to find its prey, though its attack does not remove the Hidden quality from a target.

An asset that goes Berserk asset cannot be regained. It will continue to attack until it is destroyed or runs out of targets. If it lacks any valid assets to target at that location, it will simply wait until prey comes within its reach.

Hidden: Almost all cult assets are hidden from the mundane attention of the world, but assets with the Hidden quality are invisible even to the cognoscenti of the unknown. This anonymity is hard to maintain given the paranoia of the occult world, and once compromised, the secret is soon out to everyone. Thus, an asset that loses its Hidden quality becomes known to all other cults, not just the one that revealed it. An asset that is Hidden cannot be attacked or otherwise targeted by a rival cult, barring special circumstances. This normally includes any asset special abilities that require selecting a specific target. Attacking or defending with an asset deprives it of any Hidden quality, but using its special powers or benefits does not compromise its secrecy.

Structure: This quality represents an asset that is chiefly a building, edifice, or hardware collection. Most structures can be relocated to other locations with the Move Asset action, though some are permanently fixed at the site of their construction. Some assets gain special benefits when attacking structures.

STRONGHOLDS, CULT CREATION, AND CULT ADVANCEMENT

The pages that follow cover a number of example assets that a GM can apply to a cult. While most of them are phrased as malevolent or monstrous, a GM designing an investigator's organization can just "re-skin" most of them into more benevolent forms. Stronghold assets, however, have a few special rules.

STRONGHOLDS

Strongholds are not included on any of the tables, because strongholds are special assets. While other assets are categorized as Muscle, Sorcery, or Influence, Strongholds don't have a type, and cannot be affected by attacks or special powers that affect only one type of asset.

Strongholds cannot be moved once they are created. Strongholds can be attacked normally, but they have no offensive power and do no damage on a successful defense. They can be given the Hidden quality as any other sort of asset, and all of them have the Structure quality.

Strongholds must be purchased at level one, and the Improve Stronghold action can only upgrade them one level at a time. The cost of upgrading a stronghold is equal to the new level's cost. Strongholds have no upkeep cost.

CREATING CULTS

Very small or local cults start with attributes of 3, 1, and 1 arranged to suit their priorities. They have one level 1 stronghold in their home location, and a number of assets whose levels do not add up to more than three. Such a cult is either very new, very specific to a family, or very badly hurt from recent conflicts. A given campaign might have one or two such small cults at most, usually in those places most important to the PCs. Most cults of this size are too small or local to be worth detailing unless they're somehow important to the heroes.

Moderately powerful cults have attributes of 5, 4, and 2. They have one level 3 stronghold and two level 1 strongholds in the region. Their total asset levels don't add up to more than 9. These cults dominate a particular section of the region, and usually are at daggers drawn with their rivals. Most campaigns have the most powerful cults at this level, with three or four of them at most, and often no more than two or three. These cults are powerful enough to strongly influence their home area and are usually interested in expanding and deepening their power.

Extremely powerful cults have attributes of 7, 5, and 3. They have one level 5 stronghold, two level 3 strongholds, and two level 1 strongholds. Their total asset levels don't add up to more than 18. There is almost never more than one cult of this power level within the region, and many regions entirely lack such a hegemon of evil. Such forces are usually constantly at war with the rest of the cults in the region, many of whom might have put aside their immediate differences to fight against this overwhelming threat. Cults at this level have their tendrils deep within national governments and can deliver overwhelming force when their plans require it.

The details and flavor of individual cults can be set out with the tools in the Mythos chapter of the book. As always, you should feel free to sketch them loosely until you really do need to know specifics.

CULT ADVANCEMENT

Cults gain experience points by accomplishing specific goals. A cult can spend this experience to increase their attributes, at an XP cost equal to the attribute's new rating. The goals given below are examples. Particularly with PC-run organizations, the GM might grant XP or flat attribute increases as a reward for a successful related adventure.

Commit Atrocity: The cult must do something horrible in a location where they have a stronghold. The location's maximum Power decreases by one due to the destruction and horror of the atrocity, but the cult gains 1 XP. This atrocity cannot be committed in a location with a rival cult's asset present, as they interfere with the process.

Destroy An Enemy: The cult must destroy a number of enemy assets with a total number of levels equal to the cult's highest asset, earning 1 XP for success.

Drive Out A Foe: The cult must destroy an enemy stronghold, earning 1 XP if they succeed.

Expand Influence: The cult must establish a stronghold in a new location and maintain it for a number of turns equal to the cult's highest attribute, gaining 1 XP if they do. This stronghold cannot have the Hidden quality during this time, as its outreach is too obvious.

Purge Treachery: Inflict 1d10 damage each turn to any one asset for a number of turns equal to the cult's highest attribute to gain 1 XP.

Serve Patron: The cult directs Power toward the eldritch ends of its master. The cult must spend Power equal to its lowest attribute plus its highest attribute to complete this goal, earning 1 XP if they do.

Tighten Control: The cult can take no action except Create or Repair Asset or Improve Stronghold, and must maintain this discipline for a number of turns equal to its highest attribute, earning 1 XP if they do.

Terrorize Enemy: The cult must perform the Attack Assets action for a consecutive number of turns equal to their highest attribute. At least one asset must actually attack each turn. If the cult maintains this onslaught, it gains 1 XP.

STRONGHOLD LEVELS AND EXAMPLES

LEVEL 1	COST	HP
House, Bar, Social Club	2	5
LEVEL 2		
Small Business, Mansion	4	10
LEVEL 3		
Large Business, Several Buildings	6	20
LEVEL 4		
City Hall, A huge and vital local business	8	30
LEVEL 5		
An entire city's governmental structure	10	40

CULTS

MUSCLE ASSETS

These assets relate to brute force and the license for direct violence. A cult that deals with its problems through intimidation, murder, and co-option of the government's monopoly on force is likely to invest heavily in Muscle assets and prove talented at their use.

Ambush: The cult has made arrangements to trick attackers into a lethal kill zone or intolerable political situation. Like other assets, the Ambush can be used to interpose between an attacking asset and its intended target. If the Ambush is Hidden when it does so, the attacker must roll their attack check twice and take the worse result.

Carte Blanche: The local authorities tacitly allow the cult's minions to use whatever force they wish, provided it doesn't get too hard overlook. All the cult's Muscle assets in this location gain +1 on all attack and defense checks.

Corrupt Cop: A local detective or police sergeant is on the take, and willing to ensure that the right people get into the wrong situations.

Corrupt Police Chief: The local chief of police is in the cult's pocket. Aside from this asset's usual abilities to attack and defend, the cult can burn the chief to automatically hit a target it is attacking. The chief wildly oversteps his legal boundaries and will inevitably be fired or arrested, but not until he's done grave damage to the enemy.

Cult Gunmen: A step up from ordinary thugs, these gunmen have more discipline and precision than the ordinary run of street rabble.

Cult SWAT Team: A highly-trained group of professionals that may or may not be an actual SWAT team. Once per turn, the cult may use the team to instantly attack an enemy asset that is launching an assault

LEVEL 1	COST	UPKEEP	HP	ATTACK	DEFENSE	NOTES
Corrupt Cop	2	0	6	M vs. I, 1d8	1d4	
Cult Thugs	2	0	6	M vs. M, 1d8	1d4	
Fortified Lair	3	1	10	None	2d6	Structure
Hitman	2	0	2	M vs. M, 2d6	None	
LEVEL 2						
Ambush	3	0	10	None	2d6	Structure , Special defense if Hidden
Cult Gunmen	4	1	10	M vs. M, 2d6	1d6	
Expert Arsonist	3	1	4	M vs. I, 1d10	None	
False Front	3	0	20	None	None	Structure
LEVEL 3						
Corrupt Police Chief	4	1	8	M vs. I, 2d6+2	1d8	Burn to automatically hit a target
Cult SWAT Team	5	2	15	M vs. M, 2d6	1d8	Interrupt incoming attack
Demolitionist	4	1	10	M vs. M, 2d8	None	x2 damage to Structures, Stealth
Expert Assassin	4	1	12	M vs. M, 2d8	None	Attacks without losing Hidden
LEVEL 4						
Carte Blanche	5	2	16	None	1d4	Muscle assets gain +1 hit and defense
Military Weaponry	6	2	16	None	1d6	Structure , Reroll failed hit or defense
Secret Police	6	2	20	M vs. I, 2d6+4	2d6	Spend 2 Power to reveal Hidden
Terrorist Cell	6	2	20	M vs. I, 2d8+4	1d12	Spend 2 Power to become Hidden
LEVEL 5						
Cult Templars	8	3	25	M vs. M, 2d8+4	2d8	
Military Favors	9	0	10	None	None	Burn to attack and destroy an asset
Sudden Assault	8	2	20	Special	None	Allow moves and attacks in one turn
LEVEL 6						
Entrenched Fortifications	10	2	50	None	2d12	Structure , Can't move
License to Kill	10	4	15	None	None	Can't move. Reroll failed checks.
Mass Movement	10	4	30	M vs. *, 2d10	2d10	Attacks worse of Muscle or Influence
LEVEL 7						
Fanatical Populace	12	6	50	M vs. I, 2d12	None	
Standing Army	14	7	30	M vs. M, Special	2d12	Any target hit takes 30 damage.

against another asset at that location. If the assaulting asset survives, its attack goes through normally.

Cult Templars: The cream of the diabolical crop, these cult templars are superbly-trained and gifted warriors in service of the cult's fiendish plans for the world.

Cult Thugs: Ordinary street scum with no future and no use beyond that of brutish intimidation, these thugs can still be used to rough up locals and stifle minor resistance.

Demolitionist: This saboteur specializes in destroying buildings and heavy equipment. Their attacks do double damage against assets with the Structure type. If an attack against a Structure is successful, the demolitionist don't lose any Hidden quality it may have.

Entrenched Fortifications: The cult has heavily fortified the location, with multiple safehouses, tunnels, and lines of retreat. This asset cannot be moved once it is created.

Expert Arsonist: An ordinary thug with an unusual love for fire, the arsonist's attacks do double damage versus Structure assets.

Expert Assassin: A lone gunman of uncommon talents, the assassin is extremely hard to pin down. If Hidden, it doesn't lose the quality when it attacks a target, whether or not the attack is successful.

False Front: A seemingly harmless and unassociated organization that actually serves as a buffer and feed line for the cult's true purposes.

Fanatical Populace: Large numbers of the locals are utterly obedient to the cult and willing to bury foes under the sheer weight of their bodies. Vast numbers of untrained cultists are ready to fight and die for their cause.

Fortified Lair: The cult has arranged for at least one well-fortified safe house or temple within the location.

Hitman: While lacking the finesse of a trained assassin, the hitman is willing to kill people at the cult's bidding without hesitation.

License to Kill: The cult's minions are virtually untouchable by the local authorities, with license to use whatever violence they wish against enemies and troublemakers. All Muscle assets may roll attack and defense checks twice in this location, using the better roll.

Mass Movement: The cult has blended ideology and savagery into a number of clubs, societies, and secret circles willing to fight on its behalf. The Mass Movement opposes the worse of an enemy's Influence or Muscle attributes when forcing a defense check.

Military Favors: The cult has allies or blackmailed servitors among the legitimate military forces of the area. The cult can force this ally to use their authority to strike and destroy any single Muscle or Influence



asset at that location. This action burns the ally, destroying this asset. The victim may interpose another asset to absorb the attack, however.

Military Weaponry: The cult has access to military-grade weaponry and other tools that civilians can't normally obtain. Once per turn, a Muscle asset in this location may reroll a failed attack or defense check. If the die rolls a natural 1, this asset is burnt as the weapons are lost, destroyed, or expended.

Secret Police: These secret enforcers monitor the cult for troublemakers and the disobedient, as well as watching for external threats. Once per turn the cult may spend 2 Power to activate this asset. The lowest-ranked enemy Hidden asset in the location is then revealed. If more than one enemy asset would qualify, the one there longest is revealed.

Standing Army: The cult effectively controls a standing army, having complete and unchallenged mastery of a major formation of trained military personnel. If an attack by this asset is successful, the target takes 30 points of damage.

Sudden Assault: The cult has arranged the infrastructure for a lightning raid on this location. On their turn, the cult may activate this asset, immediately doing 1d10 damage to it. Once activated, one or all of the friendly assets at another location may move to the Sudden Assault and make attacks in that location. At the end of the turn, any or all these assets may be moved back to their originating location. This action sacrifices any Hidden quality the Sudden Assault may have.

Terrorist Cell: The cult has either sponsored or created a network of terrorist cells willing to do its bidding. Once per turn, the cult may spend 2 Power and apply the Hidden quality to this asset without needing to spend an action to do so.

CULTS

SORCERY ASSETS

Sorcery assets rely on the supernatural, on gifts and powers that defy mortal understanding. They can rot the strong, blast the cunning, curse the mighty, and otherwise gnaw at a target's weak points. Many Sorcery assets allow the attacker to pick any attribute to defend against the assault. These attacks are often less effective or convenient than those of more mundane assets, however.

Cursed Warrior: This cult minion is laced about with black blessings and damnable gifts, transformed into a fearsome weapon of ruin.

Dark Experimenters: The cult conducts numerous experiments in search of greater power. Sometimes they prove useful, but always at a dire cost. This asset can be burnt to restore a number of hit points equal to its current hit points to any other asset at its location. This healing may be split up over multiple recipients if desired.

Dark Fane: The cult has a strong and darkly potent temple at the location. One Sorcery asset of the cult's choice has its upkeep cost eliminated, and all Sorcery assets at that location gain a +1 bonus to their attack and defense checks.

Eldritch Creche: Terrible things are bred in dark places. Once per turn, at the end of the turn, the cult can tap this creche to purchase any level 1 or 2 Sorcery asset. The asset can do nothing the turn it is made.

Enthralling Cabal: These cultists are impossibly charming and persuasive. Once per turn, their honeyed words can negate an incoming attack at that location that targets the cult's Influence.

Grave Retribution: If the asset this charm is attached to is destroyed, its destroyer takes 2d12 damage automatically.

LEVEL 1	COST	UPKEEP	HP	ATTACK	DEFENSE	NOTES
Hypnotic Guru	2	0	2	S vs. Any, 1d8	None	
Minor Curse	2	1	5	None	None	Attached , Victim rolls checks twice.
Petty Sorcerers	2	0	5	S vs. Any, 1d4	1d4	
Protective Rite	3	1	5	None	None	<i>Burn to use Sorcery attribute to defend</i>
LEVEL 2						
Dark Experimenters	3	0	12	None	1d6	<i>Burn to restore its HP to other assets.</i>
Hidden Shrine	3	0	12	None	1d6	Structure , One asset has no upkeep
Minor Abomination	4	1	10	S vs. Any, 2d6	1d10	Berserk
Scourging Ritual	3	1	8	S vs. S, 2d8	None	<i>Only harms or can be blocked by Sorc.</i>
LEVEL 3						
Cursed Warrior	4	2	8	S vs. M, 2d8	1d10	Berserk
Hidden Ways	5	2	16	None	None	Structure , Move and hide asset
Mindbending Adept	4	2	10	S vs. I, 2d8	1d10	
Sorcerous Atrocity	4	1	16	None	None	<i>Burn to destroy one Influence asset.</i>
LEVEL 4						
Enthralling Cabal	4	1	20	S vs. I, 2d10	1d6	<i>Per turn, negate an Influence attack.</i>
Grave Retribution	4	1	16	None	None	Attached , if destroyed, do 2d12 dmg.
Major Abomination	5	2	25	S vs. Any, 2d6	2d6	Berserk
Unholy Ward	4	1	20	None	None	Structure , prevent Sorcery attack
LEVEL 5						
Dark Fane	7	0	20	None	2d6	Structure , boost Sorcery assets
Eldritch Creche	5	2	10	None	1d10	Structure , can buy level 1/2 asset
Plaguebringer	6	3	20	S vs. Any, 2d8	2d6	<i>Things it hurts take 1d6 dmg/turn</i>
LEVEL 6						
Kelipah Nexus	5	2	10	None	None	Structure , Unify multiple locations
Miasma of Doom	10	4	20	None	1d8	<i>Hostile assets there take 1d6 dmg/turn</i>
Unearthly Horror	10	4	25	S vs. Any, 2d10	2d8	Berserk
LEVEL 7						
Outer Lord	14	7	50	S vs. Any, 3d12	1d12	Berserk
Pact of Damnation	14	8	30	S vs. Any, Special	None	<i>On a hit, the target and one asset dies</i>

Hidden Shrine: A secret fane has been built to dark powers, and its worship feeds their evil. One Sorcery asset of the cult's choice has its upkeep eliminated. As with the Dark Fane, this asset can be anywhere.

Hidden Ways: The cult has mastered secret paths through the Kelipot. Once per turn, the cult may spend 1 Power to move any one asset at this location to a different location, automatically granting it the Hidden quality when it arrives.

Hypnotic Guru: A cult teacher exerts an unnatural influence over minions and foes, using their pawns to strike where enemies are weak.

Kelipah Nexus: The cult has opened a path into a Kelipah, one that they use as a travel nexus between far-flung earthbound points. On their turn, a cult may freely move assets between locations with a Kelipah nexus without using the Move Assets action. The nexus itself cannot be moved once it is created.

Major Abomination: A truly horrific entity from the outer darkness has been summoned forth to serve the cult. Such creatures can strike in many ways, using their occult powers to blast and blight a foe.

Miasma of Doom: The location is oppressed by potent sorceries that inflict grave troubles on enemies that dare enter the area. At the start of the cult's turn, all enemy assets in that location take 1d6 damage, whether or not they're Hidden.

Mindbending Adept: This sorcerer strikes at the wills of the cult's foes, twisting and breaking their determination with the force of his magic.

Minor Abomination: This eldritch entity is one of the more minor beings of the darkness beyond the world, though it remains more than a match for any ordinary human.

Minor Curse: This curse is attached to an enemy asset in the location. So long as the curse remains attached, the enemy must roll any attack or defense checks twice and take the worse results. The curse is destroyed if its host perishes, but otherwise cannot be harmed except by another Sorcery asset's attack.

Outer Lord: These awful engines of otherworldly ruin are not so much servitors of the cult as avatars brought forth to wreak divine madness.

Pact of Damnation: This asset can attack any non-Hidden target in the region, regardless of its location. If the attack is successful, the target is automatically destroyed, but the cult must sacrifice another asset at the Pact's location to fuel this attack. The victim can interpose another asset to save the original target, as normal for an attack.

Petty Sorcerers: While the curses and spells of these sorcerers are unimpressive in power, they make for very flexible assailants.

Plaguebringer: These creatures or cursed adepts infect those who fight them with madness or disease. Any non-Structure asset harmed by the Plaguebringer, either in attack or defense, suffers 1d6 damage at the end of each turn thereafter until a Repair Asset action is taken on it.



Protective Rite: The cult's magical forces are used to protect its holdings. During an enemy cult's turn, the cult may burn this asset to force all attacks that turn to target the cult's Sorcery attribute rather than the usual defensive attribute, regardless of the location of the attack. A cult may have only one Protective Rite asset at a time.

Scouring Ritual: This spell is harmless against ordinary humans, but strikes deeply against sorcerous powers. It can harm only Sorcery assets. If a cult wishes to interpose another asset to protect its target, that defending asset must also be a Sorcery asset.

Sorcerous Atrocity: The cult infects a social movement or influential organization with a monstrous occult curse that produces an atrocity sufficient to utterly discredit the target. The asset may be burnt to automatically destroy any one Influence asset in the location. As usual, the targeted cult may interpose another Influence asset to defend the intended target, destroying it in its place.

Unearthly Horror: A mind-wrecking abomination, the unearthly horror is an engine of ruin for its summoners.

Unholy Ward: At any time before the dice are rolled, this ward may be triggered to nullify a Sorcery attack at its location. Each time the ward is triggered, it takes 1d10 damage. If the ward is destroyed in the process of negating an attack, the strike goes through to the target and is automatically successful.

CULTS

INFLUENCE ASSETS

These assets reflect the cult's control over the levers of social and economic power in the region. Whereas Muscle assets involve physical force, and Sorcery assets touch on eldritch impossibilities, Influence assets deal with money, law, and social favor. A rich cabal of sorcerers entrenched in local society is likely to have many such assets.

Active Conspiracy: The location seethes with conspirators eager to complicate any plans against the cult. Any asset that attacks the Active Conspiracy must roll its attribute check twice and take the worse result.

Blackmail: A juicy piece of blackmail forces an enemy asset or its handlers to act against its owner's best interests. Burn this asset to force another non-Hidden asset at the location to make an attack against any target, including itself. Special powers related to its attack may be triggered but not unrelated abilities such as extra Power gain or special penalties to enemy rolls.

Corporate Raiders: These zealous minions use the power of their money and business contacts to force rivals into compliance.

Crime Boss: A brute at heart, however polished his or her exterior, the crime boss translates influence into raw violence.

Cult Recruiters: Simple street-level recruiters, these cultists are susceptible to hostile interference, but quite effective when left alone.

Economic Domination: The cult practically owns the location's financial arrangements. No other cult can harvest Power with its stronghold at that location. If both have this asset, no one can harvest.

Forbidden Pleasures: The cult knows how to give someone the things they desire, however horrible these needs may be. This asset may target any of a foe's attributes when attacking, rather than a single set one.

LEVEL 1	COST	UPKEEP	HP	ATTACK	DEFENSE	NOTES
Cult Recruiters	2	0	5	I vs. I, 1d8	None	
Friendly Official	2	1	2	I vs. I, 1d6	1d4	<i>Free Influence asset attack per turn</i>
Organization Mole	2	0	5	None	None	Attached , Keeps an asset from Hiding
Profitable Business	3	0	8	None	None	Structure , Each turn gain 1 Power.
LEVEL 2						
Blackmail	3	0	10	None	1d6	<i>Burn to force an enemy asset to attack</i>
Lawyers	3	1	12	I vs. I, 2d6	1d6	<i>Cannot harm Muscle assets</i>
NGO Zealots	4	1	10	I vs. I, 1d10	1d10	<i>Enemy Influence upkeep increases by 1</i>
Trained Cadres	3	1	8	I vs. I, 2d8	None	
LEVEL 3						
Hardened Resources	4	0	16	None	1d10	Structure , Each turn gain 1 Power
Infiltrated NGO	5	2	16	I vs. I, 2d8	1d10	
Lobbyist	4	2	10	I vs. I, 2d10	None	<i>Once/turn pay 2 Power for Hiding</i>
Obfuscated Membership	4	1	10	None	None	Attached , hide host once/turn
LEVEL 4						
Crime Boss	4	1	20	I v. M, 2d10	1d10	
Economic Domination	5	2	16	None	1d6	<i>Other strongholds can't harvest Power</i>
Forbidden Pleasures	5	2	25	I v. Any, 2d8	2d6	<i>Can target attribute of choice</i>
Honey Trap	4	1	16	None	None	<i>If attacker misses, burn to turn attacker</i>
LEVEL 5						
Active Conspiracy	7	2	20	None	2d10	<i>Attackers roll twice and take worse</i>
Corporate Raiders	5	2	20	I vs. I, 2d8+4	1d12	
Subverted Authority	6	3	20	I vs. Any, 2d10	2d8	<i>Targets hit can't act until Repaired</i>
LEVEL 6						
Hidden Treasures	10	0	10	None	None	Structure , Each turn gain 2 Power
Ignorant Army	10	4	25	I vs. I, 2d10	1d8	<i>Each turn, heal 2d6 damage on it</i>
Star Performer	10	4	20	I vs. I, 2d12	2d8	
LEVEL 7						
Innsmouth Response	20	8	30	None	None	Berserk , Can annihilate foes
Suffocating Control	14	8	30	I vs. I, Special	None	<i>Targets hit become incapable of acting</i>

Friendly Official: This obliging local official makes life miserable for rival organizations in the location. Once per turn at any time, the official may make an attack on a rival Influence asset in the location.

Hardened Resources: The cult has built lines of hardened supply and persuasion in the location, bonds and resources that are difficult to touch. They earn an extra point of Power at this location each turn. A cult can have only one Hardened Resource per location.

Hidden Treasures: The cult has used its secret knowledge and ruthless influence to wring power from hidden places in this location. They earn two extra points of Power at this location each turn. A cult can have only one Hidden Treasure per location.

Honey Trap: This snare is designed to catch and sway a powerful enemy asset, seducing it to the cult's side. If an enemy asset attacks the Honey Trap and misses, the cult may burn it to instantly take possession of the attacking asset. They may do so even if the asset is of a level their own attributes could not normally support.

Ignorant Army: A host of minions and lackeys are under the spell of the cult, even if almost none of them realize the nature of their obedience. Their sheer numbers and veiled nature make them difficult to root out. At the end of each turn for its owner, this asset heals 2d6 lost hit points.

Infiltrated NGO: This non-governmental organization puts up a charming front, but its leadership has been wholly subverted.

Innsmouth Response: The cult has forged ties with the national government and gained control of a secret department dedicated to cleaning up cult activity. This department can be used as a devastating weapon against their enemies, but failure to control the Innsmouth Response can spell doom for the cult. Once per turn, the cult can trigger the Innsmouth Response, choosing any location in the region. They then roll 1d20. On a result of 1-17, all enemy assets in that location are destroyed, Hidden and otherwise. On a result of 18-19, the agency has discovered too much. The former result occurs but the Innsmouth Response asset itself is destroyed, along with all allied assets at its location. On a rule of 20, the cult's secrets are catastrophically compromised. The entire cult is destroyed by the ensuing response.

Lawyers: Cold-hearted and ruthless, these lawyers can wreak havoc with the lives of enemies of the cult. They are poorly-suited for handling those that know no law, however, and cannot attack or do damage to Muscle assets.

Lobbyist: The lobbyist conceals maneuvers advantageous to the cult under a thick cloud of backroom deals and secret maneuverings. Once per turn, the owner of the lobbyist may spend 2 Power to apply the Hidden quality to any other asset at that location. The lobbyist may not Hide itself with this ability.

NGO Zealots: Irrational, uncompromising, and joyously self-sacrificing, these non-governmental organization supporters make life much harder for rivals at the location. All Upkeep costs for enemy assets there are increased by 1 point.

Obfuscated Membership: The organization keeps churning handlers or asset members, making it difficult to keep a fix on an asset. Obfuscated Membership may be attached to an allied asset. At the end of each turn, the owner may inflict 1d4 damage on the Obfuscated Membership to turn it and its host asset Hidden.

Organization Mole: The cult has an ally on the inside of a hostile asset. The mole is attached to an enemy asset in the location. So long as the mole survives, that asset cannot become Hidden.

Profitable Business: The cult has a money-making prospect in this location, and gains 1 additional Power point at the end of each of its turns. A cult can have only one Profitable Business in a location at once.

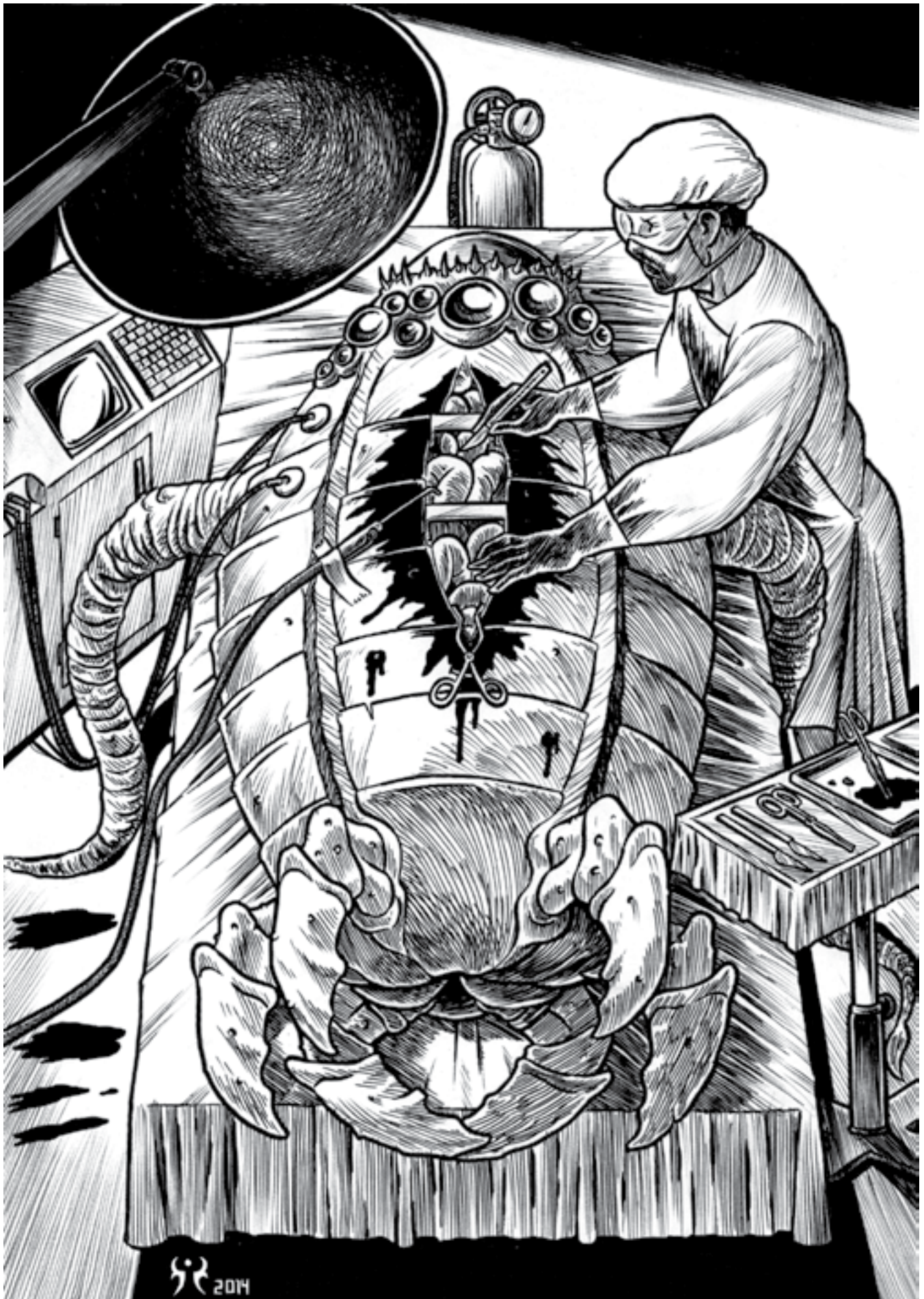
Star Performer: Charming, compelling, famous, and beloved, the star performer can move public sentiment in the cult's favor whenever it proves useful for their masters.

Subverted Authority: The cult knows how to paralyze an enemy asset with blackmail, seduction, intimidation, and a host of other complicating burdens. If the Subverted Authority asset hits its target, the victim is unable to perform any actions until its owner applies a Repair Assets action to it.

Suffocating Control: The cult owns the social, legal, and economic context of the location. Nothing happens without its tacit permission. Any target hit by Suffocating Control becomes unable to perform any action, defend against attacks, or trigger any ability until the Suffocating Control either leaves the location or is destroyed.

Trained Cadres: These loyal soldiers of the cult are eager to work on its behalf, performing whatever deeds their masters find useful.





THE BESTIARY

CREATURES OF BLEAK DREAMS

Manufacturing a consistent supply of unnameable horrors can be an exhausting task. As the GM, it's up to you to come up with a steady stream of interesting and horrible entities to torment your players and provide worthy adversaries for their heroes. While the basic mechanics of the game allow you to easily import monsters from any one of a host of other RPGs, there's really no substitute for a home-brewed horror.

This chapter gives you the tools for fabricating your own abominations and unearthly horrors. While the Mythos chapter has guides for the physical appearance of aliens and worse, these pages show you how to assign game statistics and abilities to these entities. By using the templates provided here, you'll be able to quickly conjure up these foes.

The first table provides basic statistics for a wide variety of different creature types. Each type is provided three ranges of statistics— weak, average, and strong. When you need a particular type of creature for your plans, such as a Weak amorphous horror, you just read off the stat line. If you decide that this weak little blob has a particularly brutal acid attack, you could give it Strong Damage while keeping the rest of its statistics intact.

Once you have the basic template, you can add qualities from the next list. These are traits such as Acidic, Undead, Disguised, Ravenous, or some other qualifier that suits your idea. These modify the creature's stat line, improving some traits while worsening others. They also give you some basic idea of the type of special powers the creature might have, or their unique abilities.

Finally, you wrap things up by considering the creature's special type of horror. What's so terrible about this thing after all? Is it an Impostor horror, taking the place of its victims and creating havoc in people's lives? Is it more of a Pursuit horror, playing up the terror of being hunted and the steady crumbling of hope as every sanctuary is proven insufficient? Is it a Contagion horror, infecting its victims with some awful condition or turning them into vectors for a curse upon their loved ones and others around them? The horror of a creature doesn't add specific new abilities, but it does encourage you to think about how the creature behaves and what its goals might be, and can be a touchstone for adding special traits that strengthen this dread.

The end of the chapter is rounded up by a selection of common human enemies that the PCs are likely to face, along with a dozen or so monstrous creatures that you can use in your own campaign or edit to fit your needs. These entities can also serve as the seeds of adventures related to their own obscure natures and desires.

USING FOES IN YOUR GAME

While this chapter is full of malevolent cultists, awful beasts and the tools for making more of them, it's important that you understand the role of combat in your campaign. *Silent Legions* uses many of the same dice and rules for combat as classic dungeon-crawling games do, but the context is very different. The investigators are modern men and women who have likely at least partially imbibed modern attitudes towards death and killing. Shooting a street thug means that they've killed a human being, not just Orc #5, and that kind of bloodshed comes at a price.

As the GM, it's up to you to decide what kind of role violence will play in your campaign. You might run things with strictly realistic modern-day sensibilities, where killing a cultist is going to involve a lengthy police investigation and the distinct possibility of jail time for the heroic investigator who did it. Conversely, you might decide to keep things more pulp-toned, where violence against other humans is part of the genre and the annoyance of relentless police manhunts and personal injury lawsuits don't intrude on the game. Whichever choice you make should be shared with the players, so that they know how to respond to the challenges in your particular sandbox. A pulpy private investigator who plugs a thug who tried to ambush him is perhaps not looking to be thrust into the middle of a courtroom drama, while a game that aims more toward the style of Lovecraft's more intellectual stories might treat killing as a far more serious act.

Aside from the tonal issues of combat in your campaign, you also need to keep in mind the mechanical aspects. Novice investigators are *fragile*. One round from a pistol has an excellent chance of taking out any of them, and a group ambushed by a half-dozen cultists with rifles might find the campaign ending then and there. Even experienced monster-hunters can be laid low with a single Slaughtering hit. Combat is never a safe bet in *Silent Legions*, and it's never a tool the PCs can employ with impunity.

This means that you shouldn't force them to use it. Don't put the PCs in situations where the only rational outcome is a knife fight or blaze of gunfire. If they naturally thrust themselves into such situations, so be it. If they stumble into them, then it's proper form to give them at least some possible way of escaping without facing gunfire, but then the situation is a little more of their doing. And of course, if they know the risks but consciously choose to push on in favor of some other, potentially safer course, well... they're heroes, aren't they? Sometimes, heroes have to pay a price for their heroism. It may be that their next characters will show more discretion with their valor.

MORALE

While some abominations may be too bloodthirsty or too alien to recognize fear, most opponents the PCs face in combat are likely to have at least some consideration for their own lives. A creature's morale score measures its willingness to stand and fight even when the battle is turning against them. Investigators never flee unless their players choose to do so, but monsters and other NPCs might decamp much sooner if the situation recommends it.

Morale is measured from 1 to 12, with a creature with 1 morale fleeing at the first sign of danger and one with 12 morale being utterly impervious to panic. When faced with one of the situations below, a creature must make a morale check, rolling 2d6. If the total is greater than the creature's morale, it breaks off the fight. It might throw down its weapons and surrender, flee the battle, beg for its life, or try to strike a deal with its enemies. The creature will take whatever steps seem most likely to preserve its life, and in the panic of the moment it might not think too much about its friends.

Situations that provoke a morale check include...

- A friend or ally is killed.
- More than half their allies are dead or incapacitated and they are not clearly winning the fight.
- For normal humans, seeing a monster, sorcery, or some other obviously supernatural effect also forces a morale check.
- For humans unaccustomed to violence, the plausible threat of lethal force also compels a morale check.

Most ordinary men and women have a morale score of 6. Even the prospect of being killed or seriously injured is enough to make them think twice about a fight and they're unlikely to keep fighting after their first ally is killed. Many of them will simply be incapable of putting up a serious fight, or else they will be unable to recognize a situation of true mortal danger until it's far too late to resist.

For hardened street thugs or veteran soldiers with a morale score of 8, the mere possibility of getting killed isn't enough to faze them, but they still might break if their comrades start dying or they take heavy casualties in a fight that is not evidently going their way.

Professional assassins, battle-tested soldiers, and callous cult enforcers with morale 10 are unlikely to panic even in the face of a losing battle, and inhuman creatures or fanatics with morale 12 will simply never flee a fight. Even the bravest combatant might end up making a tactical retreat if they find themselves in an indefensible position, however.

Creatures that make their morale checks are not forced to flee, but they're still capable of responding logically to the situation. A group of thugs facing an outer abomination might make their morale check, but they still have enough sense to make a fighting withdrawal to a place they can barricade against the beast. Were they to fail their check, their retreat would instead have been a disorganized rout.



CREATING UNSPEAKABLE HORRORS

The creature table on the following page provides basic templates for monstrous foes and mortal cultists. Each template describes a general class of creature, with statistics given for weak, average, or strong examples of the type. When creating a monster, you should feel free to mix and match from the examples. You might have a spindly, fragile little beetle-creature that has a savage bite, giving it the average Verminous Thing template but with Weak HD and Strong Damage. The monster qualities detailed in this chapter might also adjust these categories, bumping up some and lowering others.

AC records the creature's average armor class. Humanoids might instead wear body armor in some circumstances, take the better of it or their natural defenses. **HD** are hit dice, with each creature rolling 1d8 for each hit die to determine its individual hit points. Thus, a skilled human with 3 HD would roll 3d8 to determine their hit points. **Attacks** cover the usual attack sequence used by the creature. Where multiple items are listed, it means the creature can attack more than once in a single round; something with the "bite / claw x 2" entry can bite and level two claw attacks in a single action, leveled either at the same or different enemies. Where "wpn" is listed, it simply means that the creature usually uses a weapon for its attack and damage.

+Hit is the creature's hit bonus on its attack rolls. When it seeks fresh prey, it rolls 1d20 and adds this number; if the result is 20 or more, the creature hits with the attack. Multiple attacks require multiple hit rolls, so a foe with four tentacle attacks must roll for each tendril. **Damage** is the damage done on a successful attack. If a creature has multiple attacks, they may do different amounts of damage, such as 1d8 on a bite or 1d6 on a claw attack. Foes using weapons will do the weapon's base damage. Unless specified otherwise, the Slaughter die of a monster's attack is 1d6, or a weapon's usual Slaughter die.

Move is the number of meters it can travel in a single move action. Some monsters may be able to fly, or swim, or climb sheer surfaces. Their movement usually applies normally to these other modes of locomotion. **ML** for "Morale" represents the monster's courage and discipline, as described in this section. **Skill** is the creature's aptitude at the sort of things it should be good at doing, and is added to skill checks it might make. A cult skinner would be talented at taxidermy, for example, while a stalking panther would add it to its stealth and perception skill checks.

Madness is the Madness inflicted on PCs who are forced to face the creatures. The totals assume that the beast is monstrous and unnatural in some way; if you're using the Hulking Brute template to represent a normal elephant, for example, no Madness would be inflicted. In the same vein, a particularly humanoid alien might be using the Humanoid Thing template, but be similar enough to humanity to avoid disturbing a human viewer's mind. This Madness total is rolled during every encounter with the creature, but a victim can never take more Madness from dealing with an entity than the maximum total roll. Repeated exposure to the same type of enemy will gradually lose its novelty. Thus, a creature that inflicts 1d8 Madness on viewers can never inflict more than 8 total points of Madness on a PC, even if they keep encountering that type of foe.

Saving throws for NPCs and monsters are much simpler than those for PCs. Regardless of the type of saving throw, the creature rolls 1d20 against a target equal to 15 minus half their hit dice, rounding the target number up. Thus, a 9 HD beast must roll 11 or better to succeed at a Magic saving throw against a desperate sorcerer's spell.

MODIFYING CREATURE STATISTICS

The monster qualities in this section include boosts to some categories and penalties to others. In most cases, this is simply a matter of reading the next category up. If the quality grants +HD, for example, and the creature you're envisioning is an average example of its type, you'd just use the Strong entry for HD instead. If that same template also has -Move, you'd use Weak Move. So long as these changes stay on the chart, it's simple to adjust the creatures. Sometimes, however, you'll find yourself boosting a Strong attribute or decreasing a Weak one. What do you do when you need something really unusual? You adjust the top or bottom-end statistics as explained below.

AC: Strengthened AC should improve by 1 or 2 points, and weakened AC should worsen by 1 or 2. An armor class can't be worse than 9, though really fragile foes might give an enemy the chance to roll twice for their attack and take the better result.

HD: Increase the Strong HD by 50% for every notch of increase above Strong. Halve the HD for every notch below Weak. 1 HD becomes 1d4 hit points, and 1d4 hit points becomes 1 hit point.

Attacks: Add one extra attack for every notch above Strong. Below Weak, the creature can attack only once every other round, with another round's delay added for each further notch below Weak.

Hit: Increase the Strong hit bonus by 50%, rounded down, for every notch of increase above Strong. Decrease it by 50%, rounded down, for every notch below Weak. If decreasing a +0 bonus, give them -2 to hit for every notch below Weak instead.

Damage: Upgrade the damage dice by one step for every notch above Strong. Thus, 1d8 turns into 1d10 and 1d12 turns into 1d20. Reverse the process for every notch above Weak, turning 1d4 down to 1d2 and then 1d2 down to 1 hit point of damage at a minimum.

Move: Add 10 meters for every notch above Strong and halve the Weak movement entry once for every notch below Weak. Extremely weak Move might mean the creature is fixed in place.

Morale: Add 1 for every notch above Strong, up to a maximum of 12. Decrease it by 1 for every notch below Weak.

Skill: Add 1 for every notch above Strong, and subtract 1 to a minimum of 0 for every notch below Weak.

Madness: Increase the die type by one step for every notch above Strong, turning a creature of 0 Madness into 1, and 1 Madness into 1d4. Decrease the die type by one step for every notch below Weak, turning 1d4 to 1 and 1 to zero Madness.

BESTIARY

TYPE OF ENTITY		AC	HD	ATTACKS	+HIT	DAMAGE	MOVE	ML	SKILL	MAD.
Common Human										
	<i>Weak</i>	9	1 hp	wpn	-1	wpn	30'	6	0	0
	<i>Average</i>	9	1d4 hp	wpn	+0	wpn	30'	7	1	0
	<i>Strong</i>	8	1	wpn	+1	wpn	30'	8	2	0
Skilled Human										
	<i>Weak</i>	8	1	wpn	+1	wpn	30'	8	1	0
	<i>Average</i>	8	3	wpn	+3	wpn	30'	9	2	0
	<i>Strong</i>	7	6	wpn	+6	wpn	30'	10	4	0
Verminous Beast										
	<i>Weak</i>	8	1 hp	bite	+0	1	10'	6	1	0
	<i>Average</i>	7	1d4 hp	bite	+1	1d4	20'	6	2	0
	<i>Strong</i>	6	1	bite x 2	+2	1d6 x 2	30'	7	3	1
Large Predator										
	<i>Weak</i>	9	2	bite	+2	1d6	30'	7	2	0
	<i>Average</i>	7	4	bite / claw x 2	+4	1d8 / 1d6 x 2	40'	8	3	0
	<i>Strong</i>	5	6	bite / claw x 2	+6	1d10 / 1d8 x 2	40'	9	4	1
Undead Humanoid										
	<i>Weak</i>	8	1	bite	+2	1d4	30'	12	0	1
	<i>Average</i>	6	3	bite / claw x 2	+4	1d4 / 1d6 x 2	30'	12	1	1d4
	<i>Strong</i>	4	6	bite / claw x 2	+6	1d8 / 1d6 x 2	30'	12	3	1d8
Amorphous Terror										
	<i>Weak</i>	6	3	tendrils	+3	1d8	20'	9	2	1d6
	<i>Average</i>	5	5	tendrils x 2	+5	1d8 x 2	30'	10	2	1d8
	<i>Strong</i>	4	7	tendrils x 4	+7	1d10 x 4	40'	11	2	1d10
Stalking Hunter										
	<i>Weak</i>	7	2	bite	+4	1d8	40'	7	3	1d4
	<i>Average</i>	6	3	bite / claw x 2	+6	1d8 / 1d6 x 2	40'	8	4	1d6
	<i>Strong</i>	5	4	bite / claw x 2	+8	1d10 / 1d8 x 2	50'	9	5	1d10
Hulking Brute										
	<i>Weak</i>	8	4	smash	+4	1d8	30'	8	1	1d6
	<i>Average</i>	7	6	smash x 2	+5	1d10 x 2	30'	9	2	1d8
	<i>Strong</i>	6	8	smash x 3	+6	1d10 x 3	40'	10	3	1d10
Humanoid Thing										
	<i>Weak</i>	9	1	bite + wpn	+1	1d4 + wpn	30'	7	1	1d4
	<i>Average</i>	8	2	bite + wpn	+2	1d6 + wpn	30'	8	2	1d6
	<i>Strong</i>	6	4	bite x 2 + wpn	+4	1d6 x 2 + wpn	40'	9	3	1d8
Armored Abomination										
	<i>Weak</i>	5	2	smash	+2	1d6	20'	8	1	1d4
	<i>Average</i>	4	4	smash + bite	+4	1d6 x 2	30'	9	2	1d6
	<i>Strong</i>	3	6	smash x 2 + bite	+6	1d8 x 3	30'	10	3	1d8
Outer Entity										
	<i>Weak</i>	4	4	tentacle x 2	+4	1d6 x 2	30'	12	4	1d8
	<i>Average</i>	3	8	tentacle x 4	+8	1d8 x 4	40'	12	5	1d10
	<i>Strong</i>	2	12	tentacle x 6	+12	1d8 x 6	50'	12	6	1d12

VARIETIES OF FOUL FOES

Common Human statistics are useful for ordinary men and women of no special aptitudes. Weak statistics might represent children, the elderly, or exceptionally frail adults. Average statistics represent an ordinary street thug or average worker, while Strong statistics are for unusually competent or seasoned people such as veteran soldiers or hardened criminals. Common human statistics are what you can use when you just need quick stats for an otherwise unremarkable NPC.

Skilled Humans are unusual. Soldiers and police might be trained for combat and physicians or scientists might be skilled at their work, but such men and women are common enough that they usually don't fall into this category. Skilled humans are truly exceptional people, leaders and lieutenants capable of guiding a cult or leading a city. A few rare and elite groups might be composed entirely of skilled humans, but they're most often found as leaders and sub-bosses of other organizations. Minor lieutenants might use the Weak statistics, while significant threats to novice PCs might be Average, and serious cult leaders and experts might use the Strong statistics.

Verminous Beasts can represent either mundane animals or supernatural monsters, ones that are usually small, vicious, and commonly found in packs or swarms. They're not hard to kill, but they come in such numbers that they can be a serious threat to investigators. The statistics for verminous beasts usually apply to a particular small group of the creatures; a horde of chittering beetle-rats might actually be treated as five Average foes, even though they number in the scores. The Weak statistics can be used for rats and other mundane animals, while the stronger stat lines are usually applied to beasts of at least a partially supernatural nature.

Large Predators are usually lone hunters such as tigers, sharks or leopards, though the Weak stat line might also be used for pack predators such as wolves. The stronger stat lines are usually reserved for supernatural abominations, ones that are dangerous but don't fit well into one of the other categories.

Undead Humanoids are zombies, skeletons, ghouls, and other largely tangible horrors risen from an unquiet grave. Aside from their particular statistics, undead are predictably immune to the sort of things that only trouble the living: poisons, diseases, suffocation, hunger, and Slaughter die rolls from mundane weapons. A few might have special vulnerabilities, such as a zombie's weakness to shotguns, while others might have special defenses, like a skeleton's general imperviousness to bullets. The section that follows includes several example undead.

Amorphous Terrors are familiar Lovecraftian favorites. Almost all are impervious to Slaughtering hits from mundane weapons, and most are able to flow through even the smallest gaps to reach their wretched prey. The Weak stat lines might be used for exceptionally small blobs and piles, while the stronger lines usually imply progressively larger monstrosities. These stats can also be used for other creatures that have a basically pliable body shape.

Stalking Hunters are usually solitary abominations that hunt their prey from cover, waiting for a moment of carelessness or weakness

before they dare to strike. They tend to inflict vicious damage on a target with their uncanny precision or brutal physical weaponry, but they avoid pitched battles and even fights. The stat lines here are for eldritch creatures that favor stealth and swift murder. They can be used for mundane stalking animals as well, though the Madness score doesn't apply in such cases.

Hulking Brutes are the giants and other titanic creatures that threaten to smash troublesome investigators into a fine paste. Most of them aren't difficult to hit, due to their size, but they're notably hard to bring down. Weak stat lines might be used for some particularly large and brutal humanoid, while the Strong stat line is fitting for a towering occult abomination.

Humanoid Things are for those occasions when you want something that is basically a human but somehow touched by the ultramundane. Particularly humanoid aliens, constructs of occult science, or ordinary humans hideously altered by eldritch influence might all qualify under this template. They usually have some sort of physical attack in addition to whatever weapons they might be wielding, and are significantly sturdier than ordinary humans.

Armored Abominations are similar to Hulking Brutes, but focus more on extreme resilience rather than sheer damage absorption. Some Armored Abominations might be relatively easy to destroy once you get past their tough exterior, but doing so isn't easy. Golem-like creatures and other entities made of tougher stuff than ordinary flesh might use this template, and most of them are also immune to Slaughtering hits from mundane weaponry.

Outer Entities are for the avatars of the Mythos gods of your campaign, lieutenants of uttermost darkness, and other serious perils. Even a Weak outer entity is sufficient to terrorize a low-level party of investigators, and a Strong one can give a hardened pack of veteran heroes a bad time. If you apply the Nemesis modifications given below to such a creature it might end up so powerful that direct conflict ceases to be a practical response even in the most gunfire-friendly campaign. Most Outer Entities are immune to non-magical weapons.

MAKING NEMESSES

A particularly ferocious enemy might qualify as a "Nemesis", a specially-fearsome opponent such as a cult high priest, a mutated alien animal or a withered eldritch godling. Such creatures are usually capable of threatening an entire group of investigators.

To turn a creature into a Nemesis, double its hit dice to a minimum of 5, increase its hit bonus by 50% to a minimum of +5, and give it a full round's worth of actions as a bonus each combat round. It can move, fight, and otherwise act twice as swiftly as the heroes.

Most Nemeses don't need much in the way of an entourage to terrify a band of PCs, but only the determined loners or truly foolhardy among them go without a retinue of lesser minions. Some such foes might be practically impossible to defeat with violence unless they are somehow separated from their bodyguards.

SPECIAL MONSTER TRAITS

Once you've got the basic framework of the creature, you can start adding trimmings. Many times, you'll have your own ideas for what sort of entity you want to create, and you'll just increase or decrease its statistics to fit your own conceptions. Sometimes, however, you'll want a little extra inspiration for your abomination. This table offers a set of example qualities you might apply to the beast.

Each quality offers a set of likely modifiers. Those marked with a plus mean that you should increase that statistic by one step, while those with a minus suggest that you should decrease it by one degree. Monsters marked with Special should likely have some special ability added to them to better express their quality.

Thus, if you have a perfectly average Humanoid Thing with the Acidic quality, you'd give it Strong Damage, Strong Hit, and Weak Morale. Its blows are caustic, and the sprays of vitriol it emits are hard to evade, but it's accustomed to overwhelming its opponent quickly and is more likely to flee in the face of stiff resistance.

In addition, a set of six characteristic words are offered to help inspire you in describing and defining the beast. You can use the words as touchstones for adding special abilities or giving its appearance certain traits. You might add on entirely new abilities to the entity if particularly inspired by an idea.

The twenty below are simply suggestions and ideas. You can always add your own, perhaps making up ones to specially fit your campaign's unique qualities or organizations. The choice, as always, is up to you and your own campaign's needs.

Acidic monsters fight using caustic substances. They may breathe sprays of searing liquid or have desiccating talons. It's possible that their hits might even cause lingering damage for a round or more as the acid burns into their prey.

Amorphous creatures are usually shapeless slime-blobs, though some can adopt more specific shapes. They tend to move slowly, but are hard to kill and often have multiple tendrils or pseudopods with which to crush prey. Their sheer abnormality is also unusually frightening.

Disguised creatures look like something else, usually a perfectly normal human. Whatever their true form or nature, most of these entities have the special ability to masquerade among normal humans without difficulty. They usually have an increased Skill bonus to avoid detection.

Flaming monsters are on fire, or create fire, or otherwise relish heat. Their burning blows are especially painful, and their heat makes them hard to approach to hit or target, but their flaming forms are also usually somewhat easier to disperse by enemies.

Frozen monsters are icy, either made of frozen water in some part or simply very cold. Such rigid frost makes them hard to hurt or destroy, but also slows down their movement in comparison to other things.

Hulking monsters are huge, with corresponding advantages to their hit dice and damage. Their size does make them easier to hit, however.

Immaterial creatures might be composed entirely of mist, or be mere spiritual echoes, or be composed of congealed shadow. They're

D20	QUALITY	MODIFIERS	CHARACTERISTIC WORDS
1	Acidic	Damage+, Hit+, Morale-	Acrid, fuming, puddles, slime, clouds, discolorations
2	Amorphous	HD+, Attack+, Madness+, Move-	Mottling, bulging, slumping, rolling, tendrils, absorption
3	Disguised	Skill+, <i>Special</i>	Plastic, shells, falseness, mind-reading, husks, cloaks, flaws
4	Flaming	Damage+, AC+, HD-	Eerie light, smoke, char, ash, insubstantiality, explosions
5	Frozen	AC+, HD+, Move-	Hardness, translucence, cold, numbness, whiteness, brittleness
6	Hulking	HD+, Damage+, AC-	Height, obesity, gnarled, disproportionate, lumbering, unstoppable
7	Immaterial	AC+, Move+, Madness+, Damage-	Gaseous, shadowy, intangible, flickering, wispy, invisible
8	Inanimate	AC+, HD+, Move-	Hard, glowing, skittering, metallic, stony, mechanical
9	Multilimbed	Attack+, Move+, HD-	Spidery, tendrils, many-jointed, folding, winged, cybernetics
10	Parasitic	Skill+, <i>Special</i>	Sucking, burrowing, leeching, infesting, bloated, subtle
11	Radioactive	Damage+, HD-, <i>Special</i>	Glowing, Geiger ticks, sickly, ulcerous, contained, explosive
12	Ravenous	Attack+, Hit+, AC-	Blades, maws, frenzied, emaciated, indiscriminate, sleepless
13	Resilient	AC+, HD+, <i>Special</i>	Numb, armored, masochistic, tireless, part-inanimate, redundancy
14	Skeletal	AC+, HD-	Bones, fragile, silent, worms, relentless, yellowed
15	Sonic	Skill+, Hit+, Damage-	Song, hypnotism, shattering, allure, compulsion, ultrasonic
16	Swarming	AC+, HD-, <i>Special</i>	Hives, nests, tiny, clouds, insectile, buzzing
17	Tiny	AC+, Damage-, HD-, Move-	Delicate, sharp, skittering, hidden, ambush, disarming
18	Toxic	Damage+, Skill+, <i>Special</i>	Nauseating, gaseous, green, sickly, stinging, biting
19	Undead	Morale+, HD+, Madness+, <i>Special</i>	Cold, still, silent, moaning, rotting, bony
20	Warded	AC+, Madness+, <i>Special</i>	Runed, steely, protected, sealed, confident, reckless

unsurprisingly hard to hit, frightening, and swift in motion, but their very immaterial nature makes it difficult to inflict damage. Most of these creatures require magic or some special substance to hurt them.

Inanimate foes either look like an inanimate object or are composed of inanimate objects. They might be golems, robots, cursed furnishings, or anything else that never knew normal life. While slow, their obdurate forms are tough and hard to bring down.

Multilimbed creatures have more than one set of arms, legs, tentacles, or other extremities. Most of them gain extra attacks from this, and the extra-legged creatures are usually faster, but this kind of biological extravagance also makes it easier to disable them.

Parasitic creatures somehow require hosts for survival, draining their blood, souls, vital energy, or other components to maintain their existence. Most are quite skilled at the means they use to acquire victims, and should have a special power related to the way they catch and maintain wretches to sate their hunger.

Radioactive things are just that. Their glowing claws and talons leave radiation burns as well as bloody wounds, though they themselves are rarely the sturdiest of foes. Enemies often risk radiation poisoning from them; being hit by one or remaining near one for more than a minute or two forces a Physical Effect save. On a failure, the victim's Constitution score decreases by one point. Only one point of attribute loss inflicted in a given encounter will return over the next month.

Ravenous monsters are frantic to consume. They attack in a blur of fangs and tendrils and move so aggressively that they're very hard to avoid. This same berserk hunger also harms their self-preservation instinct, however, and makes them easier to hit.

Resilient creatures are somehow remarkably hard to kill, being tougher and harder to hit than most creatures. They may keep fighting for a round or two after hitting zero hit points, or they might regenerate a certain amount of damage each round, or they might be impervious to all but magical weapons or some special substance.

Skeletal foes aren't necessarily undead, but even the living examples emaciated, thin, and bony. Their lack of flesh makes it hard to find something to hurt, but it also provides less support when damage is finally done to the things.

Sonic enemies use sound in some nefarious ways. Sirens might daze victims with their golden voices, while banshees could inflict terrifying shrieks that drain the strength from those that hear them. Sonic attacks tend to be hard to avoid, but less immediately damaging than a more tangible blow from an enemy.



Swarming enemies usually come in large numbers, with correspondingly small or fragile creatures making up these terrible hordes. Some of them might require fire or other area-effect weapons to actually hurt them, as individual creatures are too small to effectively target. Others might be treated as single entities, with a whole swarm sharing a single attack sequence and pool of hit points.

Tiny foes are usually very hard to hit, having one or two steps of improvement on their armor class, at the cost of inferior damage, movement, and hit dice. Tiny foes may be found in numbers large enough to threaten investigators, or they might act in secret, using their small size to creep in unnoticed and perform dark deeds.

Toxic enemies are poisonous or diseased. They spread a particular venom or sickness as described in this section, with each attack usually forcing a Physical Effect saving throw to avoid the plague. Most are unusually skilled at stealth or ambush, the better to strike unawares and incapacitate an enemy with their venom before their victim has a chance to strike back.

Undead creatures usually share a similar set of immunities. All are impervious to Slaying hits from non-magical weapons and any other effect that relies on a living form for its harm. The mindless undead are usually totally fearless, while even those capable of recognizing harm tend to be reckless in their violence.

Warded creatures are specially blessed against particular types of harm. One might be impervious to melee weapons, while another can't be harmed by bullets, and a third can only be injured by open flame. This is a completely uncanny effect in most cases, and the sheer impossibility of what they see is especially disturbing to some heroes. The ward itself may be the result of sorcery, alien biology, or the simple physical nature of the creature.

TYPES OF MONSTROUS HORROR

These horrors describe particular flavors and lenses you can apply to your monsters. They usually don't involve the change of a creature's combat statistics, though they might prompt you to add a special power or quality to the entity. You can pick from the adjacent list or simply roll to get a suitable dread for the occasion.

Body horror is about the defilement, perversion, or treachery of a victim's flesh. Monsters that focus on body horror provoke some terrible change in a victim, altering their form in ways grotesque or dehumanizing. The alteration should not be a complete transformation, because the special frisson of horror here comes from the juxtaposition of intimately familiar and self-identified flesh with something utterly wrong. A beetle can be unpleasant to look at. A very large beetle can be especially repulsive. A human-sized creature that is part beetle and part grandmother is horrific.

Body horror can be emphasized by transformative attacks that alter the victim. Lengthy transmutation processes work particularly well, such that the creature enacts some hideous change on a victim or prisoner over a period of time. These changes might turn the victim into a more suitable servant for the entity, or it may just be an impulse of an unfathomably alien mind.

Consumption horror is about eating, both literal and metaphorical. A monster that deals in consumption devours its prey. This may be a visceral, bloody process of agonizing death by inches as fanged worms burrow into a paralyzed host, or it might be a steadily-growing despair as an entity slowly devours a host's memories of everything good or happy in their lives. Such creatures often do lingering damage to a victim they hit, excising body parts or crippling mental abilities.

Giving a monster an especially horrible way of eating a person is the simplest way of applying this type of horror, as more abstract forms of consumption can be hard to put across at the table. If you have your monster eat something intangible, the horror needs to come from the consequences of that consumption and the demonstrated effects it has on the victim's life. A wound writhing with gem-colored maggots is repulsive in of itself. A cold and empty space where a person's power to hope once was can only be perceived in its consequences, whether in sudden adherence to a cult's doomsday preaching or a swift and anguished suicide.

Contagion horror is about the spreading of sickness. To be infected is bad enough, but the real horror of these creatures is that they spread their plague either directly or through unwitting hosts. The foul effects they inflict can be passed subtly to those near them or might be transmissible through an afflicted NPC or investigator. They make something awful happen, and then their victims intentionally or helplessly spread that awfulness to others.

Conventional disease is an easy pick for a contagion horror, but you can add almost any phenomenon to an occult creature's malevolent effects. An entity might pass on a lethal aura that makes loved ones die, or inflicts sadistic misfortune that never quite kills the bearer, or transforms the victims into secret and unknowing slaves of the creature.

D12 THE BASIC HORROR OF THE THING

1	Body horror; change and defilement of the flesh.
2	Consumption horror; it eats something of its victim.
3	Contagion horror; it or its prey spread a dire condition.
4	Debility horror; it makes its victims weak in some way.
5	Domination horror; it controls prey and forces obedience.
6	Expulsion horror; it drives prey out of their society.
7	Impostor horror; it pretends to be what it isn't.
8	Mystery horror; it conceals itself to terrify the prey.
9	Pursuit horror; it chases a knowing prey relentlessly.
10	Revulsion horror; it's disgusting and repulsive in nature.
11	Sexual horror; it involves violation and change.
12	Violence horror; it is unstoppably savage in combat.

Debility horror is a particularly tricky one to use at the game table because it is about helplessness and weakness. While a certain thrill of futility is part of a lot of Lovecraftian gaming, heavily emphasizing this can wear on some players. If you play this up for a monster, perhaps the best way to handle it is by giving the monster the ability to utterly debilitate one or two crucial abilities, such as the power to talk to anyone about it, or the power to find it. In a more general sense, it might enfeeble the heroes' other abilities, weakening their combat powers, draining their Expertise, or otherwise narrowing their scope of action.

Particularly ruthless GMs might even employ old-school energy draining with these monsters, where a successful hit siphons away an entire level of experience and all the benefits it provided the hero. If nothing else, monsters like this certainly tend to frighten the players, whether or not the PCs are feeling bold. If you do use this tactic, it's perhaps best to avoid making any way to cure or reverse the effect other than by re-earning the lost experience. It's not really horrific if it's something that can be undone by a spell or wear off with time.

Domination horror is about enthrallment and the loss of volition. The creature seizes the minds or bodies of others and makes them serve its own purposes. This might be a hypnotic mental effect, or a direct seizure of their flesh with an embedded control node, or even a more abstract sort of social or financial domination. The crucial thing to play up here is that the creature is making people do things that they very much do not want to do, but have no power or choice to resist.

For extra moral ambiguity, it's possible that the creature's control is not complete. The victim can resist the impulses, but at some horrible cost in physical health, Madness, or mental ability. Obedience to the creature becomes a matter of choices, then, as to whether the victim is willing to pay the price to avoid performing the terrible acts demanded of them by their alien master.

Domination horrors that allow at least some small measure of resistance play up the moral terror of the creature. Not only does it compel grim obedience, but it shows its victims that they really are willing to do such things if resistance comes at such an awful cost.

Expulsion horror is the terror of not belonging. The creature isolates its victims somehow, forcing them out of their circles of family or community. They might frame the victim as the perpetrator of some horrible crime, or cause their presence to be hurtful or dangerous to their loved ones, or infect them with some loathsome quality, or even make them become adherents of some utterly outcast social group. Their victims are alone, abandoned by all they once knew.

The powers of these creatures are often perceptual in nature, changing the victim's perception of their social circles or the perceptions of those friends. Others induce physical changes that make the victim a figure of disgust or revulsion in the community. Some simply murder everyone the victim loves, forcing them to stay away from those they care about. The special horror is that of solitude and knowing that no one can help.

Impostor horrors are those that assume false identities or usurp existing lives. Their dread lies in the falseness of the creature. When posing as another, it steals the rights and emotional ties that the true person deserves, and when posing as a victim, it plunders the very identity of the one it torments.

These horrors often have extensive shapeshifting and mind-reading abilities. The true bearer of an identity might be killed and consumed, or they might just be left to pick up the pieces of the life the creature has shattered. Some victims might be spirited away, used for hideous ends as the impostor takes its place. Identifying an impostor should always be possible, but remain an effort for wary investigators.

Mystery horrors are about the unknown and the provocation of the players' own imaginations. Mystery horrors don't ever reveal themselves directly until after the victims have been whipped into a proper frenzy of terror, acting only through agents and second-order effects. These horrors show glimpses and hints of their nature, enough to give the victim's imagination something to fix on, but they don't manifest until after their prey has already been driven into a panic.

The natural imagination of the investigators is going to create most of a mystery horror's terrors. Players are experts at identifying what terrifies them, and if you give them a Rorschach of hints and fragments they'll patch it together into something terrible. Some of these creatures might actually have the power to manifest as exactly what their victims are terrified of meeting, and might not be able to take tangible form until their prey are suitably frantic.

Pursuit horrors touch on the ancient, primal panic of being chased. Playing out their special terrors requires that the horror be something that the players know is very bad to encounter, and then showing them that the horror knows of the heroes and is hunting them. A monster springing out of nowhere is good for a shock, but an extra-dimensional hound relentlessly seeking them through the angles of space and time allows the players to luxuriate in anticipation.

Pursuit horrors should never be so inexorable that the PCs' efforts at flight and evasion are useless. If the creature can simply teleport to the PCs at any time, then the hope of evasion is lost. There's none of the pleasure of the growing panic as successive efforts at escape are

methodically foiled. The PCs need to have a sense that running or hiding is useful if they are to get the full horrific benefit of a chase. Without the rational hope that they actually can throw off the monster, they'll never get the satisfaction of that hope's bitter failure.

Revulsion horrors are simple; they are disgusting. Something about the monster is just naturally nauseating or repugnant. Biological taboos of excrement, decay, and carrion might play into its nature, or some particularly horrific necessity for its existence, or some horrible habit or craving it induces in its victims. Revulsion horrors inspire a desire to flee or destroy them not necessarily because of what they do, but because of what they so manifestly *are*.

Revulsion monsters tend to have special abilities related to the things that make them so repugnant. Jets of filth, horrible urges, reeking stench, and defilement of beloved principles or beliefs might all figure into their particular powers.

Sexual horrors are the ones easiest to use badly in play. Sexual trauma and sexual identities can be extremely delicate topics for a group, and a GM is advised to simply put this category of horror aside unless they have a very keen understanding of their players. At most, it should be something hinted at and insinuated in the contexts rather than a fact directly pushed at the players. Particular care should be taken with issues of changed identity or new impulses. For instance, a monster that hideously gelds and alters human males into "female" breeding vessels can be read in a very unpleasant and very unenjoyable way by a table that includes a transwoman player.

For GMs that do have a group comfortable with horror of this kind, a simple rule for creating sexual horror is to mingle unwilling categories and alter chosen identities. Making victims experience what they don't want to experience, become what they don't want to become, and be made to desire things that are utterly anathema to their self-conception are all easy roads to revulsion. Even in this case, however, these events are best applicable to NPCs and peripheral events rather than the PCs themselves; it's just too easy to use them badly in all but the most intimately-familiar groups.

Violence horrors share their particular dread with many of the other varieties, but they play a special role in pulp campaigns where direct confrontation with evil is a viable choice. A violence horror is not deterred by mortal struggles. The PCs know or learn very early that a direct fight with the creature is suicidal, and their only hope of survival is to avoid it long enough to escape or to find its secret weakness. For more classic Lovecraftian campaigns, this sort of behavior might be normal for any eldritch horror, but not all campaigns have that trait.

It should be possible to escape the horror, even after a sudden clash with it. If the PCs see no rational hope of fleeing from a monster like this, they'll likely just assume that they're doomed and decide to go down fighting. Such a creature might be particularly slow, or it might stop to do something horrible to a person it has downed, or it might be temporarily driven back by some substance. The creature may not even have combat statistics, instead inflicting a certain amount of damage each round on any mortal luckless enough to be caught by it.

POISONS AND DISEASES

When dealing with the powers of darkness, it's not uncommon for heroes to face insidious venoms and terrible plagues. GMs who wish to introduce such unpleasantness may do so with the guidelines here. When adding these afflictions, you should be careful not to add too many instant-death effects or other immediate fatal consequences. While Lovecraftian games have a certain tolerance for swift, unpredictable death, but this tolerance shouldn't be abused.

SIMPLE POISONS AND DISEASES

One way to handle poisons and plagues is common with other old-school games, and can be adopted for those effects that don't require progressive debilitation or symptoms. With these afflictions, a character hit by a poisonous attack or exposed to a dangerous disease makes their choice of a Physical Effect or Luck saving throw. If they succeed, they resist the effects, while if they fail, the consequences apply immediately.

Poisons might be instant, or might be delayed in their effect for several rounds or minutes. Diseases might require a day or two to incubate before their symptoms become obvious, though magical plagues are usually near-instantaneous in their effects. Particularly weak or virulent toxins may apply a bonus or penalty to the saving throw.

The actual effect can be selected from the tables on this page. A PC mortally wounded by a poison or disease has one chance for survival; if a successful Int/Medicine skill check at a difficulty of 11 is made, the victim is stabilized at zero hit points. Availability of antivenoms or specific pharmaceuticals might lower the difficulty of this check by as much as 4 or 5 points for specific treatments or 1 or 2 points for more general remedies.

LINGERING POISONS AND DISEASES

More complex toxins can also be used by GMs. These toxins are defined by their Toxicity, their Interval, and their Virulence. When first bitten or exposed, a victim must make their choice of a Physical Effect or Luck saving throw.

If they succeed, then they throw off the poison or avoid the sickness. If they fail, then things get worse. As soon as the toxin's Interval is finished, they suffer the effect of the evil and may make another saving throw. The poison or plague continues, doing damage every Interval and allowing another save to be made then. These saving throws don't prevent the harm, but they do help the victim recover. Once the victim has made as many saving throws as the toxin's Virulence, they manage to throw it off.

D8	POISON EFFECTS	INTERVALS
1	Uncontrolled bleeding	1 round
2	Respiratory collapse	1 minute
3	Tremors	1 round
4	Blindness	1 hour
5	Heart murmurs	1 minute
6	Hallucinations	10 minutes
7	Tissue necrosis	1 hour
8	Nerve damage	1 minute

D8 EXAMPLE DISEASE EFFECTS

1	Exhaustion. -2 to all hit rolls and skill checks.
2	Respiratory distress. Take 1 HP damage for each round of vigorous activity while sick.
3	Fever. Roll twice on all skill checks and hit rolls and take the worse roll.
4	Painful boils. Suffer -2 on all social and movement-based skill checks. Can't wear armor.
5	Infection. Take 1d4 hit points of damage after every failed Interval saving throw.
6	Pain. Can only act for 1 round + Constitution modifier before requiring one minute of rest.
7	Internal bleeding. Lose one quarter of maximum HP after each failed Interval saving throw.
8	Death due to organ failure after the third failed Interval.

Medical assistance can speed this recovery. An attending physician can make an Int/Medicine roll at every interval at a difficulty of the toxin's Toxicity. If successful, the victim's saving throw is automatically successful, though the harm is still applied if the toxin indicates this.

The tables on this page can be used to get inspiration for the particular effects of a poison or disease. Poison effects usually apply over a relatively short period of time, and may go away on their own after four or five Intervals. Disease effects tend to be more persistent, and will continue until the victim is either dead or has recovered.

When designing your own effects, you might choose to make them very simple, just applying a certain penalty until the toxin is cured or the victim recovers. You might make them progressively worse, such that each failed Interval saving throw not only puts off the final recovery, but also worsens the effect of the toxin.

Magical toxins might have uncanny effects, such as the slow transformation of a victim into some monstrous servitor or unliving revenant. Poisons might envenom a person's luck, forcing them to face unwarranted misfortunes and sudden reverses, or they might be toxic to a victim's soul, gradually eroding their sense of self and sanity. Some magical spells might be able to alleviate or dispel these effects, but dabbling with such sorcery can sometimes be worse than the sickness itself. Prudent heroes take care to avoid such perils whenever their adventures allow such discretion.

D8	POISON EFFECTS	INTERVALS	HARM
1	Uncontrolled bleeding	1 round	Do 1d4 damage. If the Interval save is made, this damage is resisted.
2	Respiratory collapse	1 minute	Can't move or act. If the Interval save is failed, take 1d4 suffocation damage.
3	Tremors	1 round	Drop everything. If the Interval save is failed, can't move or act.
4	Blindness	1 hour	Blindness. If three consecutive saves are failed, it's permanent.
5	Heart murmurs	1 minute	Can't move or act without harm. Action inflicts 1d6 damage per round.
6	Hallucinations	10 minutes	Can only defend. Wanders and raves unless restrained by friends.
7	Tissue necrosis	1 hour	First failed Interval inflicts 1d4 damage. Adds +1d4 for each failed Interval.
8	Nerve damage	1 minute	First failed Interval is unconsciousness, second is zero HP, third is death.

A SELECTION OF NEFARIOUS ENTITIES

The following pages provide a number of common foes and example monstrosities for examples and for your own use.

Those creatures with armor classes marked by an asterisk are specially resistant to ordinary harm, and will usually require either a magical artifact or direct sorcery to harm them. They may have a unique weakness or a particular substance that is anathema to them but unprepared investigators are advised to flee should they find themselves engaged with such an abomination.

The armor classes given for creatures assume only their natural toughness and dexterity. Humanoid foes might choose to wear armor or other protective measures that could substantially improve their armor class. Even so, GMs are advised not to make most foes too hard to hit. Combat in *Silent Legions* lends itself more to a bloody, horrific exchange of hideous wounds than an extended standoff of fencing and hunting for gaps in an opponent's armor.

Most creature attacks use a 1d6 Slaughter die unless noted specially in the description. Humanoids using weapons will use the weapon's normal Slaughter die. Many supernatural entities are immune to Slaughtering hits from non-magical weapons, though a high-level Tough's special ability to inflict them may still apply.



Some creatures have a Madness entry divided by a slash. When appearing as an ordinary human, no Madness is incurred in dealing with it. When it shows its true nature, the second value is used. The special abilities used by some creatures may provoke further Madness gain when they defy the canons of ordinary reality.

MUNDANE HUMANS

Many of the obstacles the investigators face will have nothing to do with the outer powers. Common men and women all have their special ways to make a PC's life difficult, and many of them aren't reluctant to do so. Those heroes who seek to solve every problem with a bullet or a fist will soon find society rejecting them as the murderous lunatics they are.

Ordinary men and women are just that. They are the shopkeepers, bystanders, teenagers, and low-grade hooligans of the world. Even the few among them willing to deploy serious violence are rarely any good at it, and most will quickly flee as soon as blood is shed. They're more dangerous in less combative situations, often using their job's authority to make trouble for those who offend them.

Heavies are people with more familiarity with combat than the average man or woman. They know how to use weapons and they're not afraid to hurt someone when it proves necessary. They might be cops, soldiers, veteran street thugs, or anyone else with the mental toughness and reflexes necessary to deal with a dangerous situation.

Experts are especially good at some non-martial field. They might be brilliant scientists, intrepid archaeologists, or any other example of professional expertise. Their skills are notably superior to others in their field, and their services are often in high demand.

Leaders are a catch-all that covers everything from hard-bitten police sergeants to streetwise gang bosses. They're men and women who are smart, tough, and perfectly capable of handling themselves in a fight. Combat expertise beyond this level is extremely rare in humans, found only in the most dedicated fighters and battle-hardened survivors. Those that are even stronger than this often have a touch of supernatural influence in order to gain their prowess.

MUNDANE HUMANS

	Ordinary	Heavy	Expert	Leader
AC:	9	9	9	8
HD:	1d4 hp	1	1	4
Atks:	wpn -1	wpn +1	wpn +0	wpn +4
Dmg:	wpn	wpn	wpn	wpn+1
Move:	30'	30'	30'	30'
Morale:	6	8	7	9
Skill:	+1	+1	+3	+2
Special:	None	None	None	None
Madness:	None	None	None	None
Save:	15+	15+	15+	13+

BESTIARY

MONSTROUS HUMANS

	Serial Killer	Slasher	Mad Scientist
AC:	8	4*	8
HD:	5	6	6
Atks:	wpn +5 x2	Special	device +6
Dmg:	wpn+1 x2	Special	device
Move:	30'	40'	30'
Morale:	9	12	8
Skill:	+3	+5	+5
Special:	None	Supernatural	None
Madness:	None / 1	1d6	None / 1d4
Save:	13+	10+	12+

These men and women have been touched by some greater evil, either the natural malice that wells in the human heart or a shadow of the outer darkness. Some are perfectly, painfully human but driven by a desire for murder. Others have delved into the secrets of a demented science and have created devices that touch on eldritch realms. And a few have been changed by some ineffable power, made into creatures of blood and terror at a price no sane soul would pay.

Serial killers are driven by compulsions and desires, the details of which vary from murderer to murderer. Some kill out of uncontrollable mental illness, driven to it by urges they can't explain. A few among them are coldly rational, taking pleasure in the demonstration of their superiority over their prey. Others simply find it to be wonderful fun. The less competent of these killers are usually found by law enforcement, but the killer given here is canny, cunning, and perfectly capable of slipping the police unless caught and brought to justice by the PCs. The killer is entirely human, but their mental toughness and talent for bloodshed makes them very hard to put down.

Slashers have a superficial resemblance to mundane serial killers, but these men and women have been touched by the outer night. Most of them are incapable of masquerading as normal humans, and haunt remote places that meant something to them in their mortal lives. They are superlative stalkers and ambushers, and prefer to prey on solitary targets. Slashers never miss with their attacks; they always hit the target of their bloodthirsty appetites. In each combat, the first time the slasher hits a victim, the blow does 1d4 damage. Each hit after the first increases by one die size until the slasher is inflicting 1d20 damage with each blow, though slasher hits never Slaughter. Slashers are also extremely hard to kill. They are immune to damage from non-magical weapons and can only be harmed by sorcery, magical weaponry, or environmental damage such as falls, fire, or suffocation.

Mad Scientists are really just a different flavor of sorcerer. They've long ago left behind the boundaries of reason and have plunged into the dark arts, formulating rationalistic explanations for impossible revelations. They are invariably found with a selection of devices that can mimic 1d4+1 spells useful to the scientist's purpose, though only they can make them work properly. They are almost always in need of fresh materials for their research, whether that consists of money, rare substances, or the spilt blood of "courageous volunteers".

HUMAN CULTISTS

	Cultist	Cult Enforcer	High Priest
AC:	9	8	8
HD:	1d4 hp	3	6
Atks:	wpn +0	wpn +3	wpn +4
Dmg:	wpn	wpn	wpn
Move:	30'	30'	30'
Morale:	9	11	12
Skill:	+1	+2	+3
Special:	None	None	None
Madness:	None	None	None
Save:	15+	14+	12+

Cultists are driven by a multitude of motivations: the longing for companions, comradeship in some foul vice, greed for wealth or power, or the intoxicating promise of shadowy secrets. Some of them are genuinely deluded souls, imagining that the cause they serve is noble and beneficial to humanity. Those who rise high in their organization are soon obliged to give up such ideas if they intend to survive. Pretty hopes and dreams are for the cattle, the expendable flesh of the rank and file. True power requires understanding.

Cultists are usually no more than ordinary men and women, competent enough at their jobs but dedicated to the ideals of the cult. Their indoctrination and sense of belonging gives them courage to face the unknown, and they can be stubborn fighters against the enemies of their faith. Many are far more dangerous in less martial contexts, using their mundane authority and connections to torment those opposed to the cult's goals.

Cult enforcers are the muscle for the organization, the lieutenants and heavies that ensure that the ordinary members do their jobs and maintain their silence. It takes a special combination of competence, brutality, and basic sanity to make a good enforcer, so cults rarely have a large number of these specialists available to them. Many of them have very meager positions in the mundane world, being thugs, gangsters, or other social detritus driven to the margins of society by their own violent impulses. The cult gives them authority and direction along with the pleasure of lording over others of better estate.

High priests are the rulers of cults, and the great majority are sorcerers of some capacity. Many will have been physically altered by the powers they serve, and might have additional limbs, hidden organs, or supernatural abilities grafted onto their fragile mortal shells. In most cases, however, they will still be susceptible to the effects of blade and bullet, and only the most obviously mutated will require special measures to kill them.

The high priest given here is a strictly human one, serving a local cult of some significance but no great power. The high priests of more important occult faiths will be stronger, some perhaps best described by the Nemesis rules provided earlier in this section. You might go so far as to use a completely inhuman creature template for the priest, making it a figure of horror and worship to its mad acolytes.

UNDEAD

The undead have a special place in the shadow world. Some seem to be the product of human sins and vices, while others appear to be the consequence of magical contamination or otherworldly incursions. Some occultists theorize that the undead are actually intrusions of a different state of being from some neighboring Kelipah, an infection of a different order of life than this world supports. Others claim that they are actually the product of a parasitical outer entity that infests the corpses and minds of the wretched dead. The types given below are merely the most common varieties. Death blooms in strange abundance in the varieties of undead, and unique monstrosities are common to many investigators' experience.

All undead are immune to Slaughtering hits from non-magical weapons. They are also immune to poisons, diseases, and any other affliction that only applies to living flesh. Unintelligent undead are fearless, and will continue attacking until destroyed. Those with some sense of self may be more cautious in their assaults.

Zombies include a wide variety of animate corpses. The decay process is usually arrested in these entities, and while most show little or no intelligence, they can only be brought down by shattering their skeletal structure. Shotguns and two-handed melee weapons are especially convenient for this purpose, and automatically Slaughter on every successful hit against a zombie.

Ghouls are a faster, more intelligent variety of zombie, often found in small groups of 2-4 undead. They have all the natural toughness of zombies combined with a greater sense of self-preservation, and are harder to bring down. Ghouls crave human flesh, and are intelligent enough to make deals with human servants in order to obtain their favorite food. Some very well-fed ghouls can even pass for humans, nourishing their dead flesh on the hot blood and meat of the living. Such ghouls occasionally fabricate cults of depraved cannibals, the better to hide their own depredations.

Vampires are classic undead foes familiar to all. Unfortunately for investigators, the classic weaknesses and vulnerabilities of a vampire vary from individual to individual. One will be repelled by crosses, while another will mock such signs, but be driven to count grains of scattered rice instead. An occult scholar with details of the vampire's true name and origins can try to discover weaknesses with a successful Int/Occult check at difficulty 9, with each significant new fact about the vampire's living days providing an additional chance to roll. In almost all cases, however, vampires cannot be harmed save by magical weapons, fire, or sorcery. Some might also be vulnerable to holy water, wooden stakes, or limb-cleaving weapons.

Ghosts are usually bound to particular locations, driven to see the completion of a task now made impossible by time and the grave. Their insubstantial forms are impervious to all harm save that from magical artifacts and sorcery, though some can be driven back by certain items important to their life or death. A ghost's touch chills a foe but never Slaughters. Instead, the victim is briefly made to feel the suffocating desperation of the ghost, a horrifying experience that inflicts 1d6 Madness each time the spirit touches them.



ZOMBIE

AC: 7	Move: 20'
HD: 2	Morale: 12
Atks: rend +1	Dmg: 1d6
Skill: +0	Madness: 1d6
Special: Undead	Save: 14+

GHOUL

AC: 7	Move: 40'
HD: 3	Morale: 8
Atks: claw +3 x2	Dmg: 1d4 x2
Skill: +1	Madness: None / 1d6
Special: Undead	Save: 14+

VAMPIRE

AC: 6*	Move: 30'
HD: 8	HD: 10
Atks: strike +8 x2	Atks: 1d6+2
Skill: +3	Skill: None / 1d4
Special: Undead	Special: 12+

GHOST

AC: 9*	Move: 30' Insubstantial
HD: 4	Morale: 12
Atks: touch +4	Dmg: 1d4 + Special
Skill: +1	Madness: 1d6
Special: Undead	Save: 13+

UNCANNY ABOMINATIONS

The creatures listed here are all wholly inhuman, though some have an innocuous outward seeming. All of them are intruders from the outer dark, whether from some strange Kelipah or from the fathomless depths of the unknown. Most of them have motivations that are entirely antithetical to humanity, while even those that are less obviously malevolent have goals that rarely do humanity any good.

Some of these creatures tend to build cults of servitors. As the GM, you can create these cults with the tools in the Mythos chapter, filling in the cult’s particular enticements to fit its founder. A Blistered Priest is going to be peddling forgiveness to people who feel lost in their own sins and failures, while a Drowned King will gather a court of the power-mad and the wretchedly enthralled.

Even those creatures that masquerade as humans tend to do so imperfectly. A Blistered Priest will look like a benevolent clergyman, and will be able to spout soothing bromides and inspiring parables to fit the occasion, but he will have no actual identity apart from this masquerade. When not building a cult or feeding its hungers, it might simply stand in its private sanctum, motionless and unblinking, or it might perform some horrible act for an unfathomable purpose.

Attentive investigators can sometimes spot these inhuman creatures by their subtle flaws of presentation and artificial manner. Of course, there are times when perfectly human souls are simply awkward or strange. This confusion can result in unpleasant consequences.

BLISTERED PRIEST

The Blistered Priests are alchemists of suffering, converting spiritual turmoil, personal grief, and gnawing feelings of failure into more tangible physical afflictions. They feed upon this process, gaining energy and power from the amount of suffering they can convert into physical debilities. They work diligently to create as much cause for misery and long-term anguish as is possible in their surroundings, ensuring that they have a steady flow of sustenance from people seeking succor from their torment.

A Blistered Priest may appear as a man or a woman, almost always presenting themselves as a cleric or a professional therapist. They’re very talented at presenting a facade of caring, but beneath their priestly vestments or professorial tweed their bodies are covered with angry buboes and boils. These sacs are filled with the partially-digested anguish of their flock.

If a Blistered Priest strikes an opponent in melee some of the sacs will burst and spatter the victim with digestive fluids and anguish. In addition to the usual damage, the victim will suffer 1d6 Madness as someone else’s thoughts of torment force their way into the victim’s head. Any melee attack on the priest will automatically break more of these pustules, inflicting damage on the attacker as if the Blistered Priest had successfully struck them, albeit with no Slaughter chance.

The Blistered Priest is always found at the center of a cult of devotees, whether religious adherents or therapy participants. The Priest



teaches these people to perform progressively more dramatic forms of self-mortification, starting with candle flames and needles and progressing to flagellation, major burns, and even amputation. This self-torment releases the victim from their anguished thoughts, leaving them unnaturally calm, happy, and optimistic. If the condition that made them miserable still persists, however, they must continue these mortifications to maintain their happiness. Most will do so without hesitation, addicted to the blind joy the Blistered Priest offers.

Blistered Priests work quietly to ensure that their adherents’ lives are as miserable as possible. They prefer to create negative and painful environments rather than direct traumas, as such conditions are harder to trace back to the Priest and more likely to bring fresh adherents to their faith. The torments the Priests’ followers inflict on themselves are guided toward more easily-hidden forms of mortification, those that can be treated and concealed away from a hospital or other curious outsider. Even so, some followers become so obsessed with relief that they willingly perform hideous mutilations on their own bodies.

BLISTERED PRIEST

AC:	8	Move:	30’
HD:	7	Morale:	10
Atks:	smash +5	Dmg:	1d8 + 1d6 Mad.
Skill:	+3	Madness:	None / 1d4
Special:	Harmful to hit	Save:	12+

CANCER MAN

The entities known in occult circles as the “cancer men” are a group of men and women associated with early twentieth-century experiments in the use of radiation to prolong life. While mundane science soon abandoned the idea as dangerous folly, these researchers were able to use radiation and the cancers it provoked as a means of extending their own lifespans—though at a terrible price for those around them.

A Cancer Man appears entirely normal to casual inspection, if perhaps a little thin and wasted. In truth, their bodies are composed of an intricate weave of tumors, blastomas, gnarled bones, and ichorous sacs. These tumors are infectious, and a person touched by a Cancer Man will begin to manifest a random, quick-acting cancer within days. There is no saving throw against this, though the Cancer Man can refrain if desired.

This cancer is incurable by ordinary medicine. Even if entirely excised, they will simply regrow in a matter of days. The progression of the tumors will kill the host in one week per point of Constitution, and they will be too sick to move during the last quarter of that time.

The tumors of this cancer are mystical, physical extensions of the Cancer Man’s own body. He can use his senses through them, hearing what is spoken in the victim’s presence, and if the tumor is exposed to the open air, the Cancer Man can see through it as well. During the last half of the sickness’ progression, enough of the victim’s body is infested for the Cancer Man to puppet them remotely, controlling any one victim completely at any one time.

DROWNED KING

Denizens of an alien Kelipah, the Drowned Kings were once sorcerer-monarchs in the ancient past of Earth. When their bloody oracles foretold the fall of their kingdom and its plunge beneath the sea, they took pains to prepare themselves for its eventual return. They hid themselves away in grand sarcophagus-thrones and enacted mighty rituals to hide themselves from the devastation that would come.

The rituals were altogether too effective. Not only were the Drowned Kings hidden from the world, their entire kingdom was erased from history, spiraling away into its own sunken Kelipah of lightless black water and drowned cities. Within their salt-water halls, servants with fishbelly skin and sightless eyes do silent obeisance to masters and mistresses of opalescent beauty and pearly splendor. They wait for the time when they are to rise to reclaim their rule of the warm lands.

Every so often, that time is set askew. Somehow, one of the sarcophagus-thrones rises or is snared in a fisherman’s nets. The Drowned Kings are frantic to enjoy the heat and light of the surface once more and are gluttonous for every form of human passion and pleasure. They feed upon it, and will drive others to bloody murder or unspeakable depravity simply to savor passions long lost to their fish-blooded bodies.

A Drowned King lairs within the hidden places of a city. It twists the doors and passages of buildings to lead in strange directions, forming a hidden palace between the lines of conventional space. Within this strange citadel they rule over a court of mortal servitors, all of whom

The only way to cure the cancer is to destroy the Cancer Man. His life is linked to that of his hosts, and their gradual wasting feeds his unnatural vitality. Most Cancer Men are relatively restrained in spreading their contagion, but they are mentally incapable of refraining from doing so for more than a week at a time. Such indulgence comes even when it threatens their usual plans for wealth, power, and self-indulgence.

Cancer Men are exceedingly hard to kill. While they can be harmed by conventional weapons and are susceptible to Slaughtering hits, they heal back to their maximum hit points at the start of every new round so long as they are above zero hit points. The only way to prevent this healing is through a very heavy dose of chemotherapy drugs, most often applied through food or drink, though more crudely physical methods of introducing the drugs are also possible.

Investigators most often discover Cancer Men due to the clusters of infection they produce and the way they use their victims as catspaws for their own selfish plans.

CANCER MAN

<i>AC:</i> 9	<i>Move:</i> 30'
<i>HD:</i> 8	<i>Morale:</i> 11
<i>Atks:</i> weapon +6	<i>Dmg:</i> by weapon
<i>Skill:</i> +4	<i>Madness:</i> None / 1d6
<i>Special:</i> Regenerates	<i>Save:</i> 12+

are under the Drowned King’s unnatural command. The King promises each of them their heart’s desire if only they prove their loyalty and worth. Such proof usually involves the creation of bloodshed, terror, and every other painful human passion.

A Drowned King can bend the minds of the weak-willed. Those of 1 hit die or less are unable to disobey the King’s commands. Those of greater strength can make a Mental Effect saving throw to resist the King’s will, but this must be repeated each round. The only way to resist this compulsion is to bear some form of legitimate authority in that location, such as that of an official or landowner. So long as physical proof of that authority is presented to the Drowned King, its powers cannot affect the bearer.

Even deprived of its mind-bending powers, Drowned Kings are all skilled sorcerers with a wide variety of blasphemous powers at their disposal. Their only interest is in creating satisfying frenzies, even if that involves riots, arsons, or civil uprisings.

DROWNED KING

<i>AC:</i> 6	<i>Move:</i> 30'
<i>HD:</i> 12	<i>Morale:</i> 11
<i>Atks:</i> smite +10	<i>Dmg:</i> 1d12
<i>Skill:</i> +4	<i>Madness:</i> 1d10
<i>Special:</i> Compulsion	<i>Save:</i> 9+

BESTIARY

FETCH

The Fetch is a hunting entity favored by sorcerers who seek the death of some troublesome meddler. The most common invocation requires a human sacrifice and an arcane connection to the target. Once set on its prey, the Fetch will pursue them to the uttermost ends of the earth, and will not cease until either it or its target is dead. If the Fetch is killed or banished while hunting its prey, however, a second Fetch emerges to pursue the summoner, a consequence that constrains wider use of these monsters.

A Fetch appears as a car-sized, spider-like entity with a dozen long, jagged spikes jutting from its carapace. Some of these spikes have former victims still impaled upon them, weakly moving in their perpetual anguish. Both they and the Fetch are completely silent, and if removed from the spikes they will find a final and blessed death. The Fetch's hook-footed legs are capable of carrying it up walls and along ceilings despite its apparent weight.

A Fetch is peculiar in that only the victim can actually see it. Others will unconsciously avoid it and move around it with no awareness of its presence, and it will not appear on video recordings or other artificial sensors. The Fetch shows itself to its victim seven times in total, first as a remote shape on the horizon or in the far distance, but each time drawing nearer and nearer to the prey. On the seventh occasion it subdues its wretched victim, impales them upon a spike, and disappears without a trace. Most ordinary victims have no hope of evading the beast's relentless pursuit.

The only way for others to perceive a Fetch is for a person to honestly believe that it exists and is hunting its victim. As the fears of the prey are usually dismissed as hallucinations or drug episodes, most of a victim's friends and family are merely saddened when the poor, unstable soul finally disappears for good. The Fetch is intelligent in a way, and will avoid giving them cause to suspect the truth. If someone does sincerely believe in its presence and thus penetrate its veil, it will take measures to deal with them as well as its prey. The creature appears to have an innate awareness of those entities that are capable of perceiving it, though it cannot track them the same way that it tracks its prey.

In combat, the Fetch's hooked legs inflict brutal wounds, and roll 1d8 for their Slaughter dice. A victim reduced to zero hit points is not dead, but is instead automatically impaled on the creature's carapace as a trophy. Each round spent so pinned inflicts 1d12 Madness on the wretched victim. If the Fetch can be destroyed before it impales its prey and vanishes, the victims can be stabilized by medical attention. Some of the maddened wretches may have spent ages in their torment.

FETCH

<i>AC:</i>	5	<i>Move:</i>	40'
<i>HD:</i>	8	<i>Morale:</i>	12
<i>Atks:</i>	claw +8 x3	<i>Dmg:</i>	1d6
<i>Skill:</i>	+3	<i>Madness:</i>	1d10
<i>Special:</i>	1d8 Slaughter die	<i>Save:</i>	11+

GRAY WAIF

Gray Waifs are scavenger-entities that manifest in the proximity of cults and other, more significant eldritch abominations. They appear most often as young gamines, beautiful but slightly tubercular maidens, and other attractive but vaguely helpless figures. They fabricate a plausible-sounding past for themselves, though careful investigation is apt to reveal its falsity. They have an intuitive awareness of all the occult activities and entities in the surrounding area, and will seek out situations where a "savior" from their perils may be found.

These rescuers are presented with a tale of woe or distressing situation which they are invited to help remedy. If the targets decline, the Gray Waif seeks more likely prey. If they agree, the Waif progressively lures them into more and more dangerous circumstances through its calculated helplessness and carefully-chosen mistakes. It can alter the tenor of social interactions by its simple presence, making otherwise unobjectionable behavior seem like a targeted insult against it, or casual conversation into a thinly-veiled threat. It tends to use this ability to provoke the protective urges of its "rescuers", ideally embroiling them in conflicts with perfectly innocent locals.

The Gray Waif has a subtle understanding of human wants and needs, and invariably knows exactly what to say or do in order to be an appealing object of charity to a given target. Some go so far as to take up "young sidekick" roles to occult investigators, "accidentally" making subtle but serious problems for their patrons. Most take care to strike a proper balance between troublemaking and utility.

The Gray Waif is capable of playing a long game with particularly succulent victims. Those that show real potential for causing occult havoc will be cultivated over a long period of time, with the Gray Waif potentially sacrificing other eldritch entities and groups to persuade their heroes that they really are cruelly-oppressed damsels in need of aid. Only after this heroism results in the unintended destruction of a true ally or the accidental assistance to a major cult scheme will the Gray Waif drop its mask and revel in the betrayal of its "protectors".

When wearing its true form, the Gray Waif is an eight-foot tall cylindrical entity with four equidistant tentacles and a beaked maws between each. It is impervious to injury from normal weapons. The illusion it adopts cannot be detected by conventional sorcery or mundane inspection, but a Gray Waif's resilience applies even in its human aspect, and the worst mundane violence against it will leave it only with bruises and scratches. Wary investigators have sometimes been able to pick up on the uncanny nature of their waifish protege when she emerges from some unsurvivable conflict with hardly more than a scratch.

GRAY WAIF

<i>AC:</i>	5*	<i>Move:</i>	30'
<i>HD:</i>	7	<i>Morale:</i>	9
<i>Atks:</i>	tentacle +6 x4	<i>Dmg:</i>	1d8
<i>Skill:</i>	+3	<i>Madness:</i>	None / 1d10
<i>Special:</i>	Illusion	<i>Save:</i>	12+

HARBINGER

The “Harbinger syndrome” is an occult syndrome that serves as a foreshadowing of an impending large-scale disaster. The effect manifests most often in areas of intense occult activity or magical energy, though a few have been known to appear before strictly mundane fires, floods, industrial accidents, or riots. They appear to exist as a kind of temporal shadow of the incipient event, ensuring that all the necessary elements are in place for its arrival. Some hypothesize that the syndrome is a parasitic outsider that feeds on the energies released by the disaster, while others claim that it is actually a form of immanentized temporal glitch with its own strange agenda.

The syndrome manifests in a man or woman who is positioned to be an important figure in the upcoming tragedy. The victim’s actions are shaped so as to ensure that the disaster causes the greatest possible destruction and loss of life, and they seek especially to hinder any attempt to prepare for the catastrophe or avert its occurrence.

A person in the grip of the Harbinger syndrome will instinctively be aware of the necessary seeds of chaos that must be sown and will rationalize their actions with progressively more elaborate self-delusions. They will use their authority to the best of their ability to bring about these outcomes, and will do absolutely anything necessary to bring about the event.

The malice of the Harbinger is easily confused with ordinary incompetence, but the Harbinger’s presence also creates a kind of

temporal duplication in those around them. When a given person fails to perform their necessary role in bringing about the disaster, a doppelganger is generated by the Harbinger to perform the necessary actions. These doppelgangers are indistinguishable from the originals, and have the exact same memories, personalities, and attitudes save for an overwhelming need to perform whatever disruptive action is necessary to contribute to the disaster. These duplicates are subtle enough to avoid being seen in public with their originals when possible, but they are driven to perform their role at all costs.

If directly confronted, the Harbinger is extremely difficult to harm, as it possesses an intuitive foresight of the necessary steps it must take to defend itself and can only be injured by magical artifacts or sorcery. A more effective way to deal with the Harbinger syndrome is to cure it, by completely preventing all possibility of the disaster. This prevention usually comes down to a handful of crucial events that must all be halted or changed in order to sufficiently weaken the disaster’s possibility.

HARBINGER

<i>AC:</i> 2	<i>Move:</i> 30'
<i>HD:</i> 5	<i>Morale:</i> 10
<i>Atks:</i> weapon +5	<i>Dmg:</i> by weapon
<i>Skill:</i> +3	<i>Madness:</i> None / 1d6
<i>Special:</i> Foresight	<i>Save:</i> 13+

LYCANTHROPE

The lycanthrope is a man or woman infested by an alien parasitic predator. These entities are denizens of some strange Kelipah where inhuman beasts hunt and slaughter each other in an endless, blind circle of consumption. While some of them bear some resemblance to terrestrial animals such as wolves, bears, or great cats, the similarity appears to be largely coincidental. Survivors of lycanthrope attacks are perhaps justifiably imprecise in describing the appearance of their monstrous assailants.

The parasite randomly infects certain humans, most often those that have extensive occult dealings or who possess exceptionally horrible hungers and appetites. These men and women become husks for the nourishing of the parasite’s needs, their own personalities and identities little more than a light patina over the parasite’s urges. The entity desires to consume; its understanding of this process is colored by the thoughts of its host, so it tends to be extremely aggressive and grasping in all aspects of life, allowing itself the more primal pleasure of cannibalism only when it is safe to do so.

An infected host is capable of changing shape into a monstrous animal or a terrible humanoid hybrid at will. They do so most often at night, when it is more discreet, though the creatures they become have no better night vision than the host. As a consequence they prefer moonlit nights to simplify navigation on their rampages. While they have a bestial appearance, their other senses are not necessarily any better than that of their original human form.

In its human shape, the host has its normal statistics and qualities, albeit it can only be reduced below 1 hit point by a magical weapon, sorcery, or a relatively pure silver implement. The argent metal is toxic to the parasite’s system, and it will avoid it at all costs.

Transforming into a beast or hybrid requires only one round, and in such a shape they use the statistics given below and are immune to all damage save that from magic weapons, spells, or silver. Their bestial shape can pass for a normal animal if viewed at a distance, but from within a few meters the excess eyes, spiky “fur”, and other aberrant alterations are obviously unnatural.

Lycanthropes want chiefly to feed their hungers, most often for human flesh, but also for whatever depraved urges the host originally had. Every so often, however, a victim is not killed, but is merely badly injured by the beast. This victim becomes the host for a new spawn of the parasite, and will gradually transform into a lycanthrope within the next month unless its progenitor is hunted down and killed.

LYCANTHROPE

<i>AC:</i> 7*	<i>Move:</i> 40'
<i>HD:</i> 7	<i>Morale:</i> 11
<i>Atks:</i> bite +8 / claw +8 x2	<i>Dmg:</i> 1d6
<i>Skill:</i> +3	<i>Madness:</i> 1d8
<i>Special:</i> 1d8 Slaughter die	<i>Save:</i> 12+

MACGUFFIN

The Macguffin is an outer entity attuned to chords of human need. It senses the frantic desire of a mortal for some particular object and transforms itself into that very thing, appearing in exactly the place that the finder hopes to discover it. The Macguffin might thus appear as a specific occult grimoire, a briefcase full of cash, an incriminating love letter, or anything else that a person desperately desires to obtain. The true object is not affected in any way.

Once obtained, the Macguffin behaves exactly like the original object. If it mimics a grimoire, it contains the original tome's spells and lore. A mimicked magical item functions exactly as the original. For a period of 1d6 weeks, everything appears to be perfectly normal about the Macguffin, even to the point of defeating most spells of detection.

After this lull, however, the Macguffin starts "infecting" other objects the owner uses and possesses. Clothing usually comes first, and then the tools of their trade, and eventually vehicles and homes. This infection is subtle. At first, the GM should simply call for a reroll of a successful hit or skill check once per session when a person uses a Macguffin-infected object to accomplish the end. The objects twist, break, or betray their users with an almost intelligent malevolence.

Within two or three months, Macguffin-infected objects are a thorough plague upon their users. The need to reroll a successful skill check or hit roll changes from once per session to once per game hour, and once during the session an object will inevitably catastrophically fail.

SHIBBOLETH

The Shibboleth are a horrific race of alien intruders that are quite literally unnameable to ordinary men and women. They come in a wide variety of monstrous shapes, usually insectile or octopoidal in nature, most somewhat larger than a human being. They do not understandably communicate with humans, though they seem to be capable of coordinating among themselves.

The particular horror of the Shibboleth is that those who see them either live or on video recordings are completely unable to convey this knowledge to anyone else. They cannot speak of it, or write of it, or even intentionally allude to the existence of the aliens or any of their activities, even if the monsters are directly in front of them. To even defend themselves requires a Mental Effect saving throw which may be rerolled at the start of each round until a success is achieved. Such victims may then fight back until the Shibboleth is no longer visible.

A victim can overcome this compulsion of silence by pushing through it, suffering 1d10 Madness in the process. Once the compulsion is overcome, the victim may act normally toward the Shibboleth for one week before the price must be paid again. NPCs almost never have the strength of will to make this mental sacrifice.

Shibboleth are usually found in small, isolated communities. The natives are perfectly aware of the aliens' presence, but can do nothing to call for help or even admit that anything is wrong, even as their friends and relatives are taken and used for strange, foul purposes by the aliens.

Eventually, every object the Macguffin's owner even touches for a moment will become infected by the entity's malign awareness, which will seek to destroy them and all their associates.

The only way to lift this infection is to destroy the Macguffin. While the object itself is no harder to smash than any other item of its kind, it can provoke maniacal desire in others to take it and keep it from the original owner. Anyone aware of the Macguffin's existence might be touched by this compulsion, and must make a Mental Effect saving throw to avoid seeking desperately to obtain and protect the item until its owner is dead. Such obsessives will not use methods or violence wholly alien to their natures, but they will break laws to obtain it, and will instinctively know its location at all times.

As a last resort, the Macguffin is capable of animating objects around itself to fend off assailants. Humanoid shapes of knotted clothing or vengeful pieces of furniture can swarm its foes in great numbers, and the statistics below describe one such common manifestation.

MEDIUM-SIZED MACGUFFIN SERVANT

<i>AC:</i> 6	<i>Move:</i> 20'
<i>HD:</i> 1	<i>Morale:</i> 12
<i>Atks:</i> batter +0	<i>Dmg:</i> 1d6
<i>Skill:</i> +0	<i>Madness:</i> 1
<i>Special:</i> Inanimate	<i>Save:</i> 15+

The Shibboleth often construct strange buildings and monumental edifices in these communities, ones that the locals can't acknowledge even when they pass by them each day. Any outsider who arrives and sees these structures is likewise struck dumb by the Shibboleth's mental cloud, and most simply leave as quickly as possible.

Those who are able to get away from the Shibboleth usually try to rationalize them as hallucinations or mental breakdowns. Those few souls who have been able to resist the effect long enough to write about them are derided as lunatics and fabulists. After all, everyone who has gone to these supposed nests of alien intrusion report that nothing at all is out of the ordinary there.

Shibboleth are not especially aggressive toward humans, largely ignoring them save when some are needed for various terrible purposes. When engaged in combat, they will usually fight with pincers or tentacles, though some use alien devices. Their technology is powerful, but rapidly degrades into powder when separated from its owner.

AVERAGE SHIBBOLETH

<i>AC:</i> 7	<i>Move:</i> 30'
<i>HD:</i> 3	<i>Morale:</i> 10
<i>Atks:</i> tentacle +3 x2	<i>Dmg:</i> 1d8
<i>Skill:</i> +2	<i>Madness:</i> 1d8
<i>Special:</i> Unnameable	<i>Save:</i> 14+

SPOKEN ONE

A Spoken One is an amorphous, bull-sized mass of pale ocher tissue that sweats an acrid slime. It conceals itself in some well-defended location, operating largely through human-appearing minions it buds off from its main mass. These servitors have the statistics of ordinary humans and can masquerade quite well as them, but a conversation of more than five minutes' length will reveal repetitions in their speech and disturbing observations about their comportment. Most Spoken Ones can bud only one servant a week, though as its power increases it becomes able to manufacture one each day, or even one each hour.

The goal of a Spoken One is to have its name repeated by humans. A Spoken One's full name is virtually unpronounceable by a human throat, and so it is forced to encourage the repetition of sections of its name, often in the form of chants, catchphrases, slang terms or song lyrics. The speakers do not have to be aware of the word's nature, but the more often each fragment is repeated, the more powerful the Spoken One becomes and the more lifelike and realistic its servitors are able to appear.

Once a critical number of servitors are available, they work to capture humans to feed the Spoken One's acidic mass. A weak Spoken One is unable to bud servitors of any great sophistication, and these minions will often simply leave graffiti of the name's fragments or pay idlers to chant along with it. Their strange behavior makes it difficult for such efforts to draw much positive attention, but the elements of a Spoken One's name are strangely compelling, and sometimes a singer or artist

will pick up a piece of the name as a touchstone for some creation. Such an effort can suddenly ramp a Spoken One's influence up to a dangerous degree of power.

A Spoken One will usually save at least some of its servitors to defend its lair, often arming them with human weaponry. Some cults have also formed around a Spoken One, chanting its name in exchange for aid from its minions or secret truths of sorcerous power. The first sign of a Spoken One's presence in a community is usually the rash of disappearances that go hand in hand with its growth.

A Spoken One is immune to Slaughtering hits, having no important physical organs to defend. Anyone attacking it with a melee weapon will inevitably suffer 1d6 damage on a successful hit as acidic slime splashes the assailant. Bullets always do minimum damage to a Spoken One, though shotguns create enough of a divot to inflict normal damage. The tendrils that the Spoken One extends are covered with a sticky, acidic goo that does 1d6 damage the following round after each hit.

SPOKEN ONE

<i>AC:</i> 7	<i>Move:</i> 20'
<i>HD:</i> 8	<i>Morale:</i> 12
<i>Atks:</i> tendril +6 x4	<i>Dmg:</i> 1d8
<i>Skill:</i> +2	<i>Madness:</i> 1d10
<i>Special:</i> Hardy, Acidic	<i>Save:</i> 11+

WALKER BETWEEN

The Walker Between is a denizen of the empty spaces between this world and the alien realms of the Kelipah. They seek to pierce fresh holes between the realms, mingling humanity and the dwellers in these distant places. Their only interest is the destruction of wards, barriers, and boundaries of all kinds, both literal and metaphorical.

Walkers Between are sometimes petitioned by cults who seek to open gateways to their dark paradises or portals to some long-lost trove of sorcerous lore. The creatures are willing to deal with the sorcerers who call them forth, but they demand a high price in comminglings and conjoinings. Surgical melding of victims, the blending of inanimate objects and living flesh, and the destruction of social distinctions are all sacrifices that Walkers Between have demanded of their petitioners.

Disparate things drawn together and mingled give it something that might be described as pleasure in a more human mind, but the Walker Between remains fundamentally alien. It doesn't seem to understand or care about human capabilities, and can sometimes demand confusions that aren't even possible to enact without black sorcery. Even when they are possible to perform, these demands are often cryptic and confused, though failure to perform them brings dire consequences.

If the price is paid the Walker Between will open the gate and maintain it for as long as their pact indicated. The Walker Between need not remain at the site of the gate, but must still be in the same general vicinity. The entity must be kept placated with a steady supply of

mingled things if it is to keep to the bargain, and the disappearances and unrest that their demands produce tend to be noticeable to others.

The Walker itself is a tall humanoid shrouded in countless ragged swaths of cloth-like substance. Long, curved blades of black glass occasionally reach from within its sleeves to sever objects and people from their appropriate context. It does not speak; instead, sounds and words spoken around it are warped into the messages it wishes to convey. If all the creature's wrappings are dragged away from it, nothing will be found beneath.

The Walker's command over space and distance is sufficient to make it immune to any attack launched from further away than melee range, even that of targeted spells. Those attempting to harm the creature must fight through a haze of duplicates and distortions to land a blow, and even then the creature is immune to Slaughtering hits from mundane weapons. Its scythe-like claws can do horrific damage and roll 1d12 for their Slaughter die.

WALKER BETWEEN

<i>AC:</i> 5	<i>Move:</i> 100' teleport
<i>HD:</i> 8	<i>Morale:</i> 12
<i>Atks:</i> claw x2	<i>Dmg:</i> 1d8
<i>Skill:</i> +2	<i>Madness:</i> 1d8
<i>Special:</i> 1d12 Slaughter die	<i>Save:</i> 11+

GAME MASTER RESOURCES

RED RAGS AND SHARDS OF BONE

This section of the book contains a number of tables, quick write-ups and other resources for the benefit of a busy GM. Much of the content here was commissioned by the generous patronage of the Bleak Prophets of the Kickstarter campaign that funded *Silent Legions*. Thanks to their generosity, a full ten pages of ideas, optional rules, and extra tools are provided here for your own home use.

Most GMs will get utility out of the Lovecraftian Name Generator. There are only so many combinations of unpleasantly gelatinous noises that come readily to mind, and a quick generator for building more is handy when assembling abomiantions. Additional resources include a spread of potential secret adepts who can be blamed for the start of hideous cults or the authorship of forbidden grimoires. If necessary, they can even be enlisted as the antagonists behind some campaign-threatening scheme of unearthly horror.

Many readers of this book will have had use of the free *Stars Without Number* sci-fi role-playing game, its sister post-apocalyptic game *Other Dust*, or the Africana-flavored fantasy of *Spears of the Dawn*. Many

others will want to make use of material from some of the excellent existing Lovecraftian RPGs, many of which use a D100-based game system rather than the particular strain of old-school games that inspire *Silent Legions*. This section includes guidelines for converting material from these games to and from *Silent Legions*, the better to ensure that you have as much content as possible for the traumatizing of luckless but heroic investigatoors.

Most of the commissioned pieces in this section consist of cults, organizations, or optional rules to add to the flavor of your own campaign. Some are entire campaign premises in their own right, such as “Luchadores Versus Cthulhu”, or academic campaigns centered around some secret-haunted university. Each basic idea was presented by its patrons before I took it in hand and rendered it in gameable form.

Finally, the chapter closes with a list of the noble souls who made *Silent Legions* possible with their special support. Not only is it a roster of honor, it also forms a convenient list of NPC names. Finally, a simple character sheet and an index to the book round out the tome.



LOVECRAFTIAN NAME GENERATOR

Every proper abomination requires a sufficiently thumping name. The tables here will help you formulate a sufficiently mucoid designation for your horrors. You can also make use of the epithet generators in the Mythos chapter to add more titles to your monsters should you want a little more panache for them.

The simplest way to generate a name is to roll once on the table to the right to get a basic structure, roll 1d6+1 find out how many syllables are in the name, and then either create syllables out of the syllable patterns below or roll them whole from the vowelled and unvowelled syllables on the table.

You can also use these tables recursively. If a basic structure is <Name> <Name>, you can roll again for the second element. If you roll a 2, for example, the thing's full name becomes <Name> <Syllable>-<Syllable>. You can repeat the process to any depth to create a sufficiently unpronounceable slush of sounds. Don't hesitate to tweak names and break them into new words at fitting points.

One way to imply a certain connection between creatures is to use the same basic name and syllable structure between them, albeit with different letters. The "rhythm" of the words are made similar this way, even if the actual letters vary greatly. Another way is to pick or make a short list of syllables and then ensure that at least half the syllables in any given name are drawn from this list. For extra cheat value, you can consult an atlas for some remote location and simply swap in new letters and the occasional apostrophe into local names.

D10 BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE NAME

1	<Name>, <Epithet>
2	<Syllable> - <Syllable>
3	<Name> <Name>
4	<Epithet> <Name>
5	<Syllable>'<Name>
6	<Name> - <Syllable>'<Name>
7	<Name> - <Syllable>
8	<Name><Name>
9	<Name>
10	<Syllable>'<Syllable>'<Name>

SYLLABLE STRUCTURE

ROLL	1-3	4-6
1	CCV	C'CV
2	CV	CC'CV
3	CVC	CV-C
4	CVCV	CV-V
5	VC	V'CC
6	VCC	VC-V
7	VCCV	VV-VC
8	VVC	VVV

SINGLE LETTERS

D20	C	V
1	B	A
2	C	A
3	D	A
4	F	E
5	G	E
6	H	E
7	J	I
8	K	I
9	L	I
10	M	I
11	N	O
12	P	O
13	Q	O
14	R	U
15	S	U
16	T	U
17	V	Y
18	W	Y
19	X	Y
20	Z	Y

VOWELLED SYLLABLES

ROLL	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Ab	Gho	Kaa	Oq	Tha	Xa
2	Ag	Gi	Kor	Orth	Thoth	Xe
3	Ah	Gla	Ku	Os	Tru	Xho
4	Ai	Gul	La	Oth	Tul	Xuk
5	And	Gur	Lho	Ox	Tur	Yad
6	Ath	Ha	Lig	Oz	Ub	Yag
7	Ax	Hai	Lo	Pa	Ueb	Yai
8	Aza	Hal	Log	Qo	Ul	Yc
9	Azh	Has	Loth	Qua	Ung	Yg
10	Bith	Hi	Lu	Rha	Ur	Yho
11	Bo	Ho	Luth	Ri	Urt	Yi
12	Cha	Hora	Mu	Rig	Uv	Yl
13	Dag	Hoth	Nag	Rog	Uz	Yog
14	Dao	Hui	Nis	Ryx	Veg	Yr
15	Den	Ia	Nyc	Sa	Vho	Yz
16	Do	Il	Ogh	Sha	Vi	Za
17	Emb	Ion	Oi	Shu	Vog	Zag
18	Et	Iq	Oig	Sog	Vor	Zo
19	Fa	Ith	Olk	Suu	Wa	Zu
20	Fha	Ju	Op	Tel	Wug	Zy

UNVOWELLED

SECRET ADEPTS OF THE WORLD

A GM sometimes has need of historical adepts or occult figures to flesh out the past of his or her world. Other wizards of note are necessary to add flavor to a magical item's background or stud the ugly past of a cult. The tables here provide some basic ideas for creating such arcane adepts, along with their major qualities of interest.

Along with their original region of operation, the tables suggest a motive for studying the dark arts, a particular hallmark magic which survives in stories about their grim deeds, and the manner in which their inevitable end was wrought. Wizards being what they are, however, it's quite possible that their death was not so final as others wish to believe.

D20	REGION	MOTIVE TO STUDY	HALLMARK MAGIC	MANNER OF "DEATH"
1	Central America	Repulse an invading people	Necromancy	Burnt by the locals
2	Central Asia	Possess a desired man or woman	Summoning monsters	Carried off by devils
3	Central Europe	Seize a throne or place of authority	Uttering useful prophecy	Summoned by a god
4	East Africa	Learn ineffable cosmic truths	Curses upon their foe	Vanished from their lair
5	East Asia	Overcome outside oppression	Magical mind-bending	Slain by a great hero
6	Eastern Europe	Destroy a wizardly rival	Enormous physical prowess	Killed by an outsider
7	Middle East	Ascend to godhood	Numerous eldritch minions	Disappeared into the earth
8	North Africa	Overthrow a nation	Conjuring wealth with ease	Executed by angry priests
9	North America	Destroy a race of people	Blasting or blighting gaze	Ascended into heaven
10	Oceania	Call forth a dark god	Summoning storms	Perished in a botched rite
11	Scandinavia	Open a way to a certain Kelipah	Hurling energies	Went mad from their wisdom
12	South America	Achieve unimagined wealth	Causing disasters or quakes	Murdered by an apprentice
13	South Asia	Gain immortality or perfect beauty	Spreading hideous plagues	Died of a rival's curse
14	Southeast Asia	Smite an alien race	Ties with an alien race	Slain during warfare
15	Southern Africa	Become the greatest wizard ever	Impossible beauty and charm	Vanished into wilderness
16	Southern Europe	Seize power for their parent nation	Finding hidden secrets	Seized by an alien race
17	The Baltics	Overthrow a local institution	Partially nonhuman lineage	Transformed into a monster
18	The Kelipot	Forge a new kingdom for their kind	Invoking a dark god's power	A device turned on them
19	West Africa	Addictive lust for arcane power	Forging wondrous devices	A victim avenged themselves
20	Western Europe	Escape a reckless occult bargain	Making charms and potions	Slain by a lover

D8	CENTRAL AMERICA	CENTRAL ASIA	CENTRAL EUROPE
1	A notorious pirate chief	Abbot of a forbidden monastery	Bohemian university scholar
2	Archaeologist of Aztec/Mayan ruins	Ancient tribal shaman	Brutal German Inquisitor
3	Elder shaman of a Caribbean tribe	Bold Chinese or European explorer	Depraved German princeling
4	Gold-hungry conquistador	Cruel Mongol sorcerer	Jesuit Counter-Reformationist
5	Mayan scribe from the culture's peak	Demented Russian warlord	Mage of the Holy Roman Empire
6	Native rebel against outside rulers	Esoteric Himalayan adept	Nazi occult researcher
7	Sinister dictator or local ruler	Merciless Mongol khan	Renegade religious sectarian
8	Spanish priest or inquisitor	Wizard of a cold plateau	Rosicrucian adept

D8	EAST AFRICA	EAST ASIA	EASTERN EUROPE
1	Arab trader-prince	Ascetic mountain priest	Bitter Roma sorcerer
2	Ethiopian royal councilor	Corrupt Buddhist abbot	Ruthless Magyar warlord
3	Heretic Ethiopian Orthodox priest	Immortality-craving warlord	Vengeful priest of Perun
4	Italian colonial adventurer	Learned Confucian sage	Vampiric nobleman
5	Kushite royal sorcerer	Machiavellian concubine	Oppressed peasant hedge-wizard
6	Renegade Egyptian priest	Obsessed Taoist alchemist	WWII-era partisan chieftain
7	Schismatic Islamic missionary	Scheming eunuch wizard	Heretical Hussite priest
8	Sinister forgotten pharaoh	Sinister European missionary	Gnostic adept of Bogomil

D8	MIDDLE EAST	NORTH AFRICA	NORTH AMERICA
1	Ancient Babylonian wizard	Ancient Egyptian priest	20th-century occultist
2	Ancient Zoroastrian fire-priest	Barbary corsair chieftain	African sage brought by slavers
3	Ascetic Christian desert hermit	Berber wanderer	European clergyman from the colonies
4	Brutal Assyrian sorcerer-lord	Christian desert monastery abbot	Grizzled explorer of the interior
5	Coptic or Nestorian Christian clergyman	Heretical Egyptian pharaoh	New Age spiritual enthusiast
6	Djinn-ruling sorcerer	Italian colonial scholar	Scholarly colonist merchant
7	Pre-Islamic Arabian poet	Muslim scholar-warrior	Shaman of a Native American tribe
8	Renegade Muslim sectarian	Pre-Roman Carthaginian scholar	Wealthy dilettante or heir
D8	OCEANIA	SCANDINAVIA	SOUTH AMERICA
1	Aboriginal Australian sage	Brooding forest wizard	Avid explorer of the Amazon
2	Curious European sailor	Eager pagan revivalist	Brutal slaver and plantation owner
3	Dutch colonial official	Grim pagan sorcerer	Crusading Spanish clergyman
4	Hawaiian kahuna	Finnish wizard	Decadent urban official
5	Japanese colonial official	Hermit adept of the occult	Escaped slave turned leader
6	Modern pirate captain	Merciless Viking raider	Hermit of the high Andes
7	Papuan sorcerer or chieftain	Prophetic spae-wife	Inca priest at the height of the empire
8	Polynesian navigator	Red-handed witch-queen	Spanish viceroy or high official
D8	SOUTH ASIA	SOUTHEAST ASIA	SOUTHERN AFRICA
1	Ancient Buddhist monk-teacher	Ancient Khmer sage	Deposed royal heir
2	Buddhist abbot of a mountain monastery	Catholic Jesuit-sorcerer	Exiled Boer magus
3	Heretical Muslim scholar	Champa sorcerer-priest	Fearsome local witch
4	Hindu sage and holy figure	European treasure hunter	Foreign colonial official
5	Inquisitive European scholar-explorer	Exiled Chinese scholar	Great Zimbabwean sage
6	Popular guru-figure	Maddened European explorer	Rebel native prophet
7	Sinister sorcerer-king of a domain	Priest of a jungle-eaten shrine	Resisting local chief
8	Tribal adept of local secrets	Reclusive tribal shaman	Vengeful Herero wizard
D8	SOUTHERN EUROPE	THE BALTICS	THE KELIPOT
1	Etruscan priest	Corrupted Livonian Grand Master	Exiled god-ruler of a fantastic realm
2	Greek philosopher	Heretical Christian missionary	Monstrous impostor of humanity
3	Imported Egyptian cult leader	Vengeful pagan survivor	Impossibly beautiful seductress
4	Italian Renaissance sage	Adept of a degraded faith	Hungry harvester of a necessary food
5	Mad Renaissance artist	Cold War-era Russian political officer	Mad prophet of an alien reality
6	Moorish scholar	Grim Teutonic Knight invader	Priest-king bent on spreading their faith
7	Roman sorcerer-general	Exiled Russian sorcerer	Warped reflection of a hero of our world
8	Spanish Satanic witch	Renegade Polish nobleman	Utterly inhuman entity
D8	WEST AFRICA	WESTERN EUROPE	
1	Ancient mythical sage	Ancient druidic priest	
2	Anti-colonial guerrilla leader	Avaricious royal alchemist	
3	Congolese nganga	Brash natural philosopher	
4	Dahomean royal sorcerer	Celtic sorcerer-chief	
5	Decadent French administrator	Industrialist thrill-seeker	
6	Heretical Western missionary	Secretive heretic leader	
7	Inquisitive slave trader	Sinister court astrologer	
8	Intrepid sea voyager	Wealthy scholar-dilettante	

USING SILENT LEGIONS WITH OTHER GAMES

Silent Legions is built on the same basic mechanical framework as Stars Without Number, so GMs interested in mixing it with SWN or other old-school games shouldn't have much trouble. The adjustments below are some simple tweaks that can be made for those who'd like to use both SWN classes and Silent Legions classes in the same campaign.

The skill list is largely unchanged, albeit Experts now gain Occult and Research as class skills, Psychics gain Research as a class skill, and Silent Legions' Medicine skill references become Tech/Medical. All SWN classes should gain an additional skill point when advancing a level, in order to bring them to parity with the Silent Legions classes.

Madness can be imported largely without alteration into an SWN campaign. For some space-operatic or military campaigns Madness gain due to violence might not fit the genre, and you might choose to drop all Bloodshed-related gains. Other campaigns might put a higher premium on human life and retain the penalties.

If you do use Madness, psychic torching no longer has the possibility of inflicting Wisdom damage. Instead, it inflicts 1d10 Madness each time a Wisdom result is rolled on the torching damage table.

When fighting eldritch creatures, high-tech weapons are no more effective against supernatural abominations than bullets or blades. A monster that is immune to normal weapons is equally immune to laser rifles, sonic cannons, mag rifles, and other typical gear. The PCs might be forced to find actual magical weaponry or special alien technology, or it may be possible to devise some high-tech weapons that can overcome the defenses of these abominations.

You might choose to use the Slaughter die mechanic in your SWN game if you prefer a greater degree of risk in combat than that of conventional SWN. When assigning Slaughter dice to weapons in SWN that aren't already described in Silent Legions, apply 1d6 for most weapons, 1d8 for grenades, rifles and other long guns, 1d10 for two-handed melee weapons, shotguns, and other exceptionally brutal weapons, and 1d12 for weapons that border on crew-served implements of ruin. Gunnery weapons usually use 1d20 unless they fit more perfectly into another category. Particularly large gunnery weapons may simply be fatal.

The Sorcery rules for Silent Legions can be imported wholesale into SWN. Any PC might theoretically learn how to use these arts or master these Disciplines if they're willing to study their occult secrets. An Expert dedicated to these dark arts will have the easiest time attaining the necessary Occult expertise, but other classes can attempt it as well.

ADJUSTING SWN CLASSES

The SWN classes all get Expertise just as Silent Legions characters do, but can only spend it on rerolling class skill checks or activating sorcery or Discipline powers, just as any character can. Their normal class powers do not require Expertise to function, but are adjusted:

- Warriors use their *Veteran's Luck* power as normal, but can spend Expertise to reroll attack rolls, unlike most other classes.

- Experts alter their *Like A Charm* ability. As every class can use Expertise to reroll class skill checks, their ability is changed; they pick a number of skills equal to one-third of their character level, rounded up. Each of these skills thereafter rolls 1d6+6 for skill checks rather than 2d6.
- Psychics function normally, save that when "torching" their powers and using them when out of power points, they can spend an Expertise point to use a power without rolling on the torching damage table.

If a situation seems marginal or muddy, the GM should just make a call and run with it. After the game, the group can discuss it and make a permanent ruling as seems best.

ADDING TRADITIONAL CLASSES

Some GMs might want to run a cross-genre game that includes trusty fantasy tropes. Other GMs will want to add in the classic spellcasting of older games or newer retroclones. While the default flavor of Silent Legions isn't especially given to magic missile spells, orcs, and fireballs, there's nothing preventing a GM from concocting their own style of campaign or introducing the PCs into a Kelipah where such magic is more in-genre.

Most existing old-school classes can be imported with few changes. You'll need to assign a list of class skills and bonus skills to each, but the attack bonuses for each class can usually be imported wholesale, along with hit dice. For saving throws, just rename existing categories, or you can even keep them the same and just decide on a case-by-case which save is most appropriate.

For simplicity's sake, you might just allow each player to pick the Silent Legions class skills that best fit their concept. A Fighter might choose to use Tough skills, a Magic-User might prefer the skills of a Scholar, while a charming rogue might choose to use a Socialite's class skills. This choice doesn't include the special abilities of the class, just their list of class and starting skills.

Combat skills can be tricky to include. In the SWN game engine, they're included to buff the PC's hit bonus just a little, generally to replace the bonus that would be given by magical weaponry in a fantasy campaign. In the absence of an easy abundance of *swords* +2 there's no reason to deny PCs the chance to buy up their Combat skill specialties.

Some imported classes will have special abilities that don't use the Silent Legions skill system, such as the thief skills of some retroclones. The simplest way to deal with them is to just leave them be, and use them instead of the skill system. If you're going to mix and match genres, there's no harm in mixing and matching some systems too. If you prefer a more uniform approach, you can just eyeball a free skill appropriate to their expertise and give it to the PC.

Magic and spell-users can generally be imported without changes. Conventional spellcasting does not induce Madness.

USING MATERIAL FROM D100-BASED GAMES

Many GMs might have an interest in pulling material from some of the excellent Lovecraftian games that use a d100-based system. The most likely pulls from these systems are some of their monsters, spells, and magical effects. It's not hard to convert these for Silent Legions.

Monsters can be carried over largely as given. Hit points and damage done on a hit can be imported as listed for monsters, with a Slaughter die of 1d8 for most monsters, up to 1d20 for truly tremendous eldritch foes. Ordinary human foes and frail uncanny minions might have fewer hit points than listed, down to 1d8 or 2d8 for petty threats.

The hit bonus of a monster is equal to its chance to hit divided by ten, rounded down. Thus, a tentacular horror with a 100% chance to hit would have a hit bonus of +10, while a thug with a 45% chance to hit with a knife would have a bonus of +4. If totals seem a little high for ordinary mooks and thugs, just give them attack bonuses of +0 for raw novices to +4 for hardened and practiced mortal kneebreakers.

Armor classes for monsters should usually be in 5-7 range depending on the thickness of their squamous hides or particular alien constitution. Extremely low armor classes should be reserved for creatures that are exceptionally hard to harm. Almost all eldritch creatures should be immune to Slaughtering hits from mundane attacks, though a few might be vulnerable to common flame or some other mundane substance.

Sanity loss inflicted by a creature can simply be converted to Madness induced by the sight of them.

Many creatures have special powers that rely on challenges to attributes that Silent Legions heroes might not possess. If a creature engages in a contest of attributes with an investigator, just have them both make a saving throw versus Magic or some other category appropriate to the test, with the one who wins by the greatest margin proving the winner of the contest. Other powers inflict damage to a hero's Power attribute; in Silent Legions, treat each point of POW lost as being five additional points of Madness gained. Drains of temporary magic points steal away one point of Expertise instead regardless of the size of the drain.

For monster skill bonuses, assume anywhere from +1 to appropriate skill checks for humans and minor creatures, up to +3 for major menaces, or +5 for outer avatars and the like, assuming there's even a question of their success.

Spells learned from imported grimoires can be cast as regular enchantments. You'll need to assign them a relative spell level, and any Sanity loss caused by their casting is instead added to the Madness of the caster. If you're feeling charitable, you might allow a PC sorcerer to spend a point of Expertise to avoid such Madness gain. If magic points or POW loss is a factor, treat one Expertise point as five magic points and one point of POW loss as 5 points of Madness gain.

The attacks of magical items and arcane weaponry can usually be given a Slaughter die of 1d8. Particularly destructive or murderous weapons might have as much as 1d10, or 1d12 for things that should utterly destroy a human caught in a direct hit.

MIXING AND MATCHING GAMES

One of the most useful traits of old-school inspired games is that the great majority of them are crudely compatible with each other. They may not use the exact same scaling, and they may differ in details or particular mechanics, but you can usually look at one and see roughly how it might fit into another.

As the GM of a sandbox campaign, you should *take shameless advantage* of this. There is an enormous amount of usable material floating around on the web and lurking on the dusty bookshelves of long-time gamers. Monsters, adventures, magic, NPCs, and everything else you need to stitch together years of regular play is just waiting out there for you to lay acquisitive hands on it.

The most important tool you have for salvaging this material is a certain insouciant attitude toward mechanical specifics. Do the pieces not fit together exactly? Are the save categories different? Is the weapon scaling off by a die size? Is it inflicting damage to an attribute your Silent Legions heroes don't have? Don't worry about it. Make a spot decision, scribble it down for reference at the table, and roll on. Your judgment and understanding of the situation is a much better guide to good results than any stack of conversion tables.

In one sense, you have an advantage in the Lovecraftian genre. Players who jump into a Mythos-based game tend to have an extremely pessimistic conception of their character's likely fate. Most of them understand that the game world is neither safe nor fair, and so a ruling that may not be entirely balanced produces an effect that they're half-expecting already. If your spot decision results in a hero being reduced to a thin red paste, well, it's probably a more pleasant death than the one he'd otherwise have encountered.

When stealing material from other games, embrace the power of the reskin. An adventure module like *N1: Against the Cult of the Reptile God* can be transformed from a fantasy setting into a modern-day swamp hamlet on a forgotten bayou just by changing a couple professions, altering a temple description or two, and swapping in some new names.

Monsters that seem ordinary, even banal in a fantasy context can become far more effective when transplanted into a more modern setting. Nothing is as tedious as a 4 hit point goblin in a conventional fantasy game, but import a hideously twisted little imp-man into a decaying tenement's HVAC system and you'll have something fresh and engaging for the players. If a given monster seems a little too familiar in its new context, just slather on an alien trait or two from the Mythos chapter of the book and the players will hardly recognize the thing even when it's digesting their faces.

Even the best and most inventive GM can only produce so much good material at a time. Sometimes real life or creative exhaustion can wear down the most industrious GM, particularly when the PCs start going through sandbox material at a faster-than-anticipated rate. There's no shame in going to the bookshelf and pulling some existing material to reskin and re flavor for your next game. The way your players approach it and the way you as the GM handle their efforts are certain to put your own unique mark on the creation in play.

LUCHADORES AGAINST CTHULHU

There are times when a GM craves an unholy genre mash-up, one that blends elements of two seemingly-contradictory styles. You can do it, you just have to make a little room for the genre assumptions. Here's an example in the form of a *lucha libre*-meets-Lovecraft outline.

SETTING UP THE LUCHADORES

First, go to DriveThruRPG and download Sine Nomine's free ***Black Streams: Solo Heroes*** pamphlet. You can use those rules with ***Silent Legions*** with no real alterations, and they'll turn every PC in the party into a glorious cultist-smashing titan of the squared circle.

Madness gains apply as normal, with the exception that non-fatal violence never inflicts Madness on a luchador. All luchador attacks may be treated as subdual damage, with enemies reduced to zero hit points counted as "defeated" rather than killed. A luchador who does kill a human being suffers the usual Madness gain.

Luchadores have a maximum Madness of 20 instead of 100, but if they exceed this total they instead become fixed on a madly heroic or glorious goal related to the trauma that provoked their frenzy, and will pursue it until it is achieved or they meet their destruction. Their Madness total resets to 0 after achieving the goal or the adventure's end.

Luchadores choose classes and skills as normal. All of them, however, automatically receive the Combat/Unarmed skill at a level of one plus half their level, rounded down, and a 1d8 Fray die. All luchadores, Tough or otherwise, can spend Expertise to reroll missed attack rolls.

Slaughter dice are not used against PCs. Unarmed attacks from a luchador count as magical weapons for purposes of harming foes.

Aside from their normal class abilities, luchadores also can choose one special ability per level from the list to the right. Many luchador abilities can only be used while in their masked persona. A luchador can change from their normal appearance into their masked persona in a single round, provided no one is watching. A luchador's mask cannot be removed nor their identity discerned unless they choose to permit it; the luchador's alter-ego could step around a corner to change and reappear the next round, and onlookers would *still* all mysteriously fail to connect the identities involved.

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

Unsurprisingly, violence is a completely legitimate tactic in this campaign. The eldritch forces of evil in this campaign spend most of their time hiding, and the challenge for the luchadores is more in the vein of discovering them than surviving the waves of minions thrown against them and the final ferocious battle. Their "mundane" identities are used for information-gathering and infiltration, whereupon they spring forth in masked glory to thrash cultist evildoers. If caught before they can mask, they can be in significantly greater danger from the forces of evil, but even without their luchador abilities the average PC is capable of smashing a half-dozen cultists, even at first level.

Luchadores Against Cthulhu was commissioned by the Kickstarter patronage of Matthew B.

LUCHADOR ABILITIES

The list below is merely a set of starting suggestions. Luchadores should feel free to propose their own abilities to the GM when they gain a level. Powers marked with an asterisk may be used even while in their "mundane" alter-ego. Others require that the luchador be masked.

A Blaze of Sincerity*: Roll twice on any skill checks to convince a person of something you think is true, taking the better roll.

A Master of Deceit*: Roll twice on any skill checks to convince a person of something you think is false or deceptive, taking the better roll.

A True Heart*: Once per session, instantly befriend any decent soul.

Adoring Fans: Once per session, while masked, choose an NPC who is present. They turn out to be a zealous fan.

Avenging Pursuit*: When someone harms you or your allies, you may mark them for vengeance. You will always have a general sense of their direction thereafter until you avenge yourself or mark another.

Bulletproof: Spend an Expertise point to ignore gunfire for a round. You may do this at any time, including after a successful hit roll.

Defender of Innocents: In a fight containing bystanders or someone you're protecting, foes will always attack you and your allies in preference to them. To resist the urge requires that foes save vs. Magic.

Distracting Gesture*: Once per session, distract everyone present long enough to change into your mask unnoticed, no matter how unlikely. This ability can be used when you in your "mundane" persona.

Friend of the People: Once per session, use this ability to cause an ordinary man or woman to suddenly appear and provide relevant aid.

Grappler's Grip: The person you hit with an unarmed attack most recently can't get away from you.

Heroic Rush: Once per fight, you can dash to any point within sight, regardless of obstacles, sheer surfaces, or attempts to block you.

High Flying: You suffer no damage from falls and can leap 10 meters.

Hunger For Life*: You can out-eat, out-drink, and out-enjoy any mere mortal. You are immune to poisons and never actually seem to need to sleep, regardless of your exertions or nocturnal escapades.

Ill-Gotten Gains*: Once per session, instantly produce an item you just happen to have stolen recently. It can be up to a car in size, and must be something that could have been acquired in the city. Specific, unique items cannot be stolen. The police never catch you.

Invincible Will: When reduced to zero hit points, continue acting for 1d4 rounds before falling unconscious.

Mano a Mano: When you fight a significant opponent without the aid of your friends, your foe's allies cannot attack you or otherwise interfere.

Sense the Stench of Evil*: Spend an Expertise point to detect whether or not eldritch powers are involved with a person, place, or thing.

So Rudo*: You suffer no Madness from killing bad people.

Submission Hold: When you strike down a human foe, you may spend an action to ask them one question which they must answer truthfully before passing out. The answer comes as no more than a sentence.

Terrifying Anger: Spend an Expertise point to force every foe who can see you to make a Morale check at -1. You can do this once per fight.

The Circle Is Squared*: You suffer no Madness from impossible sights.

Unstoppable Technique: Your Fray die affects even foes with more Hit Dice than you have levels.

Whirlwind of Wrath: Your Fray die always does one more point of damage than what is rolled on the die.

DARK VISIONS

Constant exposure to otherworldly reality has the potential to infect an investigator's senses. An incessant barrage of alien insights and foreign perceptions can permanently warp a PC's capacity to perceive the world around them, and this damage can be ruinous to their sanity. Despite the cost, however, these unearthly insights can be very valuable to investigators willing to endure them.

These rules are optional ways to reflect that sensory damage that comes from excessive exposure to alien forces. A GM is under no obligation to use these rules, but they can provide an additional route for getting information to the players, with a commensurate cost for the insight.

A PC who has reached 20 points of Madness has a chance of being infected by these visions. If these rules are used, the PC must roll a Mental Effect saving throw. On a success, they manage to block out the insights, though they must repeat this save at 40, 60, and 80 points of Madness. If the PC fails the saving throw— or chooses to fail it— their senses become tainted by the light of these ruinous worlds.

If a PC is affected the GM should roll on the tables to the right, determining the sense that is affected, the type of insights it grants, and the side effect that occurs when the PC embraces their awareness. Some GMs might prefer to roll randomly each time the visions are invoked, though this can make the player more reluctant to consult the senses if they can't be sure they'll get anything useful from them. Most of the time these insights merely harass the PC, introducing small artifacts and quirks of perception that mean nothing understandable and only serve to disquiet the PC.

Once per session, however, the PC can attempt to focus on these insights and extract some meaning from them. The PC must be in the presence of the person or situation they wish to interrogate with their visions, though the insight might show them something distant or seemingly unrelated. The PC immediately suffers 1d8 Madness from the effort, with no way to lessen the damage or grow accustomed to the perceptions. The PC also incurs the usual side effect of their insight, even if it is highly inconvenient for their situation.

If the PC survives this consultation, they get a useful piece of information related to the type of insight their visions provide. This data is conveyed through the affected sense; it might be whispers of alien voices, halos or images that guide them, smells that reveal a metaphorical truth, or the brief sensation of some physical fact. The GM should make up something appropriate to the sense and the fact. It should be clear enough that the PCs get the general gist of the fact, but it doesn't need to be perfectly lucid.

From a game perspective, these visions are an easy way for the GM to give the players information they may have missed or mistaken. The Madness cost discourages PCs from giving in to the insights too often, though it's cheap enough to be tempting all the same. As the GM, don't hesitate to prompt the PCs if a little more temptation is needed.

Dark Visions was commissioned by the Kickstarter patronage of Adam Anderson.

D6 SENSE AFFECTED

1	Sight. The insights come visually.
2	Hearing. The hints are audible in nature.
3	Smell. Something olfactory cues the possessor.
4	Touch. A physical sensation is the clue.
5	Taste. Some unnatural taste floods the PC's awareness.
6	None. The PC just intuitively knows the insight.

D8 TYPE OF INSIGHT GRANTED

1	A warning of some impending danger.
2	Identification of an impostor or false seeming.
3	Location of something important to the adventure.
4	The truthfulness or deceit of a statement.
5	The nature and powers of a magical object or effect.
6	The way to harm or foil a supernatural entity or its plans.
7	The place the PC needs to be for their purposes.
8	An ally or friend in need of aid or useful to the PCs.

D20 SIDE EFFECT OF THE VISION

1	Minor bleeding from eyes and ears for a minute.
2	The PC is blinded for 1d4 rounds.
3	The PC is struck mute for 1d4 minutes.
4	A momentary convulsion, causing the PC to drop items.
5	The PC is paralyzed for one round.
6	The PC is deafened for ten minutes.
7	The PC exudes a deeply foul odor for 1d4 minutes.
8	The PC vomits, costing them their action for the round.
9	The PC is shaken, and cannot sleep that night.
10	The PC blurts out what they sense.
11	Compelled to flee at least 10 meters away from people.
12	The PC must spend at least 1d4 rounds trying to hide.
13	The PC refuses to talk of the vision for ten minutes.
14	The PC can talk only of the vision for ten minutes.
15	The PC savagely insults all around them for one minute.
16	The PC blasphemes against all decency for one minute.
17	Any occult entities there immediately focus on the PC.
18	The PC reflexively drops or discards all weaponry.
19	The PC blurts out a secret that is important to them.
20	The PC laughs convulsively for 1d4 minutes.

THE SECRET DEGREES OF PRINCE HALL FREEMASONRY

While Lovecraftian stories often lend to a universal feeling of alienation and despair, some GMs like to add in the existence of powers and organizations dedicated to human good. These groups might have access to their own special abilities that aren't aligned with the malevolent outer powers. An example of this is given here, for those GMs who want a little more hope mixed in with their Mythos.

PRINCE HALL FREEMASONRY

Conventional history records the foundation of African-American Freemasonry as the result of the efforts of Prince Hall, a freeman of Boston. Together with other free men of the city, his unsuccessful attempt to join the St. John's Lodge of Boston eventually gave birth to the first African-American lodge in 1784.

Over the years, Prince Hall Freemasonry developed into a determined and accomplished branch of Freemasonry, accepting members that would otherwise be denied fellowship by the white-only lodges of the times. Today it exists in two branches that include lodges in America, Canada, Liberia, and the Caribbean.

Unbeknownst to its general membership and the eyes of the wider public, however, Prince Hall was more than a respectable craftsman and outspoken abolitionist. He and his fellows sought the aid of Masonry to defend the African-American community of Boston from the encroaching of dark powers that preyed upon the poor and marginal of the town. Out of a combination of disinterest in their plight and scorn for their race, they were rejected, but they were not daunted.

Prince Hall and his companions were eventually able to gain recognition for their lodge from the Duke of Cumberland, an English Mason who passed along certain volumes of esoteric lore. The group worked feverishly to gather whatever occult knowledge they could find; being as they were in a former colony of England, that largely meant European forms of magic and sorcery. Some African forms of magic were gleaned from former slaves and familial tradition, but the lack of trained ngangas, hounngans, and other specialists hampered the development of these arts. Pressed for time and needing the fastest solution available, Prince Hall and his colleagues focused on Hermetic sorcery as the means for their defense.

The true nature of the lodge was never commonly known, even by the majority of its members. They were good men, but not meant for the kind of life-or-death struggles and unspeakable knowledge that the community required for its defense. They provided support, information, and selected recruits to the deeper organization— the “secret degrees” of Prince Hall Freemasonry.

THE SECRET DEGREES

The conventional lodges of this tradition have largely the same degrees and customs as other branches of Freemasonry. Every lodge, however, has at least one member initiated into the secret degrees, by which the truth of the world and the awful dangers that surround humanity is revealed to them. Most of these recruits are survivors of some horror, those with practical knowledge of the truth and the proven ability to survive attacks of the outer darkness.

These men— and in the modern day, women— are charged with protecting their communities from the incursions of occult power. So often abandoned by the great, so regularly sacrificed for the interests of others, they remain a stubborn and grimly-determined band of defenders of their own and others less esteemed by the world.

Those brought into the secret degrees are known as “Apprentices”, and allowed knowledge of the truth of the world. Apprentices are tasked with the work of rooting out threats and gathering occult resources, and might number as many as a dozen in a large lodge. Apprentices of proven ability and experience might be elevated as a “Fellowcraft Mason” responsible for managing the plans of a lodge and inducting Apprentices. Fellowcraft Masons who show exceptional competence are raised as Master Masons, charged with overseeing whole regions. Together, a council of Master Masons determines the overall goals of the secret order and acts as a clearinghouse for information passed between the lodges.

Service to the secret degrees exacts a brutal price. Many members are forced into inactivity by wounds, mental illness, or simple exhaustion. Even these inactive members can be of aid to new Apprentices, however, often teaching valuable lore or providing contacts in the field.

THE SUBTLE ARTS

Deprived of conventional authority by a hostile society, members of the secret degrees have fallen back on a remarkable grasp of Hermetic sorcery and classical magic. Centuries of syncretic study and invocation have created a tradition of magical power unique to Prince Hall Freemasonry, and one that often surprises their foes.

These powers appear to be drawn largely from angelic entities known to Hermetic tradition or the African gods of their ancestors. These entities seem at least partially willing to aid humanity if properly approached, and the secret degrees have had centuries to perfect their arts.

Depending on the GM's preferences for their games, a member of the secret degrees can choose the Magic-User class from a more conventional retroclone, or the Nganga class from *Sine Nomine's Spears of the Dawn* game. The latter class requires no real adaptation for use with *Silent Legions*, while the former can be adjusted with the game conversion guide given earlier in this section.

PCS AND THE SECRET DEGREES

GMs might choose to allow player characters from the order, most likely a group of Apprentices recruited to defend their community from a horror that others don't bother to contest. While the membership of the secret degrees is overwhelmingly African-American, it's not impossible that the order might bend to allow less conventional membership. Some modern members advocate a wider scope of recruitment, the better to find more people willing to fight the powers of the outer dark, while others fear the loss of the uniquely African-American character of the organization and its long-held purpose of community defense.

The Secret Degrees were commissioned by the Kickstarter patronage of Peter Olfelt.

THE PALIMPSEST SOCIETY

The world is not as it seems to be. The past is not as it is said to be. The truth is not as it must be. The Palimpsest Society is a hidden cabal of conspirators, one fragmented into dozens of smaller cells throughout the globe. The lesser covens are obsessed with conspiracies and hidden revelations, while the secret masters of the society know the real truth— that the Palimpsest Society does not discover reality, but instead manufactures it.

The elders of the Society are devout cultists of an entity known only as Azug-Koth, the White Wind of Revision. This creature has no tangible form in mundane reality, no physical nexus that can be harmed or banished. Instead, it is a presence, one that pours into the world through specially-fashioned names, rituals, and beliefs. Where the White Wind passes, the past itself melts and changes, and things that were once ludicrous conspiracy theories become all too real.

Each of the lesser cabals is a circle of conspiracy theorists carefully chosen by their superiors. These cultists are fed scraps of information, hints of some greater truth in line with their particular manias and weaknesses. Their search for further evidence, their repetition of carefully-chosen names and dates, their ritualistic recreations of events... all of these things are calculated to open a way for Azug-Koth. The more people that believe in these conspiracy theories, the broader the way that is opened for this terrible creature.

The manifestation of Azug-Koth is subtle, but dreadfully powerful. Azug-Koth gradually makes true the conspiracy theories of those who summon it. Ridiculous congeries of coincidence and random fact can become the mere outlines of deeper truth, with people appearing in history, documents appearing in archives, even recorded footage turning up where it's "always been". Most insidiously, those around this change are usually entirely incapable of noticing the alteration, or remembering the original facts. Only those that have been touched by the Outer Powers and forced to confront their alien reality are able to remember what the truth used to be, and even then they find that old documents have shifted and clear proof of its falsehood has been written out of the present.

Investigators have found three ways to halt the machinations of one of these lesser cults. The most brutal simply kill the cultists, though such murders can sometimes form the seed of yet another cult, one now convinced that their predecessors were on to some terrible truth. More patient investigators seek out proof that the cultists are wrong, and try to convince them to give up their delusive pursuits. As difficult as that is, some find it easier to simply muddy the waters for the cult, bringing them new connections and conspiratorial truths that dilute the original theory and send them chasing off in directions useless to the Society. It is not enough that a thing be a conspiracy theory, after all— it must be the *right* theory, with the right names and acts and beliefs to call down Azug-Koth.

The inner cabals, those that guide the Society as a whole, are a different matter. They are convinced that bringing Azug-Koth into this world will leave it mutable and subject to their wishes. The more that the outer power warps and molds human history, the more these sorcerer-cultists

will learn of ways to use those changes for their own benefit. Their worship of the creature is wholly instrumental in nature; if Azug-Koth even has sentience, it is of a kind no human can understand. They propitiate it with sacrifices of evidence, ritually destroying documents and people that might disprove a conspiracy theory.

The cloud of forgetfulness that Azug-Koth's presence inflicts on humans is the cult's best defense. When one of their schemes succeeds, the change is imperceptible to all save those investigators who have been touched by the Mythos. Any creature that has suffered at least one point of Madness from a Mythos event can still remember the former, real state of affairs, but others are unaware of any change in the past. This memory is all they have; documents or other proof they may have vanishes or is changed with Azug-Koth's immanence.

Unsurprisingly, all of the theories the Palimpsest Society encourages are ones of blood and horror. Several cults are working diligently to "prove" dozens of hidden past atrocities as the direct work of, alternately, the Jews, Chinese, white males, Muslims, Christians, gray aliens, and for some reason, the Belgians. Some wild-eyed investigators insist that major world events such as the Crusades or the Belgian massacres in the Congo did not happen until a successful series of Palimpsest Society maneuvers created them out of whole cloth. Others seek to blame the Society for wholly human horrors, pretending to a human past that never really existed.

It is impossible to tell how much of the world's history has been changed by the Society's machinations. Investigators have been able to discern that the more significant the effect, the more elaborate the efforts necessary to "prove" it— but even seemingly trivial conspiracies can have ongoing consequences to the march of history. Some believe that the Society itself is rent by inner disputes over what the new reality should be, and it is only this conflict between its sorcerous leaders that keeps it from rewriting history entirely.

PALIMPSEST CULTS

Conspiracy cells almost always form around a single agent of the Palimpsest Society, one fully aware of the artificial nature of the conspiracy. This agent may not be the apparent leader of the cell, but their guidance and careful planting of names, artifacts, and documents is necessary in order to "seed" the outer cult with the correct elements to summon Azug-Koth.

This agent of the inner circle will be willing to sacrifice the cult to outside investigators if necessary to save their own life; these sorcerers are in it for power rather than the service of Azug-Koth. Persistent foes might be made the focus of a conspiracy to alter their past appropriately.

Investigators are most likely to come into contact with the cult when they learn that a clear past memory is being disputed by a conspiracy theory— and then evidence that they *know* never existed suddenly appears. Investigating the cult will soon reveal its sorcerous efforts.

The Palimpsest Society was commissioned by the Kickstarter patronage of Ali Sajid Imami.

THE GOAT MOTHER

The entity known as the “Goat Mother” is a power worshiped by the lonely and the desperate. Those who dream beyond their power to create pray for her sanctifying inspiration, and those who are barren and lacking yearn for her ineffable blessings. A fundamentally alien sentience, her worshipers conceive of her as a kind of fertility goddess, one who can quicken all manner of creation in the wombs and minds of her faithful.

The truth is something far less comforting, of course. The Goat Mother infests her faithful with a force that both brings forth desires and sets them in opposition to their creator. She births strifes and generates struggle between makers and that which they have made. Many of her devotees are unwilling to acknowledge this tension, but others are content to suffer destruction if only they can bring their desire into the world.

The Goat Mother’s cult revolves around the unnatural fecundity her blessings grant, a fertility not only of the flesh, but also of ideas and physical creations. The Goat Mother brings forth wonders from a devotee’s body and mind, marvels to fulfill their every heartfelt wish... and some purposes that they perhaps were not imagining.

A cultist who is determined to invoke the Goat Mother must engage in large amounts of intercourse with other people— sexual intercourse if progeny are desired, or intellectual, social, or artistic intercourse if a different kind of creation is to be birthed. The influence of other minds is crucial in the process, and not without a price for those who deal with the cultist.

Anyone who interacts with the worshiper in the relevant way— sex, debate, jam sessions, or whatever other process aids their creation— must make a saving throw versus Magic or lose one attribute point from the most relevant attribute. For sexual involvement, this is usually Constitution, while Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma might be stolen for other works. If the victim avoids all contact with the devotee for seventy-seven days, any lost attribute points will recover. If they are reduced below 3 in any one attribute, they will either die, go catatonic, or become hopelessly and permanently insane depending on the particular attribute being drained.

Once the devotee has harvested 21 attribute points from one or more victims, they can create their desired magnum opus. In the case of physical offspring, the gestation takes place over seven days and nights; the Goat Mother’s creative force is so potent that even male devotees may bear her spawn. For works of art, science, or eldritch engineering, the creation is assembled over the same timespan, assuming the raw materials are available. Once the devotee has accumulated the necessary energy, they *must* create their desire within seventy-seven days, or the completed desire will erupt from their skulls.

In most ways, the created desire is exactly what the devotees wished: a beautiful child, a magnificent work of art, a penetrating scientific idea, a marvelous eldritch device, or some other suitable wonder. It will work as it was meant to work if it is an object, and will grow and mature just as any other human if it was born a child.

At its core, however, all the spawn of the Goat Mother are antithetical. They exist in opposition to their desired purpose. Some oppose subtly, by inconspicuous flaws that poison the supposed good they do, while others are more blatant, such as a beautiful daughter who turns her elderly mother’s home into an abattoir. The things the devotees get from the Goat Mother are never willing to be what the devotees really wanted. Even the most human-seeming spawn is a construct of dark sorcery, and even the most rational new scientific theory never produces results pleasing to human desires.

CULT STRUCTURE

Goat cults commonly begin with a single initiate, one that has either fled a collapsing cult elsewhere or has come upon the secrets of the initiatory rites in some lost tome or dark vision. This initiate requires both fellow cultists and breeding victims to enact the necessary rituals, and so they are quick to form groups that serve that sinister end. Swinger clubs, musical groups, art societies, and entire scientific departments have been used as covers for a goat cult.

While harvesting energy from victims can be done discreetly, the actual rites of worship are every bit as hideous as might be expected from such a cult. A steady supply of victims is necessary to keep the devotee in favor with their goddess. Many of them are victims of the cultist’s sorcerous hunger, drained to the point of uselessness before being sacrificed on the Goat Mother’s altar. Others are used in hideous rites of propitiation. No willing member of a goat cult remains untainted by their choice for long.

Cults to the Goat Mother tend to end in blood. The perfect child grows old enough to exert its antithetical purpose, the marvelous device turns on its creator, or the beautiful idea brings about the slaving insanity of its maker. A few cults manage to sidestep this self-destruction by forcing victims to serve as physical or intellectual broodmares; they’re tortured or coerced into becoming cultists and bringing into existence what the cult conditions them to desire. Should they succeed, the destructive consequences will fall on them rather than the cult as a whole... or so it is hoped. Such hopes are not uncommonly in vain.

The objects that a cult fashions can live on beyond their creators, and can even prove very useful to others who discover them in the wreckage of a ruined cell. For a while, these devices or ideas prove perfectly loyal to their purpose, doing just what they were intended to do. Inevitably, however, the device begins to turn on its possessor, perverting their intention and drawing in dark consequences. No one can use such a device or associate with a spawn of the Goat Mother for long without being betrayed by their intrinsic defiance.

Most relics and spawn die or disappear not long after their creation. They are destroyed by anguished victims, evaporate in a cloud of intrinsic impossibility, or otherwise disappear from the knowledge of humanity. This fate is not universal, however, and there are times when a long-forgotten “gift” may yet return to the waking world of men.

The Goat Mother was commissioned by the Kickstarter patronage of Harold Wagener.

MYTHOS ABERRATIONS

Playing a different game and want to add a dose of Mythos weirdness to it? Pick one or more of the tables here and give them a roll to add a twist or two to an otherwise conventional encounter, situation, or obscure magical relic.

The Mythos Aberrations were commissioned by the Kickstarter patronage of Linus Råde.

D4 THEY'RE NOT FROM AROUND HERE

- 1 Freshly-summoned from an alien kelipah or far realm.
- 2 Agents of a foreign cult masquerading as something else.
- 3 Voyagers from far worlds exploring this strange place.
- 4 Bewildered foreign helpers brought in for hidden purposes.

D10 A THING THEY DESIRE IS...

- 1 A willing human sacrifice, even if tricked or coerced.
- 2 A shrine of worship to them or their gods.
- 3 A destructive arrangement of stones or structures.
- 4 Food. Living, writhing, screaming food.
- 5 A negative emotion, felt in unison by a great many.
- 6 The death of local authorities or keepers of order.
- 7 The ruin of a local temple or death of its clergy.
- 8 The discrediting of a belief or betrayal of a group loyalty.
- 9 A magical artifact for their consumption, worship, or use.
- 10 Power over the nearby community or polity.

D20 WHAT'S WRONG ABOUT THIS PLACE?

- 1 Remains of a cult sacrifice are hidden here.
- 2 There are eldritch sigils worked into the decorations.
- 3 An altar to a profane and forbidden deity was raised here.
- 4 A standing emotion of terrible force and foulness is here.
- 5 It's connected to elsewhere by a curdled angle of space.
- 6 A magical spell went terribly wrong, and effects linger.
- 7 Something is infected with a hideously unnatural disease.
- 8 A particular angle has attracted extraspatial predators.
- 9 A Thing has made it a baited trap for human prey.
- 10 Nothing now, but a pack of cultists is about to arrive.
- 11 Everything that happens here is incredibly unlucky.
- 12 A noise or music here bores into the sanity of intruders.
- 13 A thing here is somehow indescribable and Maddening.
- 14 There is an object here that the PCs *know* is elsewhere.
- 15 Remnants of a horribly successful ritual are strewn about.
- 16 Space is wrong, distorting and twisting motion here.
- 17 Something good here has been utterly perverted.
- 18 A precious object here bears an abominable curse.
- 19 An idol offers warped powers to those who venerate it.
- 20 A wretched victim of cult amusements may still live.

D6 WHO SENT THEM?

- 1 A cult high priest ordered them out on their task.
- 2 Visions from an ineffable outer power whip them on.
- 3 Terrible dreams haunt them unless they slavishly obey.
- 4 A schemer employs them without their understanding.
- 5 One of them is an ambitious sorcerer who leads them on.
- 6 They think this is a great idea for wealth or power.

D8 A RULE THEY IGNORE IS...

- 1 Gravity. They fly as easily as they walk.
- 2 Time. They can rewind or fast-forward events.
- 3 Space. They are where they want to be.
- 4 Color. They're indescribably luminous; suffer Madness.
- 5 Solidity. They pass through solid objects effortlessly.
- 6 Temperature. They're molten or impossibly cold.
- 7 Causality. Things happen before or long after actions.
- 8 Free will. They have none or drain it from others.

D12 WHAT UNCANNY MARK DO THEY BEAR?

- 1 Extra limbs, and often the wrong kind for their species.
- 2 A droning, Maddening buzz of blasphemous speech.
- 3 A magic item or high-tech device out of place for here.
- 4 Terrible wounds that should have killed them already.
- 5 They are fuming, acidic, on fire, or otherwise haloed.
- 6 They exhale scalding steam, corrosive words, or the like.
- 7 They are merged with their patron's totem-Thing.
- 8 Unnatural corruption rots everything clean around them.
- 9 Every word they say blasts the reason of those who hear.
- 10 They are merged with metal parts or inanimate structures.
- 11 They have melded into one shambling colony-entity.
- 12 Their patron's signs grow like tumors from their flesh.

D12 WHAT CURSE PLAGUES THE UNWARY?

- 1 Grinding nightmares. A good night's rest is impossible.
- 2 Gets lost anywhere and everywhere unless led by another.
- 3 Neither dies from nor heals from any disease they incur.
- 4 No one believes a word they say except their best friends.
- 5 Helpful magic or divine blessings no longer help them.
- 6 A loved one will inevitably die horribly. If loveless, them.
- 7 They age at a rate of a year every week.
- 8 Food no longer nourishes; they need something darker.
- 9 Their breath spreads a loathsome plague to strangers.
- 10 They die, but fail to notice it until they start rotting away.
- 11 The curse will kill them unless they trick another into it.
- 12 An alien intellect gradually eats their mind and free will.

SHADOWS IN THE SKY

Some readers might like to mix the Lovecraftian ethos of *Silent Legions* with the sci-fi adventure offered in *Stars Without Number* or some other science fiction RPG. It's not hard to blend the two, but here are a few basic frames and campaign hooks you can use for your own game.

THE SLOW BURN

For long-term sandbox campaigns, one technique is to plant the Mythos deep into the background of the game. Don't tell your players it exists in the campaign, just put in a representative group as a cult, lost civilization, alien race, faction, or other conclave of evil. The PCs may not even realize the cult is there, but its actions should have repercussions on the sector around the PCs.

These hidden elements of supernatural evil should have a superficially rational explanation. Alien technology, exotic psychic powers, or lost pretech should initially seem to be the explanation for their gifts. Only after a deeper investigation should the PCs realize that something truly unnatural is happening with these beings, and that they're a true threat to the whole of the sector.

Be careful about making your Mythos elements too big a problem in these games. If the cult is clearly part of a larger organization, or if the PCs can't be sure they've rooted out the entire problem, the threat of Lovecraftian apocalypses can hijack the campaign and pressure the PCs into turning all their efforts toward halting the peril. If you don't give them a clear victory state the players may not be comfortable turning away from the events and returning to their own goals.

SHOWING YOUR CARDS

An alternate angle to take, one particularly useful for one-shots and other short campaigns, is a game openly focused on Lovecraftian elements in a sci-fi setting. With this setup, the players know that the Mythos is involved in the game and that their main focus is going to be on fighting it and dealing with its dangers.

You need to be quicker about bringing out the horrors with a game like this. You can use the tables and tags in this book to generate the occult hooks for areas, but instead of rolling tags for cities and locations, you can apply the tags to whole planets or space stations. The scale changes slightly, but you can just dial the prevalence of a tag up or down based on the kind of opposition you need for the PCs.

SATURDAY NIGHT SPECIALS

You already have a sci-fi campaign going, but you'd like to add in a shot of unearthly horror. With this angle, you just go ahead and do it. The next adventure the PCs have has a Lovecraftian component in it, one rolled up on the adventure templates here and fleshed out with the other tables. You don't need to explain where the cult came from, or how it fits in to the rest of your sector. It just *is*.

Being Lovecraftian means never having to say you're reasonable. These entities and cults operate on their own logic and actively resist easy categorization and rationalization. Be careful not to leave too many loose ends, however, or you might provoke the players into feeling the same focus obligation that was mentioned above.

HOOKS FOR HORROR

Having trouble finding a clean way to insert Lovecraftian horror into your campaign? Try one of the hooks or angles below to help focus your ideas into something you can play.

- The Mythos infected an alien predecessor-race that thrived before humanity arrived in the sector. Some ruins or remnants may be known to humankind, but these are the relatively "clean" structures that predate the race's descent into madness. Researchers who have discovered the later ruins may not realize what they've found, or may be pressured into silence, or may be vectors of cult infection. Humanity as a whole probably doesn't realize the truth.

- The Mythos infected an earlier wave of human colonization in the sector, dragging it into ruin long before the Second Wave colonists arrived. Historians might depict this as a normal, if tragic, outcome brought about by more mundane quarrels, with those who recognize the true peril written off as cranks. The Mythos may have gifted the humans with powerful technology or other artifacts that are prized in the present day, humans unaware of their true danger.

- The Mythos is present in a new technology devised by the humans of the sector, one which provides a substantial advantage to those who embrace it. On a superficial level, the technology seems harmless and very effective. As the tech is developed, however, it requires components and elements that are increasingly horrific or irrational, but this price becomes clear only after the tech is a vital component of at least one world's local power.

- A militant new religion has cropped up, crusading against demonic powers and a host of invisible sins. Most dismiss them as fundamentalist lunatics, but in truth, they're actually completely correct. There really are demonic entities in positions of high authority, and it is necessary to fight them in order to prevent a long, slow descent into sector-wide horror. The religion may be opposed to the PCs' actions for some time if the heroes are somehow being used as catspaws by dark powers.

- New psychic disciplines are being developed at a psionic academy, generations of research suddenly coming to fruition in a matter of months or years. Just a few small neuromodifications are necessary to get the benefits of these powers. They're very useful abilities, but they're all inexorably tied to the Mythos. Steady use of them increases the psychic's Madness in a way unbeknownst to them until they become flesh-puppets for unholy alien intelligences.

- A mighty space empire of brutal tyranny or other foul evil controls a significant portion of the sector. The most effective rebel band has made bargains with Mythos powers, intentionally or accidentally, and is using their connections and sorcery to attack this human evil. For now, it's a great success, but the price of these favors is steadily growing.

Shadows in the Sky was commissioned by the Kickstarter patronage of Herb Nowell.

THE ORDO SERVORUM LUX

The human mind yearns for order in the cosmos, fashioning gods and benevolent powers in the hope of some answering voice. While most **Silent Legions** campaigns have no room for such optimism, a GM might choose to allow these human yearnings to mean something. The Ordo Servorum Lux is an example of one such manifestation.

GRAVEN IMAGES

Humans are a trifling species in the cosmic scheme of things, a temporary infestation of organic life in one soap-bubble cosmos. Their psychic potential is trivial, their occult knowledge negligible, and their bodies are soft and fragile things. Against the innumerable greater species of the black unknown they are hardly worth reckoning.

Despite this meager condition, humans are not completely helpless. Under the focus of rigid ritual and psychic concentration, human hopes and prayers can congeal into something like a larval deity. These powers are weak compared to the awful might of an outer god, but they are not helpless, and they can lend certain forms of aid to their devotees.

Their existence depends on regular rituals, however, and the determined devotion of their worshipers. Unlike true outer gods, they have no independent existence beyond the dreams of their creators. They are fragile eidolons of solidified faith and congealed prayer. Should their cults be destroyed or their rituals interrupted, they will collapse back into the silence of nonbeing.

A god once made, however, is not so easily unmade. These larval deities condense around the sacred places of their faith, like a puppet collapsed into a tangle of dead strings. If the motive force of prayer and ritual is given to them again, they might yet manifest once more and give their blessings to the faithful.

Hundreds of such fragile deities have formed, prospered, and faded over the centuries. Folk-gods of isolated peoples, saints with a fervent local cult, guardian demons propitiated by those in desperate need of protection... all have dwindled and faded as their cults disappeared or their people were converted to new faiths.

Some learned men and women have come to understand part of this process. The secrets of creating such gods are beyond them, but awakening them? *That* they know how to do.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

The group that calls itself the Ordo Servorum Lux was founded sometime during the slow fall of Rome, during the upheavals at the middle of the first millennium. The records from that era have long since been lost, and scholars of the order argue regularly over the specific nature of their first ancestors. Were they Christian sectarians seeking to preserve the manifestation of their holy image? Were they pagans trying to maintain the wraiths of their native gods? Could it be that they were Roman magicians who dabbled in the arts of apotheosis?

Whatever their origins, the Ordo knows of the nature of these man-made gods and seeks to revive and retrieve them from their lost holy places. Theologians and historians working with the Ordo reconstruct

the necessary rites and prayers to empower the deities, while “retrieval teams” are charged with actually claiming the lost holy places of the gods. In some cases the Ordo is able to revive the deity in a form that can be carried back to a secure base. At other times, the god is too tightly bound to their shrine, and the Ordo must fortify and defend the place against intruders.

Sometimes the Ordo is wrong. The rituals may be mistaken, the prayers may be erroneous, or the made-god in question might actually be an outer power. Such mistakes are usually made immediately and bloodily obvious, but there have been times when an Ordo retrieval team has brought back something unexpectedly horrible despite their best precautions. Several Ordo bases have been lost this way.

The Ordo is loosely organized at best, with individual “sanctums” operated by a cabal of scholar-agents chosen by their predecessors and accepted by those who work under them. Sanctums work together out of necessity, though some have drastically different ideas about the gods they are rescuing. Some view them as purely instrumental tools for protecting humanity, while others have a deeply religious view of them as echoes of a higher truth. A few sanctums are quietly suspected of using their gods as mere implements of personal advancement.

The Ordo aren’t the only ones who want these gods. The spiritual power they represent is of great interest to sorcerers and other cultists. Sacrificing a human is useful, and a god even more so. Tearing apart the spiritual flesh of such a being could be the key to a sorcerer’s own ascension to divinity, and there are plenty of experimenters eager to attempt such rituals. Retrieval teams have much to fear from groups of cult-backed thugs and dark, awakened powers.

DIVINE BLESSINGS

The chief advantage of having access to a made-god is the blessings they give their devotees. The exact details of the favor depend on the deity, and some of them are more widely useful than others. A great many grant enormous fecundity to a devout worshiper’s herds, for example, which is a much less useful blessing than it once was. Others give more practical gifts, some of which are equivalent to spells, skill bonuses, or Discipline powers that have no cost for use.

Most followers can effectively propitiate no more than one god at a time, with the initial blessing requiring a visit to the made-deity’s holy site or current presence. Some exceptionally valuable deities give their blessings even to those otherwise entangled. Regardless of the source, such favors continue as long as the deity remains animated by the prayers and sacrifices of a correctly-trained theurge team.

Deities rarely have a tangible or even visible manifestation. Their presence is clear only to psychically-sensitive persons and those correctly trained by the Ordo. If they have a separate intelligence or identity beyond the one formed by their original worshipers, it is impossible to discern it with certainty.

The Ordo Servorum Lux was commissioned by the Kickstarter patronage of Jason Blalock.

SCHOOL DAYS

Since the hallowed days of Miskatonic University's founding, an academic setting has always been a popular choice for Lovecraftian horror. Campaigns focused around a particular school can make for entertaining short efforts, so here are some guidelines for building one.

Note that university-centered games tend to work best as short campaigns. The tension of events is usually tightly-focused in one geographic area, so once the PCs pry out the secrets of the school it becomes difficult to keep introducing new dire horrors into the same location. Still, a successful short academic campaign can be used as a springboard to a wider campaign, with the cleansed school serving as a useful base of operations or source of replacement PCs.

BUILDING A UNIVERSITY SETTING

First, block out the basics of the university. The school will be the center point for everything that's going on in the campaign. The PCs might be obliged to head out to a satellite campus or dig site as part of their adventures, but the main focus of action is on the school itself.

A fictional school is often most useful for this, but you can just as easily pick a university with which none of the players are familiar. So long as they understand that the facts of the place will be altered for the campaign, there shouldn't be any confusion. Don't hesitate to alter facts to suit your own necessities.

Start by identifying six important locations at the school. These locations might be actual physical places, such as the steam tunnels under the campus, or they might be metaphorical locations such as the Department of Archaeology or the English department. These locations are going to provide the basic grist for your campaign.

When choosing locations, you want to pick ones with an eye toward different types of adventures. "Bad neighborhood where grad students live" has a very different tone than "Classics Department". As a general rule, at least one location should be amenable to exploration-based adventures, such as a bad neighborhood, steam tunnels, overgrown botanical garden, or perpetually-closed-but-undemolished old campus building. Another location should be chosen to involve people outside the school, such as a town-and-gown social club, a local church that draws both townies and students, or a popular local gathering place.

Once you've chosen your locations, randomly pick three of them and roll for occult tags from the adventure-building section of the book. These three occult tags represent the Mythos activity at the university. They may be connected events, or multiple Mythos groups might be struggling for control of the school. For now, don't bother to elaborate the tags. You'll get to that soon enough.

Next, randomly pick three other locations and roll for conventional problem tags. You'll need to interpret these for the location, but they provide a basic direction for the situation. "Feuding Elites" in an English department might be a case of quarreling professors and a weak dean, while "Entrenched Poverty" in a grad-school slum might be read as grinding privation for the locals. The same location might be touched by both a conventional problem and an occult tag.

With your tags established, now figure out what's going on at the school. Do the occult events have anything to do with the mundane problems? Are the problems or tags connected to each other? How many major interest groups are involved in the tags, and what are the basic conflicts? Answering these questions will help you block out the general shape of events at the university.

Now start populating the school with important NPCs. Define the evil masterminds behind whatever Mythos evil is going on and rough out their most significant minions and catspaws. You don't need to go so far as to give combat statistics or deep back story to these figures yet, you just need to have some names and faces to fill out your templates. Don't neglect to add a leavening of unassociated bystanders, potential allies, and townies with ties to the school. You'll use these people to fill in slots in the adventures you make, and they might eventually grow into patrons or allies for the PCs.

Once you have the locations, the conflicts, and the NPCs established for your school, you can start to create an adventure to introduce the setting. PCs are all assumed to be students, professors, workers at the college, or affiliated locals, so you can frame the hooks accordingly.

This adventure should not point directly at the core mystery of the university unless you're planning on a very short campaign. It's usually easiest to aim it at a conventional problem that is somehow the result or side-effect of an occult scheme, with the true peril hinted only in allusions or peripheral involvement. It should be a short adventure, too, just enough to fill a single evening's play session. If you fold in character creation into the same session, it might be no more than an immediate situation for the PCs to resolve together, just enough to acquaint them with the basics of the university setting.

At the end of that introductory session, the PCs should have at least three clear conflicts or interesting mysteries to investigate. Let them pick the one that sounds most interesting to them, and spend the downtime between gaming sessions building out the adventure details you need to provide your next session of fun. Rinse and repeat until they finally crack the big mystery or all perish in hideous ways.

CREATING ACADEMIC PCS

For a campaign like this, every PC should have some clear connection to the university. They might be dewy-eyed undergraduates, overworked grad students, harried professors, administrative clerks, campus cops, or locals who work at the school or provide services to its members. This tie should be in addition to whatever personal connections are established during character generation.

Some PCs might have more nominal influence with the university than others. Professors might reasonably demand more deference than undergrads, and all tremble before the might of administrative staff. If this seems a problem, just ensure that PC elites are matched by antagonistic NPCs of equal or greater status.

School Days was commissioned by the Kickstarter patronage of Andrew Light.

UNIT 13

Forged from the doomed soldiers of a hundred far-flung armies, Unit 13 is a secret military brotherhood that struggles against the unknown powers. Their origins have been lost in the mists of history, but almost every military force in the world has some small number of its members scattered through the ranks. Formal ties between cells are limited, but every member of Unit 13 can recognize a comrade on sight, and they work together when duty calls.

Each member of Unit 13 is a survivor of unspeakable events. Every one of them is a veteran of some unearthly intrusion of the outer powers, a survivor who managed to escape the nightmare or drive it back into the dark. Many of them only were able to do so thanks to the aid of other members of the organization, and it was this help that initiated them into the group—whether or not they wanted to join.

This initiation comes at a terrible price, for Unit 13 is cursed. Their affliction is part of their initiation, and is passed on in a very simple way; a member tells a story to a prospective recruit about a past encounter with the occult. If the recruit dismisses the story as nothing more than barracks talk, or if they are already a believer in the existence of the outer powers, then nothing more will happen. If the recruit is made to believe the story and recognize the reality of these horrible things, then they too fall under the organization's curse. Members are loath to recruit others, but sometimes there is no choice but to share the awful truth if there is to be any chance of surviving an outbreak of eldritch forces.

The curse of Unit 13 is simple. Each and every member will inevitably die violently. Whether from bullet or tentacle or withering sorcery, all of them are doomed to perish at the hands of another. There is no known means to lift or evade this fate, despite the best efforts of occult researchers among the group. The curse resonates between marked souls, and as a consequence all members of Unit 13 will instinctively recognize fellow members.

This kinship extends between different military forces, even those on opposing sides of a war. The members of Unit 13 might hate each other for a hundred different reasons, but all of them have come face-to-face with horrors far beyond anything a human enemy could commit. National enmity and inter-service rivalries lose much of their savor when confronted with the terrors of the outer powers.

There is no formal organization to Unit 13. The most experienced members provide leadership to newer recruits, often working through formal military lines of command. Members are often transferred into small special-purpose units of obscure designations and imprecise goals, the better to leave them available for sudden deployment or black operations. High-ranking members of Unit 13 provide what cover they can to these units, though they must be kept small and discreet in order to avoid hostile attention.

The group seeks to conceal the truth of the outer powers at all costs. Spreading the truth widely runs the risk of passing on the unit's curse, damning the very people they hope to save. Perhaps worse, they know that a certain percentage of people will inevitably see these entities as sources of power or objects of worship. Actually telling civilians, or

worse yet, civilian *politicians*, strikes most members as an invitation to truly spectacular exercises in eldritch appeasement. Unit 13 keeps things quiet, and they'll do whatever it takes to help ensure that matters stay that way.

The unit's resources are unpredictable. Sometimes a cell has a high-ranking patron who can get them whatever hardware they need and whatever blessings are necessary to operate in an area. Other times a local cell is composed of a half-dozen vets with nothing more what than the local sporting goods store can provide. Due to the effects of the curse, a cell's situation can change rapidly when their patron is suddenly gunned down in a mugging gone bad or dies in a "shooting accident" at home. The brotherhood will do what it can to help, however, and friends can sometimes be found in the least likely of places.

UNIT 13 ACTIVITIES

The membership is very loosely-organized, each member knowing their recruiter, their local comrades, and a relative handful of other members in the service. Recognition of members in other branches of the service or other armies is usually cause for private meetings, large amounts of alcohol, and the release of being able to talk openly of past experiences. Members of Unit 13 may or may not like each other, but their experiences have tied them together in ways that none of them can deny.

Some members of Unit 13 just want to get back to normal life, and keep their heads down unless aid is needed. Most of them are unable to deal with inaction, however. Knowing that they're doomed anyway, most prefer to go out fighting. Unit 13 cells can be found providing black ops support in remote areas of the world and "counter-terrorism operations" virtually anywhere that their parent forces can justify being.

There are persistent rumors of long-standing Unit 13 bunkers scattered around the world, some of which hint at a history far older than its modern members suspect. The origins of the organization and the cause of their ancestral curse might be tied up in these lost strongholds, but few members have the luxury of time in which to search for them.

Other investigators who stumble over these lost redoubts might find links to Unit 13's mysterious past or clues as to the nature of their doom. Some bunkers might hold arcane weapons or alien technology once used against outside powers, yet perhaps too dangerous to be wielded by any save those who know their fate is already sealed.

UNIT 13 INVESTIGATORS

The GM might choose to allow player characters to belong to Unit 13. Such PCs simply cannot die from accidental causes or other acts devoid of intentional violence. Events will twist and conspire to save them from such deaths, though their comrades may not be so fortunate. The curse will always take its due, however; at the start of each new adventure, the GM should secretly roll 1d12. On a 1, the PC will inevitably be killed at some point during the adventure.

Unit 13 was commissioned by the Kickstarter patronage of Andrew Laliberte.

NOBLE PATRONS OF THE BOOK

Thanks to the tireless support and generous patronage of the souls named below, the *Silent Legions* Kickstarter in December of 2014 was a splendid success. More than 1,100 backers threw their support behind this book, and almost seven hundred went so far as to contribute above the most modest pledge. As I write these words at the start of March of 2015, all signs point toward early KS completion and full success.

For those GMs who read so far as this, consider it a convenient trove of NPC names. Just waggle a pencil eraser over the page, drop it somewhere, and you have a fresh villain or hapless victim to use.

BLEAK PROPHETS OF DOOM

Adam Anderson
Ali Sajid Imami
Andrew Laliberte
Andrew Light
Matthew B.

Harald Wagener
Herb Nowell
Jason Blalock
Linus Råde
Peter Olfelt

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Aaron Burkett
ack
Adam Coker
Adam Conlan
Adam Crossingham
Adams Tower
Adjacent Cow
Advocatus Peregrini
Alan Bligh
Alan Brodie
Alban
Alex Lieberman
Alex Mayo
Alex Torres
Alexander Cherry
Alistair C
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Andrea Lo
Andres G Aguirre
Andrew
Andrew Bartlett
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Andrew D Devenney
Andrew Scott
Andrew Whitwham
Andrew Delorenzo
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Anthony Hunter
Anthony Lewis
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Arseny
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AsenRG
Autarch
Avery Cahill
Bastian Flinspach
BC Parker III
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Ben Short
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bmarkslash7
Bobby Jennings

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Cameron Marschall
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Capellan
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cdaniel
Celeborn Stringham
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Chad Giusti
Chaos Engineer
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Christian Lindke
Christian Nord
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Christopher Kallini
Christopher Tousignant
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Clint Howarth
coal the coward
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Contesse
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DacholaEtecoon
dafadu
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Edgar Johnson
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Edward Hand
Edward Kline
EJ Ford
emacgregor
emdk
Eric, First of His Name
Eric, Second of His Name
Eric Jackson
Eric Maloof
Eric Priehs
Eric Schaffer
Erik de Graaf
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John Armstrong	Lucas Cooperberg	nekosluagh	Roger	Tom Pleasant
John B. McCarthy	Ludanto	nerdwerds	Rolunde	Tomas
John Berry	Luke Gissara	Newt Newport	Ross Payton	Tomer Gurantz
John Carlson	M.	Newton Grant	Ross Smith	tonypnz
John Doyle	M. Sean Molley	Nezumi	Roy R Clark	Tore Nielsen
John Jenson	Manwell Hung	Ngo Vinh-Hoi	Ryan Percival	Travis Casey / Ebon Gryphon
John Kane	Marc Gillham	Niadh	Sam Hawken	Games
John Moran	Marc Young	Nicholas Clements	Sam Hays	Trevor McDonald
John Scheib	Marcus Bone	Nicholas Stylianou	Sam Kenkel	Travis Coe
John TK Veltman	Marcus Burggraf	Nick DeReus	Samanfur	Trentin C Bergeron
Johnn Fourr	Marcus Symonds	Nigel Phillips	Samuel Doepken	Trevor Bailey
Jon	Mario Cole	Nigel Wright	Sarah	Tristan Harness
Jon Finn	Mark A. Siefert	Odysseus King	Savage Robby	trublunite
Jon Mayo	Mark Bruce	Oliver Korpilla	Scott Caroni	Tuomas Lempiäinen
Jonas Karlsson	Mark Delsing	Oliver Lind	Scott Cunningham	Vecna
Jonathan Fish	Mark H	Omer Golan-Joel	Scott Malcolm	Vicente Cartas
Jonathan Ly Davis	Mark James	Osian Ap Glyn	Scott Maynard	Victor Fajardo Lopez
Jonathan Turner	Mark James Featherston	Owlglass	Scott Mortimer	Vincent Diakuw
jonathan wilson	Mark Jones	PandaDad	Scott Whitehurst	Walt
Jordan Milton	Mark Jones	Paranon	Sean McLaughlin	Wayne Rossi
Jordi Rabionet Hernandez	Mark Kilfoil	Pariah77	Sean Smith	WBM
Jose	Mark Knights	Parrish Warren	Sean Trader	William Howard
Joseph Collins	Mark Kriozere	Pascal Behem	seanhxed	William James Dowie
Josh Brauer	Mark MacDougal	Pascal Oliet	Sebastian Banzet	William Stowers
Josh Rasey	Mark Maratea	Pat Slauson	Shane Street	workshop
Joshua	Mark Stanley	Path	Shaun McMahon	xander
Joshua D. Meadows	Mark Tudor-Williams	Patrice Mermoud	Shawn Wood	Xavi Nieto
Joshua Dee	Marshall Behringer	Patrick Sayet	Shervyn von Hoerl	Yann Abaziou
Joshua Starbuck	Martin Nichol	Paul Haban	Simon Brake	ybn1197
jtc1975	Martin Wagner	Paul Harrison	Simon Brunning	Yosef Maayan
Juan Felipe Calle	Matt	Paul Tomes	Simon Carter	Zachary Kline

CHARACTER NAME

CLASS:

LEVEL:

XP:

WEALTH:

MADNESS:

HIT POINTS:

EXPERTISE:

SAVING THROWS

PHYSICAL EFFECT	MENTAL EFFECT	EVASION	MAGIC	LUCK

ABILITIES, SPELLS, AND DISCIPLINES

GEAR

ARMOR CLASS

WEAPONS

+HIT

DMG.

SLAUGHT.

AMMO

	SCORE	MODIFIER
STRENGTH:		
DEXTERITY:		
CONSTITUTION:		
INTELLIGENCE:		
WISDOM:		
CHARISMA:		

SKILLS	LEVEL	CLASS?
ART ()		
ATHLETICS		
BUSINESS		
COMBAT ()		
COMBAT ()		
COMPUTER		
CULTURE ()		
CULTURE ()		
ENGINEERING		
GAMBLING		
HISTORY		
LANGUAGE		
LAW		
LEADERSHIP		
MEDICINE		
NAVIGATION		
OCCULT		
PERCEPTION		
PERSUADE		
PROFESSION ()		
RESEARCH		
RELIGION		
SCIENCE		
SECURITY		
STEALTH		
SURVIVAL		
TACTICS		
VEHICLE ()		

INDEX

A

Adventure Templates 109–133
 Ambush Scenes 122
 Challenges 126–129
 Conflict Scenes 123
 Escape Scenes 124
 Example 132–133
 Hook Scenes 121
 Introduction Scenes 120
 Investigation Scenes 118–119
 Resolution Scenes 116–117
 Respite Scenes 125
 Scenes and Challenges 115
 Aliens 61–65
 Arcane Connections 35
 Armor 18
 Armor Class 10, 18, 24
 Artifacts 80–87
 Attack Bonus 10
 Attacking 24
 Attributes 5
 Awarding Experience 114

B

Backgrounds 6
 Bestiary 147–165
 Abominations 160–165
 Creating 149
 Humans 157
 Types of Monsters 154
 Undead 159
 Building Your World 89–133

C

Character Advancement 28
 Classes 10–14
 Combat 24
 Initiative 24
 Movement 24
 Creating a Character 3–19
 Creating Your Mythos 53–87
 Cults 135–145
 Influence Assets 144–145
 Muscle Assets 140–141

Sorcery Assets 142–143
 Cults, Creating 75–79

D

Dark Sorcery 44–46
 Deliria 27
 Disciplines 47–51
 Enlightened Hand 48
 Precognition 48
 Pyrokinesis 48
 Sacred Blade 49
 Telekinesis 49
 Telepathy 50
 Warding 50
 Witchfinding 51
 Diseases 156

E

Encumbrance 25
 Equipment 16–19
 Experience Points
 Awarding 114
 Expertise 23

F

Falling 23

G

Gear 19
 Gods 57–60

H

Healing 30
 Hit Points 10

I

Initiative 24
 Investigators 11

K

Kelipot 66–74

L

Languages 15
 Location Tags 92–108

M

Madness 10, 26–27
 Madness Costs 26
 Movement
 Combat 24

N

Names, Lovecraftian 167

P

Poisons 156

S

Saving Throws 23
 Scholars 12
 Skill Checks 22
 Skills 8–9
 Socialites 13
 Sorcery 33–51
 Spells 34–42
 Casting 34
 Learning 34
 Suffocation 23

T

Tags, Location 92–109
 Toughs 14

V

Vehicles 19

W

Wealth 15
 Weapons 17

