

THE HIDDEN ONES



Outcasts who worshipped the Sunken Pantheon, ancient sub nautical deities, the ancestors of the Hidden Ones were frequently in conflict with the Warrior Nation communities around Narragansett Bay on the American East Coast. The arrival of European settlers allowed the Hidden Ones to find safe haven and allies, slowly infiltrating and incorporating the colonial culture into their own.

By the 1850's the Hidden Ones were an oily parasite at the heart of the coastal town of Dunsmouth, Rhode Island. Through corruption and interbreeding, the Hidden Ones have irrevocably linked their community to the sea and to Dread Father Dagon, Deep Mother Hydra, and the other ancient names for the Great Spirit. As industrialisation takes hold in the Eastern States of the Union, the Hidden Ones remain unnoticed in

the shadowed doorways and alleyways of their isolated community. The Hidden Ones prey on their neighbours, considering them little more than talkative sheep ready for slaughter. Food is not an issue for the tainted bloodline that hides amongst the fair (but fishy) folk of Dunsmouth, and their numbers are growing with each cycle.

The tainted nature of these bloodlines has become all too apparent in recent years with a town curfew after nightfall necessary to protect the citizens from their own kin who have succumbed to this taint and been transformed into mindless beasts. Such creatures are hunted down by the town Sheriff if they linger, but most usually wander into the sea and vanish after a night of preying on livestock. For the people of Dunsmouth, this is their terrible secret and one that reinforces their

reluctance to encourage visitors to stay after nightfall. But the true rot at the soul of the town is far worse than the occasional Hex Beast...

Those who are steadfast in their devotion to the Sunken Pantheon are often blessed with offspring touched by the abyss below. In this time of the Shadow War, the birth of such hybrids are becoming frequent, able to pass for human except when confronted with fire or certain words of power. However, now these turbulent times have given rise to children of the Hidden Ones who are not of such concealed heritage. The Angler is one such tainted creature, born to a human mother but with no trace of mankind in its flesh. Its slippery skin is nauseating to the touch and its gaze is disconcerting with its prodigious bulging eyes that never close. The Angler's croaking, baying voice, clearly used for articulate speech, holds all the dark shades of expression which its staring face lacks. The Angler is both a child of Dunsmouth and progenitor from the deep. A true Deep One.

The slaughter of the Ore War and the start of the Shadow War has led Hidden Ones like the Angler to venture out from Dunsmouth, compelled by their matriarch, the self-appointed Dunsmouth Witch. The authority on almost anything in town, the Witch is a putrid hag steeped in ancient wisdom, none know of her true origin, but she has certainly lived in Dunsmouth for many generations. Popular gossip has it that on the night the State was founded, a young woman, mourning her stillborn son, walked into the sea in the hope of swift oblivion. She returned carrying a crying baby boy, a gift from the deep. The salt encrusted crone returned with not only a son but a vision of a great Sea Queen rising in the Union and believes it is their destiny to find her. As for the Witch's son, he

grew up tall and strong, the blessings of the Sunken Pantheon apparent beneath his rain-soaked sou'wester.

Family is important to the Hidden Ones. Loyalty through blood is unconditional. Such devotion can be found in Molly Malone, a woman desperate to find favour with the abyss. The Malone family have served the Sunken Pantheon for generations. Youngest of twelve siblings, Molly's elder brothers and sisters were killed in the Ore War. Alone, she feared that there would not be a way in which she herself could bring further honour to her family, until the coming of the Shadow War. She thanked the stars the night that the Witch sought her out and gave her this important duty. The titanic crab, Click-Clack, must be lured out from the harbour when needed. The pails of human offal that Molly must acquire for such a purpose is her privilege to collect from the sleeping homeless and itinerant visitors to their fair town. An immense crustacean from the dark caverns of the deep, Click-Clack is often found clinging to the underside of the town's trawlers. There the creature lurks, journeying out to the fishing grounds and feasting on its tithe of the catch before returning to the town each night to answer the call of the Dread and the Deep.

Molly and Click Clack now journey with the Witch and the other Hidden Ones on frequent raids far from home, as they hope to find clues to the identity of the Sea Queen and the location and of this reborn royalty from the Sunken Pantheon. Rumours of a powerful sorceress in the southern Bayous gives the Witch and her followers hope and fear in equal measure. What if this creature is naught but a blasphemous pretender? Or worse, what if she is the Sea Queen and finds the faith of the Hidden Ones lacking?