

The Silent Legion

By Their Own Hands



he traditional salutation of a Silent Legion Reaper to his new charge, this simple statement perhaps defines the ranks of the victims of Despair better than any Sandman's eloquent prose ever could. From its inception, the Silent Legion has stood apart from all other Stygian institutions in that it is composed near-exclusively of wraiths who chose their own times and methods of dying. How, then, do those who seek Oblivion react upon finding that they've only exchanged one life of torment for another?

Before examining the ranks of the Silent Legion, it is necessary to look at the membership requirements. Not every suicide victim becomes a wraith. Many simply have no strong emotions to live for, and pass on, unimpeded, to whatever lies beyond the Shadowlands. Those who remain do so because they are tied more tightly to the Skinlands than they ever wanted to be. For these individuals, it's often a rude awakening to find that the universe has forced them into bondage to the very problems they were trying to escape. Many of the Quiet are Fettered to the people or places that were their greatest sources of turmoil when they were alive, and they find that gaining closure in the Shadowlands is a much more difficult task than it would have been had they elected to remain among the Quick.

On the other hand, not all suicide victims who cross the Shroud are inducted into the Silent Legion; a significant minority is claimed by the Penitent Legion for obvious reasons. Finally, not every victim of Despair dies by his own hand. Martyrs burned at the stake, rear-guard volunteers, hunger strikers and assisted euthanasia patients – all can end their lives in a condition of hopelessness so extreme as to leave deathmarks of Despair.

The end result is a diverse, if somewhat morose, Legion.

No one who is happy with life kills herself. The Silent Legion, with the exception of the small but vocal martyr demographic, is made up of wraiths that so despised and feared their mortal existences that they found a total end to be better than any other alternative. That kind of nihilism leaves marks on a person even before death. In the Shadowlands, the Quiet radiate an almost palpable air of hopelessness. This, piled on top of the wraiths' already considerable emotional imbalance, often leaves them ostracized even more than they were in their mortal lives. The Silent Legion provides a vital support network for such individuals, who would otherwise be lost to Oblivion in record time.

Politics

Stygian Relations

The Silent Legion, next to the Legion of Fate, is the smallest of the Legions, and as such has been overshadowed and over muscled since time immemorial. Indeed, some have remarked that the Quiet have only survived as a political entity thus far through divine (or diabolical) intervention. As a result, the Legion's political, military and social practices have come to emphasize subtlety and precision over brute force and complexity. This has not been easy, but the Quiet have thrown themselves into building their power base with the single-mindedness born of desperation.

Throughout its history, the Silent Legion has been a favorite target of the Laughing Lady, who has pronounced that Despair is Madness and should be treated as such (coincidentally funneling most of Quiet into her coffers). The Smiling Lord, whose pronouncements on suicide hold that it is a form of Violence against one's self, is another age-old enemy of the Legion, and these two are formidable opponents. Relations with the Grim and Penitent Legions, therefore, have been less than cordial, and sporadic military actions have ensued from decade to decade. The outcomes of these low-key conflicts have been evenly split, as the other Legions intervene before any one Deathlord gains too much of a measure of dominance over any other – or any potential ally is weakened too much.

The Silent Legion is on cordial terms with the Legion of Paupers and the Emerald Legion. Both of these groups contain a large number of wraiths that don't understand how or why they died, and the Quiet are some of the best counselors and Castigators in the Empire. On a more economically motivated note, there is little dispute between Despair, Mystery, and Happenstance. Accidental suicide is a very difficult thing to accomplish, and if a wraith doesn't remember killing herself, the Quiet are more than glad to let that particular stone remain unturned.

Cool neutrality marks relations with the Legion of Fate. The Hand of Fate has remained a fixed, unbiased point in the tempest of Stygian politics since the Empire's birth, wielding a power completely out of proportion to its small numbers, and none publicly argue with its opinions or soul selections. Many Quiet will privately remark that they chose their own fates rather than wait for Fate to choose them, but this is something of an inside joke. It does not pay to offend the Legion of Fate.

The Skeletal and Iron Legions have historically maintained neutral but tense relations with the Silent Legion. Although the line of demarcation between claimed souls is usually well defined, there have always been those mortals who would rather end their existences than face the ravages of age or disease. Until recently, this was not enough to cause more than an occasional rude remark or snide letter to pass between the involved Deathlords. However, within the past decade, the right-to-die movement in the United States and Europe has garnered enough attention that both the Ashen Lady and the Skeletal Lord have both publicly accused the Quiet Lord of inciting it in order to "get the jump" on souls that rightfully belong to them. Observers of Stygian machinations speculate that this may be the next great inter-Legion conflict. Several bands of Reapers have already clashed over disputed souls in Detroit, London, and Venice. No Destruction Harrowings have yet been reported, but all the Deathlords are keeping close watch on the situation.

The Legion itself has always been adaptable. Change, after all, is what is necessary to break out of any cycle of despair, and so the Quiet have espoused King Arthur's ideal of "Adapt, adopt, and improve." As a result, the Quiet Lord has always been a voice for innovation, if at times a cautious one. Most of the Legion's political leaders follow his lead, and the Quiet are some of the more liberal voices in Stygia and the Shadowlands alike.

It is worth noting that individual members of the Silent Legion have been some of the most persistent Stygian violators of the *Dictum Mortuum*. In truth, the Legionnaires themselves are one reason

for the Legion's small size. The Quiet are perhaps the largest suicide prevention network in the World of Darkness, albeit one that is anything but organized. Many of the Quiet willingly cross the Shroud in order to keep a mortal from ending his own life. The explanation these Quiet give is that any victim of Despair is a potential tool of Oblivion and would be better off dying at a later date with (hopefully) a bit less Angst riding his soul. In many cases, however, the underlying motivation behind such an action is that the wraith is a bit softhearted or nostalgic, and is inclined to give the would-be suicide victim a "second chance." On the other hand, more than a few Quiet Reapers indulge in the occasional bit of Shadow-nudging in order to boost their profit margins.

The conflict between these two viewpoints is frequent and intense. The Quiet Lord could easily end the matter with a decree, but his apparent reluctance to levy a stiff penalty upon any wraith who so violates the *Dictum Mortuum* has fueled the debates and fostered a "don't get caught" attitude. Needless to say, the other Deathlords are less than pleased.

Foreign Relations

Persistent rumors of the Silent Legion's ties to various Heretic cults have followed it for centuries. The stories usually follow a common pattern: A Skinlands cult commits suicide *en masse* and crosses the Shroud relatively intact. Upon being Reaped, the cult adapts its beliefs to follow the sudden shift in locale and sets up shop again. Spokeswraiths for the Silent Legion persistently deny any such association with a smirk and statement that the Laughing Lady is more than welcome to those souls. The outspoken Anacreon of Paris, Lilith Donois, has been quoted as saying that the Deathlords should form the Bumbling Legion and place within its ranks all the wraiths who appear to be victims of their own stupidity. The general Quiet opinion on Heretics is similar. They are seen as misguided, stumbling, and ultimately useless and harmless to anyone but themselves.

The Silent Legion actually opposed the disbanding of some of the Guilds, which gained it no small amount of disfavor from those Deathlords who followed Charon's lead unquestioningly. Pardoners and Monitors, in particular, were openly protected by the Quiet, and a few of the most skilled users of those Guilds' respective Arcanoi are still trained within the Legion's ranks.

The Artificers, on the other hand, were known to view the Quiet as a source of raw materials, both voluntary in the case of Steel Martyrs and involuntary for the rest of the Legion. More than one soulforger went on record saying, "The Steel Martyrs have the right idea. If you're going to kill yourself again anyway, don't feed yourself to Oblivion. Make something useful of yourself, or, more to the point, let us make something useful out of you." The Silent Legion was universally glad to see the Artificers broken, and Quiet troops were at the forefront of the battle against the Guild during the Great Revolt.

Silent Legion leaders historically despised the Masquers' Guild for reasons that were never made public, and this distaste filtered down through the ranks. To this day, there is still a general reluctance among the Quiet to undergo even cosmetic Molation, and those skilled in Moliat are quietly shunned by their brethren. More of a tradition than a fad, this prejudice is slowly dying out, but Legion Gaunts still spit upon those who advertise Molation services for hire.

The breaking of the Mnemoi was publicly applauded by the Quiet. Too many wraiths had tried to forget their mortal existences only to be the targets of unpleasant flashback sequences commissioned by an enemy. However, just as many individuals sought the services of the Mnemoi in numbing their memories of the Skinlands, and some wraiths might well undergo such erasure voluntarily if the Guild still existed – or its remnants could be found.

Every member of the Silent Legion is painfully aware of the effect that excess levels of despair can have on a Shadow, and thus they are mutually supportive where depression and Angst are concerned. However, some wraiths still slip through the cracks, and anyone who has spent any length of time among the Quiet has almost certainly seen at least one friend succumb to the Oblivion out of hopelessness. The Spectres generated by this process show unusual cunning and insight where their former brethren are concerned, and take fiendish delight in dragging the Quiet down with them through conversation or carefully engineered setbacks. Even more alarming is the fact that a large number of wraiths that perish of Despair fall straight to Spectrehood in a relatively short time after death. Accordingly, the Silent Legion views Spectres as a much more immediate and insidious threat than some other Hierarchs do, and the Quiet have adopted a “stab first, and let the Grim Legion ask the questions” policy where the servants of Oblivion are concerned.

Non-Military Life

The Quiet do not share any overwhelming focus to their day-to-day activities. Despair does not discriminate by age or profession, so the Silent Legion includes equal numbers of angst-ridden former high school students and middle-aged Wall Street executives. However, the casual observer can make a few generalizations.

The Silent Legion is best known for its mystics and counselors, and the line between the two is occasionally blurred in the Shadowlands. Part of the reason the Legion opposed the disbanding of the Guilds was the fact that the Pardoners’ and Monitors’ Guilds actually included a sizable number of wraiths who also claimed membership in the Silent Legion.

Although it seems ironic, it has been noted by several scholars of Arcanoi that the victims of Despair show an uncanny aptitude for Castigate. The dominant theory here is that the quiet’s familiarity with their own personal portion of emotional Oblivion lends them greater insight into that of others. Many wraiths also succumb to depression at some point in their existences, even if their Shadows are not particularly active. When this occurs, the general consensus among the Legions is that it’s best to speak with someone who knows the situation from the inside, and thus the Silent Legion serves as a sort of emotional counseling service for the Hierarchy as a whole. A similar knack for Lifeweb has been observed, but no acceptable explanation has yet been advanced for this. Regardless, it is estimated that perhaps 60 percent of Stygian Pardoners and 40 percent of Monitors are members of the Silent Legion, which makes the Quiet privy to a good many personal secrets of Stygia’s rich and infamous.

It is whispered that many of the Quiet have benefited from the numbing or erasing services provided by a Mnemos, but no proof of this accusation has yet surfaced. Making such a statement in public is still a good way to earn a Harrowing or to be turned into a seat cushion, but the rumors continue. How much truth there is behind them is vigorously debated at even the highest levels of Stygian society.

As a general (but not all-encompassing) rule, victims of Despair either work in high-pressure jobs or are unemployed before death. The former often find a Shadowlands analog of their mortal profession to be comfortably familiar, and slip into soul trading instead of stock trading with a minimum of disorientation. On the other hand, just as many opt to take up a new career because they killed themselves to escape the last one. Those who had no profession whatsoever find Stygia’s job market to be rich in opportunities for relatively unskilled labor such as construction, but they must be careful not to become the material rather than the worker.

Members of the Silent Legion, curiously enough, are usually more outgoing and social than most other Hierarchy wraiths. Those who retain their despair after death don't last long in the Shadowlands, so the Quiet whom most wraiths interact with are those who have managed to overcome their inner turmoil (usually with a great deal of assistance from a Pardoner) and gone on to become about as gregarious as a bunch of dead guys can be. The Silent Legion also claims more teenage wraiths than any other Legion except the Emerald, so the organization has a relatively strong involvement in Skinlands popular culture. It is a rare concert or rave that doesn't have at least one of the Quiet in attendance, via either Skinriding or Embody, although "Quiet" may be a misnomer on such occasions.

A common goal among members of the Silent Legion is to part ways with their Fetters. The lives of these wraiths ended in despair, and most Fetters are memories that the wraiths would rather not be tied to. The Legion acts as a mass support group for its members, and most Legionnaires willingly help other wraiths find resolution. It is a rare wraith who has been among the Quiet for any length of time without the resolution of at least one Fetter.

Perhaps as a result of this mutual quest, the Quiet are noted for common yet subtle violations of the *Dictum Mortuum*. Many makes a last trip back to apologize to their families for leaving without saying good-bye, or to write the note they never left before pulling the trigger. A recent fad among suicide victims has been to make amends to whomever found the body, particularly if the death was a messy one. Barring these practices, however, most of the Quiet do not cross the Shroud to keep up with their mortal lives; after all, they died to get away from those lives. Instead, involvement in the Skinlands takes the form of personal causes or crusades that can be carried out now that the wraith is free from mortal obligations and limitations. Some Silent Legionnaires also take up work as professional Monitors and watch over other wraith's Fetters for a fee. Alternatively, others take upon themselves the often-thankless task of suicide prevention in order to spare others and existence of eternal despair worse than anything present in their mortal lives.

Military Life

The popular Stygian conception of the Silent Legion's military arm is that of a band of wild-eyed Warriors of Lethe, screaming at the tops of their lungs whilst hurling themselves headlong into a Maelstrom to kill as many Spectres as possible before succumbing. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Unit Composition

The Silent Legion, as has already been noted, is one of the smallest Legions in terms of size and influence. It cannot afford to lose wraithpower on senseless suicide charges. The Warriors of Lethe are exceptions who are only grudgingly tolerated by the Quiet Lord. He sees their value as an outlet for the most self-destructive of his troops, but fears that they may set an unfortunate example for the rest. Silent Legion military policy has always favored intensive training of a small cadre of elite troops and precise use of those troops, as the Legion simply cannot field a massive army like that of the Smiling Lord.

Legion units are built on Circles of five wraiths, rather than 10. This is both tradition and pragmatism: The normal Hierarchy Circle would stretch the Legion's resources too thin, and every

Silent Legionnaire is expected to fight twice as hard as any other wraith. Unit cohesion and survival are emphasized over any other points. “We can’t afford to lose any of you,” is an all-too-common statement voiced by superior officers from the Quiet Lord all the way down the ranks. Very few Circles will fight to destruction over any goal; those who do usually have run out of other options.

Individual combat training emphasizes speed and brutality. The goal is to cause as much damage to an enemy as quickly as possible, disable him, and move on to the next one. The Quiet Lord has spared no expense on his troops, and throughout Legion history he has owed a perpetual debt to other Legions (and occasionally other Dark Kingdoms, it is said) for the loan of instructors. Many Silent Legion soldiers are forced to rely on this training extensively. Because of the ancient enmity of the Artificers, the Legion does not receive a large share of Stygian steel weapons, and the demand for even soulforged swords sometimes exceeds the supply. This has been yet another point of contention between the Silent and Grim Legions, and occasional hijackings of supply shipments have been known to occur.

Operations

The Silent Legion’s actual military operations are usually defensive in nature, whether the troops are protecting Hierarchy holdings or guarding a Nihil. This is not to say that the Quiet troops fight only from entrenched positions; pre-emptive assaults are quiet common and successful. Unfortunately, these efforts are not hampered by the lack of a coordinated intelligence network, and the Legion has cut back its usual rate of activity to perhaps a quarter of what it was.

Aside from strikes against Spectral buildups, the main duty of every Legionnaire is peacekeeping, and this is the assignment usually drawn by wraiths fresh from the orientation cadres who are waiting their turn at advanced training. Silent Legion military policy when dealing with citizens is to speak softly and carry a big soulforged stick, preferably one that was formerly a local malcontent. Legion officers frown upon excessive use of force and exploitation of the civilians whom the Legion troops are tasked to protect and police. Quiet troops tend to be more lenient than those of other Legions where minor breaches of Hierarchy policy are concerned, so long as the offender does not have an outstanding warrant. Recently, Legion Anacreons have been cracking down on Heretic cults whose beliefs center around the approaching end of the millennium. No explanation has been given for this upsurge in policing, but the orders reportedly come from the Quiet Lord himself.

External Intelligence

The Legion had a competent, if not outstanding, espionage arm until about a year ago, when a series of infiltrations and subsequent assassinations by Doppelgangers sent most of the organization’s key officials to Oblivion in exceptionally painful fashion. Rebuilding efforts have been hampered by a constant stream of soulforged and Moliated threats directed at potential replacement officers. Popular opinion holds that a third party assisted the Spectres in the assaults. Rumors have laid the blame at the feet of everyone from the Laughing Lady to the Mnemoi, but the Quiet have not yet been able to rebuild their intelligence organization sufficiently to conduct their own investigation into the matter.

The one area of external intelligence operations that has been unaffected by the recent casualties is that of the Spectral infiltration. The Legion has long been known for its plentiful, if occasionally inaccurate, data on happenings in the Labyrinth. Such information has actually become more reliable

over the past year, which leads observers to speculate about a possible collaboration between Legion higher-ups and various Spectral powers. The Legion, of course, hotly denies all such accusations, even though the Legion's intelligence network in the Labyrinth should, by all rights, have had some warning of the coming assaults. The one certainty in this issue seems to be that no one knows the whole truth.

Stygian Intelligence

Due to the high percentage of Pardoners within the Legion, the Quiet have a better understanding of the inner workings of Stygia than most other parties. Although only 60 percent of Stygian Pardoners are members of the Silent Legion, perhaps another 30 percent have been trained by the Quiet. This has created a loose network of mentor-student loyalties that occasionally serves to funnel many important "confidences" back to the Quiet Lord and his trusted subordinates. The Legion has thus gained a significant edge in political struggles, and its Anacreons are not above using blackmail or threatening another wraith's Fetters in order to ensure their success. Before the breaking of the Guilds, the Silent Legion and the Masquers Guild came into frequent conflict over such operations.

NOTE: It must be stated that only non-Guild Pardoners take part in information-funneling operations. Were the Guild to discover such a gross breach of the Pardoners' Oath, no doubt drastic measures would be taken.

Special Orders

Warriors of Lethe

The Warriors of Lethe are wraiths who have volunteered for military service in the hope of finding peace – and Oblivion – in combat. Membership is not confined to the Silent Legion, but perhaps 90% of the Warriors come from the ranks of the Quiet. As has been noted elsewhere, the Warriors of Lethe are bound together by their overwhelming desire to forget, whether out of pain, fear, or embarrassment, their mortal existences. Their ranks also include many who wish for others to forget them and so hide behind the featureless midnight-blue masks of the Warriors. The Quiet Lord uses the Warriors as a sort of fire-and-forget guided missile, giving the Anacreon of the Warriors a target and standing back to watch the results from a safe distance. As might be expected, most Warriors accomplish one grand feat of devastation, but few are noted for repeat performances.

The Band of Quixote

The Band of Quixote is a semi-formal social organization composed of those among the Quiet who died unfulfilled. Quixoteans feel that wraithly existence has given them a chance to "live again" and follow through on unrealized dreams, and are sardonically accepting of the "Mitty" label. These armchair adventurers are found throughout the civilian sector of the Legion; most wraiths who choose a

military career find more than enough excitement to keep them from ever regretting a “boring” mortal incarnation. A wide spectrum of wraiths finds its way into the Band of Quixote, and members of all Legions are welcomed, though few actually accept the invitation. Quixoteans generally wear a red-and-brown ribbon somewhere on their persons to signify their affiliation. Most Necropoli of any size host at least one Circle of Quixoteans, who volunteer to accompany military Circles on patrol, to explore the Shadowlands, or to perform other “exciting” tasks for the local Anacreon.

Angels of Angst

Angels of Angst are, one and all, wraiths who committed suicide as teenagers or young adults; the eldest were perhaps 23 at death. The Angels are more of a social stratum than a formal organization, and their names were bestowed upon them by the Anacreon of Chicago in one of his more cynical (some would say drunken) moments. Much like their “Generation X” counterparts in the Skinlands, the Angels have adopted the name while complaining about it all the while. The ranks of the Angels change from year to year as members “grow up” and take a more active part in their wraithly community. Most Angels only claim Hierarchy citizenship for the benefits and protection; few have yet to settle down into a Shadowlands occupation. The Angels are fairly widespread; they are most predominant in Los Angeles, Chicago, and London, but any city of size has at least one Circle of angst- and Angst-ridden teenage ghosts. Angels of Angst rarely perform any productive tasks, but regularly congregate to complain about the lack of freedoms available to them in the Empire, the unbearable weight of being dead, and the poor fashion taste of their elders.

The Bleak Legion

The Bleak Legion is the arm of the Silent Legion that controls the Russian and Eastern European Shadowlands, where the Quiet have the greatest power. The region has long been noted for its inhabitants’ calm, silent suffering in the face of any adversity, and Despair is almost a way of life on the steppes and in the Carpathians. Over the past five years, contact between eastern elements of the Bleak Legion and Stygia has become more and more sporadic. Investigators have returned with reports of abandoned Necropoli, empty save for the keening of a cold wind blowing where no wind should be.

The Ten Thousand

When conversation turns to the elite military units of Stygia, Xenophon’s Ten Thousand are spoken of with awe and reverence. Despite its name, this all-volunteer Legion has never numbered more than a few hundred wraiths at any given time. Much like their historical namesakes in the Skinlands, the Ten Thousand were all soldiers whose service in foreign lands left them bereft of any hope of seeing their homes again. Unlike the original Ten Thousand, the members of this Legion never returned home. The leader of this Legion does go by the name Xenophon, though none can say whether he is the

original general who led his mercenaries on a long march home in 401 BCE. Given the record of the Ten Thousand, however, none are willing to raise any doubts. This sub-Legion is known to have more than passing contact with the Lost Legion, and has mounted several raids into the Shadowlands of Vietnam to rescue the wraiths of American and French troops. The Ten Thousand are all trained as Equitae, regardless of their military specialty in life. Their banner is a tattered relic of a black war-stallion rearing against a gray field, and they wear suits of dull gray armor forged from the Corpora of fallen foes.

