



SHADOWRUN



MAGICAL SOCIETIES

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Connecting JackPoint VPN ...
 ... Matrix Access ID Spoofed.
 ... Encryption Keys Generated.
 ... Connected to Onion Routers.
 > Login

 > Enter Passcode

 ... Biometric Scan Confirmed.
 Connected to <ERROR: NODE UNKNOWN>

"Circles of power sometimes resemble squiggly lines."

JackPoint Stats

9 users currently active in the network

Latest News

Just because you traded in your Americar two years ago, it doesn't mean everyone else did. - FastJack

Personal Alerts

- * You have 7 new private messages.
- * You have 72 new responses to your JackPoint posts.
- * Drone KE 459-LSEA-194 is requesting additional license information.

First Degree

Three members are online and in your area.

Your Current Rep Score: 653 (69% positive)

Current Time: 28 May 2074, 1026 hours

- PREFERENCES
- FEEDS
- TASKS
- LINKS
- HISTORY

Welcome back to JackPoint, omae; your last connection was severed: 2 days, 1 hour ago.

Today's Heads Up

Here's a brief who's who of Awakened groups that might be of use to, drek. -FastJack

Incoming

- * Just because it's old, doesn't mean Grandma won't run you over with it. [Tag: [Used Car Lot](#)]
- * The wars of yesterday leave us the museum pieces of today. [Tag: [Eurowar Antiques](#)]
- * When are rocks not just rocks? [Tag: [Parageology](#)]
- * There are dangerous places in the world, and sometimes you have to go there. [Tag: [Hazard Pay](#)]

Top News Items

- * Knight Errant is investigating the recent loss of material from Metroplex Guard Armoury Delta 27. The Governor's office has not responded to allegations the weapons might have been sold to violent pro-human groups. [Link](#)
- * The body FBI Supervisory Special Agent Jennifer Kowalski was located this morning at a facility in Renton marked as extraterritorial. Federal authorities are still trying to gain access to the Renraku property so they can cut the swinging body down from the flagpole. [Link](#)
- * Havana, Cuba—Several explosions have been reported in the city at law enforcement facilities. Reporters are still attempting to locate a spokesperson for a formal statement. [Link](#)



- CHAT
- MESSAGES
- FILES
- POSTS
- NEXUS
- SEARCH

Active

- ComStar Firewall
- Jack-in-the-Box Antivirus
- SpamWitch Filter
- Commcode

On/Receiving

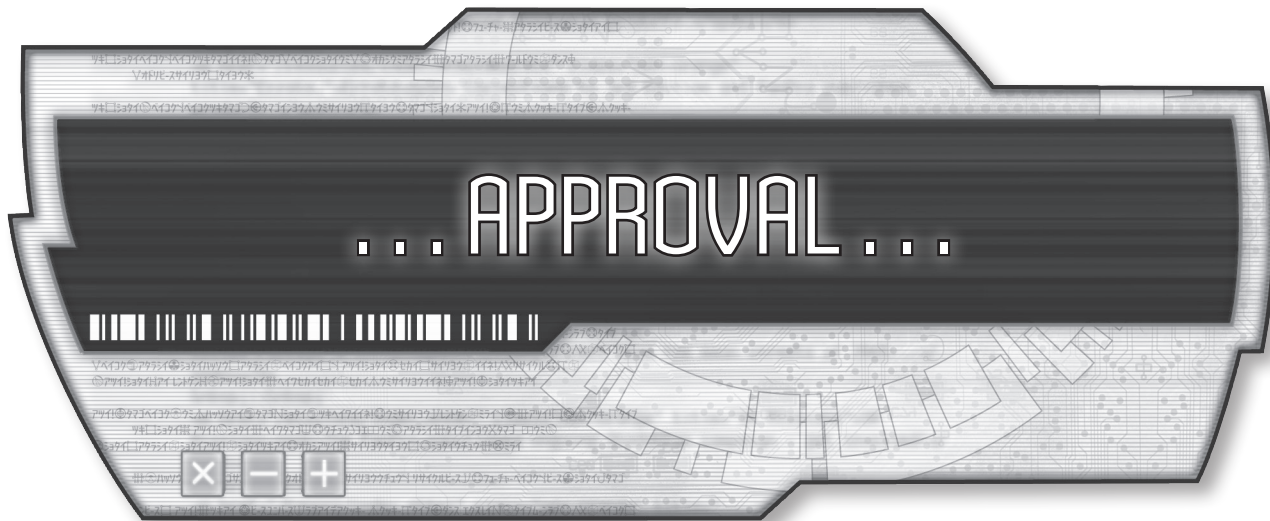
- Signal
- Hidden Mode
- Local Map

MAGICAL SOCIETIES
 Invited Guests: Smiling Jack

Posts/Files tagged with "Magical Societies"
 Assemblies of Power
 The Brotherhood of Darkness
 Cracking the Bones

[More]

- CONTINUE
- ADVANCED SEARCH
- SAVE



Two Latin phrases circled through Alistair's head, time and time again, repeating, drowning the hiss of sleeting rain with the noise in his own head. He looked for a path that might allow him to keep somewhat dry, but it was hard; the fog rolling off the bay mixed with the spray of water bouncing off the tarmac near the docks, filling the air with a constant mist of water that glowed in the sulphur-yellow lights

As he entered an old wooden warehouse and passed into the dimness, he allowed his spells to fade into the manosphere. Freed from this minor distraction, he took a deep breath and inhaled cinnamon mixed with burnt brakes. The warehouse was very quiet, which meant he had arrived unnecessarily early. In the darkness, he slowly picked his way past piles of spice in rough plastic sacks until he was past all the stock. Walking briskly, he crossed the empty space in a few seconds, stopping next to a wall. He turned, raised the cowl of his robe, and waited for the other judges to arrive.

The next to arrive was Derek, fat and ancient. His robe looked like it was draped over a floating beach ball. Alastair dropped reality from his sight and focused on the astral, allowing him to view a spirit using magic to fly the obese bastard in.

Typical. Never does anything himself that he can get someone else to do. The old judge drifted gently to the floor, not even looking at Alastair as he faced the empty space. Under his cowl, Alastair felt his face flush at the insult.

The final judge arrived on foot. Zak eschewed the robes and many of the traditions of the group; he was a young human of indeterminate ethnicity, stripped to the waist with only a sash to show that he might have skill in the art. With him some employees dragged a struggling bound, hooded figure. Alastair and Derek watched silently as a chair was found, and the figure tied to it. The employees then left the way they had arrived. When their footsteps had disappeared, Zak chanted a quick phrase, and in the blink of an eye he was clothed in the order's robes, complete with deep cowl. He stepped forward and slapped a patch on the exposed neck of the prisoner, putting drugs in his system to keep him quiet. He then pulled the hood off, revealing a young ork wearing gang colors and a glazed expression.

Alastair was getting worried about Zak's anti-metahuman views. His Humanis membership could be a conflict of interest with some of the other members of the group. In this case it didn't matter who the victim was, though, because he'd probably survive. Zak took his place on the other side of Derek and waited. A few minutes later Alastair felt the touch of a spell intruding on his soul; with a moment's hesitation he allowed it past his defences and heard Derek's voice as it must have been decades ago.

"She is outside the building. The rest of the crew she runs with are nearby in case of trouble. I have sent a watcher to direct her in."

If there was any trouble, it was doubtful that anyone would be able to save her. Alastair was always reluctant to recruit shadowrunners—they had a tendency to bring trouble with them, and a habit of thinking about themselves first and the group second. Still, they were often able to get things that were impossible to





find otherwise, and occasionally they had the most astonishing insights. Knowledge that might have otherwise been lost, if not for groups such as his.

As she made her way toward them, Alistair cast a spell to prevent electronic transmissions from inside the warehouse. He could sense Derek invoking another spell of some sort, probably something to slow down her backup. She reached the edge of the empty space, and Zak spoke softly, his voice almost swallowed by the darkness.

"Are you ready?"

The attractive young elven woman nodded and stepped into the space. She took a deep breath and looked into the darkness. Alastair created a soft blue radiance above them, lighting the area while blurring details. Her eyes looked as black as her hair in the half-light.

"I have come seeking knowledge." Her voice was clear and strong. "And I wish to share the knowledge that I have."

"Do you swear to keep our secrets, to entrust yours to us, and to harbor a brother or sister in time of need?" Derek croaked out the old phrase; he must have forgotten the new one, or he was deliberately winding Alastair up.

"I so swear."

Digging into his memory for the last few words, Alastair spoke.

"Do you understand that the quest for knowledge is the highest ideal, and do you promise to pursue this in the face of danger?"

"I do."

"Then show us something new."

The candidate turned and faced the ork victim, who was still too drugged out to be able to make much sense of the situation. The demonstration was a formality; like most shadowrunners, the candidate had developed her new spell and flashed it around several times. He himself had watched from the astral realm while she had been practicing last night, and it was certain that the others had seen it before as well.

Stepping back with one leg, she moved into a more secure posture. Taking a second to concentrate, she chanted quickly in Sperethial. Alastair watched as the mana concentrated around her and took form. There were no hints that anything strange was happening until an opaque cloud formed above her head. Before it had completely formed, it was already moving in a long stream toward the hapless ganger, impacting with a splash. The victim's head and torso were completely covered for the split second the spell took to run its course. As the magically conjured water and sand dispersed back into the manasphere, the ork's chair was slammed into the floorboards. Bruises were already beginning to form over his face, and the attack had shredded the ganger's shirt and jacket, scouring his skin until it was bleeding. He was not seriously hurt and would be left here to wake up on his own.

"It's a water elemental strike with a sand effect. Nothing new. Reject." Zak's terse mental contact came across Derek's telepathic link. It wasn't a surprise that the metahuman-hater was rejecting the elf.

"Nice technique, good focus, and it's not exactly the same as the spell we have in the library. Approve." Again, not a surprise that the fat old bastard approves of the attractive young elven woman.

Alastair thought about whether approving her membership would be better for him or not. On the one hand, it would irritate Zak, who was influential with the younger up-and-comers, and ultimately those were the people who would be driving the organization. On the other hand, having an attractive, young elf around would distract Derek from playing politics.

"The old spell hasn't been used in years, it will be good to have someone to circulate it in the organization. Approve." Besides, maybe he could get Derek to instruct her in some of the older spells. That would keep the lecherous old fool busy.

The candidate had turned to face the three adjudicators and was waiting in silence for their judgment. Although she was keeping her emotions under control, it was obvious that she was proud of the spell.

Derek stepped forward. "Welcome to the Gate of Ishtar."



ASSEMBLIES OF POWER

Posted by: Smiling Jack

It is good to be with many of you again. I was active on Shadowland long before the last Crash, and I have been busy enough since that time that I have not had an opportunity to follow the discussion to JackPoint. I remember some of you from the old days, and it is good to make your acquaintance again.

- I like how the guy assumes he would have been invited to JackPoint if only he wasn't so busy.
- Slamm-0!

I am a sociologist and a magician, in that order. I used to be a shadowrunner, back when everyone who wanted decent access to the Matrix needed a wire in their head. It has been a long time since I've needed to pick up a gun and shoot anyone in the face.

I ran across FastJack while I was checking out some rumors of a new type of magical group, one that mixed magicians and technomancers. He asked me to upload a guide to modern magical societies, initiatory groups, and other social clubs to give a feel for what is out there.

First, a bit about me. My old handle was Whizzer; if you go through what's left of the archives, you might be able find some of my old posts, but bear in mind it was a long time ago.

I'll be covering a bit about what magical societies are, the benefits of joining, and the best way to find and join a group that suits you so that everyone has the basics. Then I'll go into some detail about groups that are currently active in North America and further afield, what their goals are, and any dirt that I've managed to dig up.

Many of these groups are secret, and even the ones that aren't don't broadcast their innermost rituals and goals to the world. Most of my information comes from carefully watching suspected members of groups, talking to defectors and deserters, listening to rumors, and looking at police and government records. The statements I make in this document are ones I have judged to be based on reliable evidence, supplemented by logical inference. Like anything you read on the Matrix, treat the information as useful, but if you are going on a run against one of these societies, do your own legwork as well. More to the point, although these groups don't change as fast as hacker groups or gangs, they do change, and it only takes one powerful person to have an accident for the direction of a group to shift.

The information is also valuable because magical societies are good sources of work and great places to off load fenced magical materials; they have their own agendas as well, so it's important to know whose toes you might be treading on.

FastJack didn't give me full access here, so if you have any questions, let him know. He'll pass them on.

MAGIC SOCIETIES: AN OVERVIEW

There are many misconceptions about magic groups and societies, made by many different, otherwise well-informed people. To clear a few things up, let's first review the type of groups you might find.

A *magical initiation group* is a small collection of people, who find that initiating with like-minded people helps make the process easier. The group is tied together by a shared mystic bond, as well as by the social agreements that hold the group together.

A *magical society* is an overarching method of organizing the magical initiation groups to which its members belong. A magical society will usually have other goals as well, based on the combined beliefs of its members.

So a member of the Bear Society is a member of a group of Bear Shamans that stretches across the UCAS and Native American Nations, and each member of the Bear Society is welcome at the other lodges, but each member of the society is also a member of a much smaller local chapter of the society—normally one with no more than a dozen members—that serves as his magical initiation group.

Small magical societies may only have enough members to form one initiation group, while larger ones may have hundreds of groups and thousands of members scattered across the globe.

It might help to think of the structure of the Freemasons, Rotary, or the local church. In each of these cases members belong to the local lodge, group or parish, but they all agree with the overall goals of the society of which they are a part, and in most cases are welcome to visit other parts of the same organization.

Magic groups who are not dedicated to secrecy also have the opportunity to connect with other magical societies. Differences in philosophy or methods can make it impossible for two groups to merge, but that does not necessarily stop the groups from occasionally helping each other out. In most cases links between very different magical groups occur on an individual level, where a member of one society wants a particular item or service that is not available within their own group. A member might buy reagents, ask for a place to stay, or create a ward or sustaining focus for a member of a different society in exchange for a favor or payment. Contacting another magical society is also a good way to arrange a meeting with someone who might otherwise be out of reach. If they are a member of another group or have a friend who is.

Membership in Magical Societies

Shadowrunners are usually interested in magical societies that fly below the radar and don't ask too many questions about members, but those aren't the only societies around. Magic has been around for forty years and there are many more public magical societies.

Any major corporation which has an interest in magic has an internal magical society that they control. All of the AAA megacorps have at least one magical society as a part of their employee framework, and most have more than one, each focusing on different corporate goals. Inside a large corporation, membership of the corporate society means the wage-mages have an internal network of other people who understand their work and can be called on for magical purposes, pending managerial approval. It also means that news about the latest magical developments, spells, initiation techniques, physical adept developments, and reagents filter through these corporate groups.

For mages of all sorts who are not in a megacorp, the benefits to joining a magical society are similar but less formal. Since mages are rare, a chance to relax around people who understand what a mage or adept deals with in their daily life is gratifying.





Why Would a Society Accept Shadowrunners?

Shadowrunners who are mages or adepts do not often talk about specific runs, but sometimes they can't resist sharing news. For magical shadowrunners who are a part of an otherwise non-magical team, relaxed chatter or jokes about mundane runners are an effective way of unwinding.

Magical societies, or rather the authorities in the societies, are aware of the material benefit that shadowrunners can bring to an organization. Shadowrunners are paid to penetrate tight security, and these situations often have Awakened animals as a part of the security response. Although shadowrunners naturally want to be paid for these reagents, the price they ask is not normally as high as talismongers charge, and sometimes runners encounter creatures that never reach most of the world's markets. The benefit of having access to the goods runners obtain has to be weighed against the risk that those reagents will be tracked down, but often that is a risk worth taking.

Shadowrunners also tend to have a large web of (usually criminal) contacts, particularly runners who have been in the shadows for a few years. This can be an effective way for magicians who are generally honest to gain access to shady underworld activities. This help is not necessarily violent; access to high society, digging up blackmail material, or creating an anonymous account or a fake ID are all activities for which a member of a magical society can use a shadowrunner's assistance. In most cases the shadowrunner will simply pass on a commcode, but sometimes the runner will agree to act as a proxy for the non-criminal.

Some magical societies are open to whoever comes along. Shadowrunners are people too, and for some societies, what a member does to earn their living is unimportant. Other societies may never do enough vetting to discover that a member is a shadowrunner.

There are many societies that simply won't accept criminal members. For those societies, the risks of being associated with a shadowrunner are too great to allow them to become members. If a shadowrunner is hard to find but is a known member of a particular society, there is a risk that a member of the society will be captured and questioned in order to track them down. Even worse is the possibility that a meeting of the magical society will be infiltrated in order to ambush the runner. Some societies will not accept the possibility of being caught in the crossfire between a violent criminal group and the magical society. Other societies would rather openly let in shadowrunners (and keep an eye on them) rather than have those same shadowrunners attempt to join under a false identity, where the same risks apply but the society doesn't know it is at risk.

Magic groups vary from obvious and public to the secret and underground, which means that contacting a magical group is the first hurdle a potential member must overcome.

FINDING A GROUP

Prospective members can hear about a group from their friends, who may be members, or who know members. Public groups often have a Matrix presence with an email address or a phone number. Secret groups are, of course, much more difficult to find. A magician may go for years without knowing that his best friend is a member of a secret magical society.

The fastest way to join one of these groups is to have the society notice the prospect in some way, usually by excelling in an

area in which the group has interest. At that point, the members of the society consider whether or not the prospect matches the group's goals and dynamics. If the individual is deemed to be a good fit, they may approach the prospect with an offer. There is, of course, a bit of a catch-22 to this whole situation. To join a society, you have to do something that will get you noticed, which raises your public profile. The higher your public profile is, though, the less likely it is that some of the more secretive groups will reach out to you.

- The trick, then, is to make sure your special magic is seen by people who are influential but not likely to speak injudiciously. Smacking down another runner team is one way to do this.
- Lyran

Groups may desire to be secretive, but it is very difficult to be completely invisible. Even the most secret group has dealings with those outside the group, and where there are interactions, there are leaks. That means that a slower but more reliable technique is to chase rumors. Some societies will plant false rumors or information trails, and for a few societies sifting through the information to find a point of contact is the first test for potential members.

Anyone might hear a rumor of a magical group: apothecaries, local police, other magicians, taxi drivers, or plumbers are all potential sources of information. You have to know what to ask when talking to these groups. You can't just ask if they've noticed any magical societies in the course of their rounds. Get them talking about the weird things they've seen on their jobs, the kind of things that just don't make sense. Some of these will be caused by random lunatics, but if you ask enough people, you might find information that points you in the right direction.

- For example, finding a plumber who has dealt with a sewer alligator doesn't necessarily mean anything. Finding that the sewer alligator showed up at a place that is frequently patrolled by Awakened cops and has been visited by knee breakers working for a local apothecary may be enough to at least make you alert about that spot.
- Elijah

JOINING A GROUP

Group membership is not to be taken lightly. Most societies require some sort of formal initiation into the group, and many require proof that the prospect is going to be a worthwhile addition to the society. Demonstrating your mastery of a difficult spell or developing new spell formulae are common steps societies ask prospective members to take. Recovering exotic reagents is another task they might give to a prospective member.

- If you have any choice in the matter, go after a plant, not an animal. Some plant-based reagents are plenty powerful, and not as hard to deal with as something large and toothy.
- Jimmy No
- Unless you're, say, trying to sneak out a Brazilian kiwi from under a Amazonian spider-beast using the plant as part of its nest.
- Marcos



When joining an initiatory group within a society, it is particularly important that the members be willing and able to work with each other. So when meeting the members of a society, you need to be congenial—or at least fake it for a while.

GETTING IN DEEP

When a runner decides to join a magical society, they generally see the mystic bond and the access to components as the entire reason for their involvement with the Society. In truth, though, once a member has been an active part of a society for some time, they often find themselves asked to shoulder extra tasks for the society's benefit. At this point the member has to decide whether they are happy serving the society as a part of the lower ranks of the membership, or if they want to move up the hierarchy.

A member can volunteer for extra duties and responsibilities, and by carrying out these duties well they can gain internal recognition and respect. To get on the leadership path within an organization, members must show themselves to be dedicated to the group, which requires spending extra time and effort helping the society achieve its goals.

In some societies, such as the Illuminates of the New Dawn and the Gate of Ishtar, members progress by degree until they are laden with titles; in other societies, such as the Lodge of the Painted Horse or the Magical Investors Group, there are no ceremonies or recognitions. New members receive nothing other than the respect of the society's elders and a reputation for getting things done. In every society, the criteria for advancement combine traditional methods, popularity, and approval from those already in positions of authority. Naturally, societies mix these things in different ways. The Brotherhood of Darkness, for example, advances members to senior positions mainly through popularity with the other members, but finding artifacts can also allow a member to advance despite being unpopular. One thing is common between all of these groups: Gaining the very highest ranks of each society requires popularity, approval from above, and traditional advancement. This is often where otherwise idealistic, rapidly rising members often become bogged down in competitions for approval.

Progressing up the ranks can seem thankless at times, but it does have advantages. As a member advances, their opinion becomes more respected and sought after by other members of the society. Members of the society are willing to go the extra mile for a member as they progress up the ranks, and at the highest levels of the society, the member becomes an important guiding force in the society's direction. Leaders of secret societies generally start to use the society to achieve their own goals directly, and leaders of public societies can use their position to lobby politicians or other major figures.

Becoming a leader is harder for the larger societies, where there are more members competing for the leadership positions. The benefit is leaders of larger societies have much more influence outside that society. Groups such as the Ordo Maximus have an entrenched leadership that it is hard to break into; in other groups, a rising star might quickly leap to the highest levels.

THE PLACE OF MAGICAL SOCIETIES IN THE SIXTH WORLD

Magical societies are not the big boys in the Sixth World. The largest society, the Illuminates of the New Dawn, would be roughly comparable to a A-level corporation in influence and resources. Members in societies also have additional loyalties that may influence or supersede the bond to their society. This means that societies have considerable soft influence on members, in that they have the ability to get their message across, but little hard influence. No society has foot soldiers or militia (although they may hire security), and law enforcement corps generally have no problem raiding lodges if they suspect criminal activity is occurring in the organization. Members do not make up a solid bloc; each of them has a life outside the society, and if forced to choose between the group and their lifestyle, most would let their membership in the society lapse.

These facts mean that a society will only retain its membership if it benefits those members. The benefits a society brings come in two main categories: the benefits of socializing with like-minded individuals and economies of scale.

There is a significant benefit in socializing with members who have the same outlook. It becomes easier learning spells and rituals from members who have the same perspective regarding life. It is difficult surviving the sprawl as a back-to-nature shaman, but if you meet regularly with like-minded people every couple of weeks, day-to-day life becomes easier to bear.

WORKING WITH MAGICAL SOCIETIES

You don't have to be a magician to work with a magical society. Magical societies deal with the mundane world all the time, and non-magicians can gain some benefits from connections with the right group, including a steady source of jobs.

Magical groups are focused on their goals, possess pooled resources to use as they see fit, and often hold specializations in one particular area. This means that occasionally a society will need outside help to achieve its goals. When the goals are illegal, immoral, secret, or too expensive, groups seek out independent contractors to get the job done.

One of the keys to working with a magical society is knowing how to offer what they don't have. This is easiest, of course, for people without magic talents. The societies have magic talent; if they're looking for outside help, it's likely to be the shooting or brawling abilities they don't possess. So find a fixer who knows magic, let them know that you understand how magic works and generally don't hate mages on sight, and you could end up on their list of people to call when a society needs help.

- Given the exotic reagent work that often pops up, being comfortable with travel and having the ability to get questionable materials across international borders helps, too.
- 2XL

If you've got some magic talent, then you need to know which societies do what—what their strengths are, what skills they lack, and the role you might be able to play in enhancing what they can do. This download should help you gain useful information in that regard.

INCOMING FEED.....



MAGICAL SOCIETIES.....

CONNECTING WITH A SOCIETY

Members of the group who are shadowrunners should, obviously, be your first point of contact. Knowing someone within the group is the best way to learn how the group interacts with shadowrunners and what they're looking for when they make a hire.

When magical societies hire runners, they usually have a senior member of the group act as Mr. Johnson. They tend not to resort to runners until an important matter is at hand. And when that's the case, the senior members tend to want to keep a close eye on how things are progressing. If they use a lower-level member or outside asset to arrange the job, there will often be astral surveillance of the meet to allow the senior members to keep an eye on things.

Magic groups are not normally experienced at handling deniable assets, which means they may act unprofessionally, make rookie demands, or insist on personal involvement. Because they don't move in the shadows, it is hard for them to understand why they should not know the identities and backgrounds of their employees (even secret societies sometimes have this issue), and it is possible that they will attempt to obtain ritual samples out of a paranoia that the team will take the money and run. This means that patience and a cool head are needed when dealing with these inexperienced Johnsons. When they make a mistake, correct them, don't shoot them. Until they make the mistake a second time.

One benefit is that, although it is annoying to have to deal with irrational and constant demands for details and transparent attempts to gain leverage these groups won't have the sophistication to be able to really screw an experienced team. If they attempt a double-cross, you'll usually see it coming a mile away—for example, they'll ask for the final meet to take place at a weird location that, according to your legwork, has a background count that just happens to be aspected to their brand of magic.

Another good thing about bargaining with groups is they don't have a good idea of the right price for services rendered. When a group has been forced to hire runners, it means their usual tactics have failed, and the group still needs to get the task accomplished. This means the group can be talked into paying a good price for the job.

Long-term relationships are often valued by both the society, who doesn't need to distract themselves by finding new runners, and by the runners, who can get a series of missions with good payment terms. Supply can dry up if the group turns its attention in a different direction, or the group achieves all of the goals that required outside help.

The risk with dealing with unprofessional Johnsons is that if the runners fail or screw over the Johnson, the group will take it personally. While a corporation will stop persecuting runners when it becomes economically unreasonable, a magical society is capable of holding a grudge for a long time, pursuing it regardless of the expense.



Signal Intercept

To: Geoff

From: Sticks

Heya Geoff, are we all on for exchanging that foci on Saturday? Your buddies had better come prepared to bargain, because their initial price was way too low. How do you know these guys anyway?

To: Sticks

From: Geoff

Hi Sticks, these are my lodgemates, I trust them with my thesis, and we've performed many rituals together. They probably don't have much more money, but they might be able to ward your van for you, and hey, you know that cyberjerk who you took a piece of last week? They could perform a ritual to finish him off for you if you bring that ear along.

- Keep that in mind when bargaining for a higher fee, if there is any chance that the group will think that you have ripped them off, they will send all sorts of ju-ju against you. It's not just a lightning bolt in the street that you need to look for—one greedy rigger I worked with for a while ripped off a group that he was brokering a deal for, and then his life just became rubbish. His van was hit by three different cars in two days, his pets died, and his girlfriend left him. He was about to crawl back and apologize, but he electrocuted himself changing a light bulb.
- Clockwork

TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT

Magical societies can potentially hire runners for any type of mission, but there are some missions that are more frequent:

Retrieving an artifact: Magic groups are interested in researching artifacts when they relate to the goals of the group. The items are generally not available for sale, and once recovered they disappear into the organization's vaults.

Data theft: Groups need to keep up with the latest magical research of their rivals, or data relating to their non-magical goals. They are often quite willing to steal what they need from other groups to make sure they don't fall behind.

Obtaining a ritual sample or kidnapping a person: Sometimes political bodies or corporations are not as friendly to the interests of magical societies as the societies would like, and the organizations are willing to use their abilities to "persuade" key individuals.

Assassination: Simply put, because sometimes extraction or ritual magic is not enough.

Obtain reagents: A magical Society needs a reagent that is beyond their ability to obtain. Dragon scales, unicorn horns, the feathers of a thunderbird, and other body parts of dangerous beasts can be important resources for research.

- Just be careful. They pay pretty well, but they can be amateurs when it comes to keeping their tracks covered. Don't do anything for them that you don't want to come out eventually.
- 2XL

OTHER ECONOMIC DEALINGS

Magical societies are good to have as contacts, especially if your runs have taken you into mystic realms or into dealings with magical beasts. The very foundation of a magic group is dedication to a higher ideal or goal; for the most part, "obedience to the law" is not that goal.

Magical societies can be good places to fence dangerous items, animals or magical data. Items such as orichalcum or pearls from eastern dragons are not illegal but it can be a bad idea to spread word about who is holding them, since powerful individuals (including in the current climate, dragons) often chase after such things. Selling such items directly to a magical society will not get the best price, but it will get the item off your hands quickly and will possibly keep you from being attached to it, as societies tend to pass along and process these things quickly, meaning it will soon be many steps removed from you.

Magical societies can also be a source of illegal foci, training, magical healing, magical drugs, and a society can perform a ritual, create wards, use psychometry on an object, or act as a consultant.

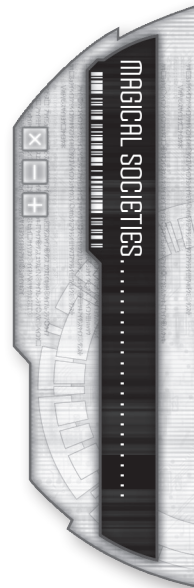
A SAMPLING OF MAGICAL SOCIETIES OF THE SIXTH WORLD

THE BROTHERHOOD OF DARKNESS

The Brotherhood of Darkness, or "Dark Brotherhood," focuses on unearthing ancient magical artifacts, both natural and artificial, and using them to combat evil in the world. The society was founded by a group of Romanian academics after Dunklezhan's rift released shedim and other dark spirits into the world. The Brotherhood is dedicated to the principles of self-denial and overwhelming force. Originally the group was only active in Eastern Europe, but as they gained success members have been attracted from around the world, and the membership roster has grown to more than three hundred magically active members.

Members in the Brotherhood understand that evil is everywhere and cannot be fought in safe academic havens. As a part of a Brothers' (or Sisters') normal life, they seek out wrongdoing across the world and often their range of occupations means that they see more than they might if they were focused on one job. The Brotherhood is a secret group, but the oath that a member takes on becoming a member requires a member to tell the truth and never deny the group. Thus if a member is directly asked whether they are a member of the Brotherhood of Darkness, they will confirm. Members are not fools; if someone is asking passers-by if they are members of the Brotherhood of Darkness, then members will avoid the situation rather than deny their membership or compromise their beliefs.

The founder of the Dark Brotherhood, Rivel Furst, was lost while fighting an infestation of shedim in an astral rift many years ago. There is a portrait of Furst in the group's headquarters, showing him striding out against a powerful vampire with his sword in one hand and a fireball forming in the other. This image has led to a preference within the group for recruiting mystic adepts, although the Brotherhood welcomes members from across the magical spectrum as long as the potential member is dedicated to eradicating evil wherever it may be found.





The group secretly funds archaeological digs in Southern and Eastern Europe, discreetly providing magical support and assistance. With chapter halls in the UCAS, CAS, and Eastern Europe, members of the group have occasionally run afoul of the goals of the Ordo Maximus, leading to an unofficial vendetta between individual members of the Brotherhood and some senior Ordo Maximus members. This has affected the ability of the group to expand its European operations and has led to more emphasis on recruiting in the CAS and UCAS.

The group has access to several artifacts that have been retrieved from dig sites and from the creatures they fight, and they are willing to sell these to members. Brothers and Sisters who find themselves in need of a spell focus or weapon focus can ask other members of the group, or put the call across the larger organization, which can make these available when other channels have failed.

Members can also call on other members to help research particular creatures or people, and the Brotherhood as a whole has significant archives detailing the different threats found in the world.

The Brotherhood has a series of safe locations for meetings, and while these are not as large or well outfitted as the meeting places of other groups, they are usually defensible and contain lodges as powerful as the members are able to erect.

Incoming Message

THE BROTHERHOOD OF DARKNESS

Members: 300

Headquarters: Chapterhouse in Budapest

Membership requirements: No member may join if they are one of the Infected (ghouls, vampires, wendigo, etc.)

Strictures: Oath (to fight evil, wherever it may lie), secrecy

Customs: Fraternity, service (assist other members when called on to fight evil), material link

Resources: Medium

Dues: Medium

Patron: None

Patron Spirit: None

Membership Benefits: The Brotherhood has set up boltholes in most major cities that members can use when the going gets tough.

Roles for Mundanes: Mundanes are needed as informants and to provide backup for the Brotherhood, as well as various maintenance and administrative tasks about the chapterhouses

Contact Benefits: Information on Awakened threats

Secrecy: 1 (no public listings, no public point of contact, but the existence of the Brotherhood is an open secret)

Connection Rating: 2 (3 when acting openly as a member of the Brotherhood)

- I don't get these guys. They made an enemy of the Ordo Maximus—how are they still around? I thought the Ordo were an unstoppable blood-magic juggernaut?
- Clockwork
- The whole point of this file is to correct your ignorance. The Ordo Maximus is not unstoppable, and the Brotherhood is not really a threat to the goals of the Ordo—they are too small and are far more likely to go after ghouls, vampires, and blood spirits than they are to try and root out secret societies.
- Frosty
- Who do you think is running the Ordo Maximus?
- Plan 9

CRACKING THE BONES

Voodoo is an uncommon magical discipline and its practitioners are often secretive. Cracking the Bones is about as loose a federation of magicians as might exist while still qualifying as a magical society. Members of the Bones congregate in small initiatory groups, generally based in one city or town, and they stay members for life.

Cracking the Bones is locally focused, and the society is loosely organized at the broader levels. Members have contact information of other members in other cities and are welcome to drop in on meetings in other areas. There are a few mobile members who visit groups across the CAS and UCAS. For most members, these few wanderers are all that they ever see of the larger organization.

Cracking the Bones members have never seen the point of excluding mundane members. Although they can't directly help in magical rituals or initiation, they can stand by and provide security, mundane assistance, or food as needed by the participants.

Meetings occur whenever the local group feels like it, which means that some groups meet only for rituals, where other groups meet every week for a social gathering. Often the main method of communication for members of a group is giving messages to embodied spirits and sending them to pass the message on. Having a crow or toad arrive with the details of the next meeting might be pandering to existing voodoo stereotypes, but it is an effective means of communication that can't be easily intercepted.

Members have the benefit of being able to socialize with others who speak the same language and follow the same tradition, which gives meetings an air more of a party than a formal gathering. When a member has to travel, he will normally be able to get the contact details of a few other houngun or mambo at his destination, if there are any. Perhaps the most important benefit is the ability to cast risky spells and ride powerful loa while surrounded by experienced magicians who are capable of dealing with the unpredictable spirits.

Becoming a member is easy. All that a prospective member needs to do is show that he has some affinity for the spirit world, or is open minded and willing to help. While joining is easy, members are generally not trusted with more significant responsibilities until they have quietly remained members for some time. Leadership of the local group is almost always in the hands of the member who has been a member of the society the longest.

While the organization is not secret, members of the society don't broadcast their affiliation. There are many more





INCOMING FEED.....



members than might be expected, and mundane members might be high-ranking civil or corporate citizens who have no solid ties to the supernatural world. In fact, simply having contact with a sympathetic houngun or mambo is the main benefit for mundane members of society, as these magicians will listen to the troubles of mundanes and may be useful in warding a mundane

member's home, or quickening a spell to promote their health or strength.

In the CAS, members clash with Aztlan magicians as they both try to build influence and power in rural, isolated areas, as well as among the lower rungs of society in the cities. There are fewer members in the UCAS, although major cities tend to have some members. There are even a few hardy souls in Aztlan, particularly in the former countries of Belize and Honduras, sabotaging anything that would oppress the people.

Incoming Message



CRACKING THE BONES

Members: 300

Headquarters: New Orleans, CAS

Membership Requirements: Must follow the Voodoo faith

Strictures: Exclusive membership

Customs: Fraternity, gaesa (traditional Voodoo equipment)

Resources: Low

Dues: Low

Patron: None

Patron Spirit: None

Membership Benefits: Access to Voodoo materials and spells

Roles for Mundanes: Some are welcomed into the society.

Contact Benefits: Magical services

Secrecy: 1 (no attempts to suppress knowledge, but they are very hard to track down)

Connection Rating: 3 (4 when they act openly)

- Anything Plan 9? Voodoo cult in the heart of North America?
- Netcat

- So what? This isn't some old spy movie; voodoo isn't some scary bugaboo. They aren't going to be controlling society, since there are too many big competitors on their doorstep. Unless they hook up with another group.
- Plan 9



THE GATE OF ISHTAR

Named for an ancient processional gate in Babylon, the Gate of Ishtar is a small group of mages dedicated to supporting each other while learning the secrets of magic in the Sixth World. The Gate of Ishtar is open to any mage or shaman, and is a public, legally registered group. Although shamans are welcomed into the society, most find the group is too structured and formal for their tastes. The society has several former members who are shamans, but all current members follow a hermetic path.

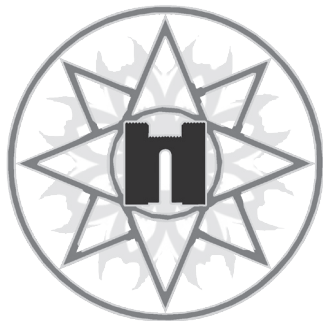
Headquartered in Seattle, this small group has not been focused on growing, spending most of their time studying, researching, or astrally questing for obscure magical lore. The members are loyal to the society, but each individual acts as though the society has been formed for their exclusive benefit, which can lead to significant internal political jockeying. Despite internal divisions and a small membership, the society is making some interesting progress in its drive toward a greater understanding of the manasphere.

The research the society is undertaking is not cheap, and the members do what they can to bring in revenue for the group. They have (somewhat grudgingly) provided consulting services to small- and medium-sized corporations, and occasionally contract with law enforcement corps for investigations involving obscure magical puzzles. Along with this income, the society also enjoys the patronage of several powerful magicians, who occasionally call on the society for rituals they cannot complete on their own.

The Gate of Ishtar is focused almost solely on the pursuit of magical knowledge and understanding, and it has a number of non-magical scholars who specialize in pure research and investigation. These members maintain the society's digital archives and the mundane artifacts unearthed in their investigations. The society attracts academic members and those who are fascinated by magic and the metaplanes.

Magical members enjoy the benefits of a large spell library; there is a small charge for accessing the collection, which goes toward maintenance and other costs of the society. Members also have access to a warded study areas located in several cities. These are usually small rented apartments that serve as private clubs for members who want a quiet, comfortable retreat for a time. These places have good astral protection, which means they can be very useful if you need a space where they can venture into the astral without fear that anyone will interfere with their bodies while they are away.

Every few years a new member joins, full of fire and determined to use the magical knowledge of the society to forge political strength out of this collection of groups. Generally, these members underestimate the territoriality and political ability of the current leadership, and they are often surprised to find they have to spend much more energy and time managing internal politics than they expected. The leaders know how to work their



membership, and they are skilled at pulling the rug out from under the feet of an up-and-comer at the worst possible moment, leaving them alone and abandoned at times they really needed support. By contrast, members who quietly work their way up and avoid getting embroiled in internal or external politics often progress to leadership positions, by which time they have become focused on magical research and have usually lost any desire to wield power outside the society.

- These are the guys you think of when you think of a magical society, cloistered away studying magic and only reluctantly coming out and seeing daylight.
- Sticks
- It's a good source of income getting obscure knickknacks for wizards who can't be bothered to go out and get them for themselves.
- Clockwork

Incoming Message

THE GATE OF ISHTAR

Members: 20

Headquarters: Bellevue, Seattle

Membership Requirements: Must have Magic attribute 5+ to join

Strictures: Exclusive membership, exclusive ritual, secrecy

Custom: Service (assisting local law enforcement)

Resources: Medium

Dues: Medium

Patron: Local law enforcement

Patron Spirit: None

Membership Benefits: Extremely comprehensive magical library, experienced tutors

Roles for Mundanes: Some mundane researchers are members

Contact Benefits: Theoretical magical knowledge, contact with local law enforcement

Secrecy: 2 (tracks down and attempts to magically influence anyone who reports or blogs about group activities)

Connection Rating: 1 (3 when group members act openly)

THE MAGICAL INVESTORS GROUP

Cash is on the mind of everyone, including magicians. The unusual thing about the Magical Investors Group is that its members control a very large amount of capital but has not yet joined any particular megacorporation. Presumably the leadership believes they can profit more from being independent.

The Magical Investors Group is a loose alliance of magicians who use magic to enhance the capabilities of investors, trying to get ahead of market trends and stock patterns by boosting the intelligence and intuition of investors. The group as a whole does not invest; instead, members make their own investments using the strategies they develop, and when they succeed they are expected to share their techniques and spells, as well as one percent of their profits, with the rest of the society. As might be

INCOMING FEED.....



imagined, a group of mages focused on getting as much wealth for themselves as possible is not really thrilled about the whole sharing thing, but they understand just what they're getting from the society. Their competitive nature extends to the society's gatherings; their meetings resemble an old-boys club bragging about their accomplishments. This can actually be a spur to collaboration, as members may need help from others to gain the upper hand on their rivals.

The Investors Group is an excellent place to learn spells that increase intelligence and memory (allowing subjects to hold and access more data in their heads), intuition (helping them see the trends and patterns behind huge amounts of data), and mental reflexes (helping them make quick decisions when an opportunity appears). By necessity, the society investigates the interaction of magic and technology, and they have completed hours of testing of how analysts perform in full, hot-sim VR while magically boosted. Sustaining foci, spell foci, and power foci are very much in demand in the society. While magically active drugs are occasionally used, the group is well aware of the dangers of substance abuse and does not want to damage their primary earning tools.

Becoming a member of the group is very difficult; the society is not exactly secret, but it does not advertise anywhere. Mages who find out about the group and pursue membership are rarely admitted. Instead the society keeps an eye on magical research proposals, as well as devoting some of their resources to targeting new investors who make significant amounts of money in the stock market in a short amount of time. Often a member of the society intensely investigates such investors to see how the group might best be able to put them to use. New investors experimenting with magic are usually not experienced at obscuring their data trail and can be tracked down using official records. In this case, a member may approach and offer services as a consultant. If accepted, and if the prospective member is trying something new, the evaluating mage will file a risk/reward assessment with every other member of the society. These assessments are usually very carefully read by members, as each new member represents an opportunity to profit, as well as a risk of losing intellectual property. Voting is conducted through the Matrix; approval of more than half of the membership is required to admit a new member.

Each member has his or her own small pool of willing brokers they use in their experiments. Since the best of the best brokers are offered huge inducements by the megacorporations to join them, the Magical Investors Group is left with the best of the rest, a selection of brokers including those who have lost their touch, those who never found their touch, and the occasional investment broker who has always been wealthy and isn't driven to radically increase their fortune. The different sub-groups within the society serve as something like control groups, helping the group as a whole see which techniques work the best.

The society maintains a luxury apartment in downtown New York and another in Seattle's Bellevue neighborhood. There is no strict auditing of the members; they are expected to follow the honor system in making their payments. While they don't like giving away their money, the fact that the size of each contribution is known by the group's leadership means that the size of the contribution can earn a member bragging rights, which is of no little importance to group members. Members are also expected to maintain good business relationships with other members and



give other members a fair hearing on business deals. The group also benefits from a mentor spirit, a spirit of man who encourages sensible risk taking and asset diversification.

The Magical Investors Group has only been around for a few years, but the cutthroat world of finance is a dangerous place. It is possible that a corporation will find the research to be meaningful enough to acquire the group, or perhaps just extract the top members.

- I bet their Matrix security is rubbish
- Slamm-0!
- Why would you say that? First of all, they can afford good security. Second, who's to say they aren't boosting their security spiders with magic as well? They could be a worthy challenge.
- Netcat

Incoming Message

THE MAGICAL INVESTORS GROUP
Members: 25
Headquarters: Manhattan, New York
Membership Requirements: High Lifestyle or better
Strictures: Attendance (bi-weekly meetings), secrecy
Customs: Exclusive ritual (to protect group IP)
Resources: High
Dues: Medium (plus one percent of profits earned through market activities)
Patron: None
Paton Spirit: None
Membership Benefits: Access to investors, financial knowledge, networking with the wealthy
Roles for Mundanes: Extensive use of non-magical investors as test subjects; some members of the groups are mundane attorneys.
Contact Benefits: Investor contacts, financial advice, loans
Secrecy: 2 (group goes out of its way to track down and bribe anyone who reports or blogs about the group)
Connection: 3 (5 when acting openly)

MANA

Three years ago, a former Halloween lieutenant named Argus called in favors from several magically active gangers in order to survive the near annihilation of his chapter. On the run for weeks, he drew these gangers together, first into a small group to hide him, and then into a mutual support network. That was how the group now known as Mana began, and since that day, group members have been able to call in significant amounts of magical support when the shit hits the fan. The group is slowly growing, although the lingering gang rivalries within Mana are hurting the recruitment effort. Members who have been around for a few years know the value of cooperation, but new blood can be hotheaded when faced with members who came from rival gangs.

Most of Mana remains based in the Redmond Barrens where Argus founded it, although some members have relocated to Los Angeles, and three gangers who had been hurt badly by the Universal Brotherhood went to Chicago and attracted some of the local bug hunters as members.

The purpose of Mana is to band together magicians who have few resources, and pool their resources and talent. Unofficially Argus is looking to leverage numbers of dedicated gang-mages and adepts into a real moneymaker that can support the society, its members, and possibly surrounding communities.

The group's headquarters is an abandoned office block in an area disputed by the Road Spikes, Ancients, and what remains of the First Nation. Gangs that have contact with Mana usually allow mages to pass through their territory if someone speaks for them.

Mana can be contacted through a few talismongers and fixers, but the most common way to get in touch with them is to use magic in the Barrens and wait for the gangs to spread the word that a new spellslinger is in town. Usually someone will check it out, and if the magician doesn't disrespect the society, they could be invited to the headquarters to check out the society for themselves. Gangers in Seattle know about Mana and cut respectful members some slack. Mana has a small library, largely looted from rivals, but the society doesn't bother with a mentor spirit; the members are too individual to accept one spirit as a guiding force.

Signal Intercept

MEMORANDUM
To: Knight Errant Patrolmen (Seattle)
From: Alice Pickering, Knight Errant Gangwatch Section
All Patrolmen: Be aware that there is a new group of gangers in the Redmond Barrens. This is not a new gang per se; it appears to cross gang boundaries. This group is called Mana and is made of magically active gangers who still wear their original colors but have some magical resources to call on.
 If patrolmen encounter this group in the course of their duties, be aware of standard magical backup options, including astral support and manatech defences.
 Current intelligence shows that this group is not hostile as a unit, but individual members are drawn from gangs across the Barrens and are therefore likely to be extremely hostile. Do not engage without appropriate support.
 Forward to Gangwatch any incident reports involving this group, or that involve magic in the Barrens.

-A. Pickering

The main reason to join Mana is the group will have your back if you are in a tight spot in the Barrens; by the same token, members will be called on to help other members from time to time. Argus also passes on any job offers he hears about, and members are expected to let him know if they hear of work going that they are not going to pick up.



Members of Mana have to turn up at least once a month to hang out at the HQ for a day or so and swap magic stories, teach other members spells, or take part in initiation rituals.

- I cannot think of them as anything but amateurs for the way they treat spirits. They have summoned spirits to carry targets near them so that their members can practice shooting a moving target. That sort of debasement of spirits approaches the levels of Horizon's research.
- Axis Mundi
- Do not dismiss someone for ignorance; work to educate them.
- Man-of-Many-Names
- I'm all for gangers getting organized. They gotta be more fun to work with than a corpsec squad.
- Slamm-0!

Incoming Message

MANA

Members: 25

Headquarters: Abandoned office in the Redmond Barrens

Membership requirements: Must not associate with police

Strictures: Oath (promote co-operation among gangs)

Customs: Fraternity, attendance (meetings every few weeks to initiate new members)

Resources: Squatter

Dues: None

Patron: Argus, former Halloween

Patron Spirit: None

Membership Benefits: Gang Rep (+1 dice pool modifier when negotiating with gangs in Seattle)

Roles for Mundanes: Argus does not want to set up a rival gang, and therefore does not allow mundanes to join.

Contact Benefits: Gang ties

Secrecy: 0

Connection Rating: 2

ORDER OF SAINT SYLVESTER

The return of magic to the world created vast upheavals amongst the faithful of many religions. The Catholic Church at first disbelieved and then railed against the unstoppable cycle of mana, putting forth the view that becoming an ork or troll could be reversed with enough prayer and devotion. The church also taught that magicians had powers stemming directly from Satan. When the Awakening continued, and it was found that there were people of unimpeachable faith who had goblinized or who had expressed magical talent, the Church began the slow process of examining its own beliefs, culminating in an election of the moderate Pope John XXV and the publication of an encyclical in 2024 titled *In Imago Dei*. The attitude of Catholicism towards magic has varied over the years, but currently it has settled into an area where

it is not necessarily sinful to have magical talents or be a meta-human. Metahumans now have all of the rights and abilities that humans have, and the church would rather have metahumans filling the pews than nobody. Magic is treated a little differently; it is not necessarily a sin to have magical talent, but magic is viewed as a force that can lead to corruption.

To assist magicians of the faith, the church strongly encourages magicians with talent to join one of the holy orders. The Order of St Sylvester has a mandate to investigate magical phenomena on behalf of the Vatican and is happy to recruit magically active Catholics for the task. Almost every magically active member of the Order practices theurgy, or is an adept who draws his power from theurgy, which is a tradition that fits magic into a Catholic worldview. The Order also has the purpose of bringing a moderating counterpoint to growing conservative influence on the church. Contrary to rumor, Catholics who are not magically active are welcome to join the larger society as analysts and custodians of information, although they will never be on the front lines.

Members of the Order swear an oath to witness and document unusual magical occurrences in order to accumulate knowledge for the Church. Magically active members typically go out in twos or threes to investigate any unusual situation, either on their own initiative or when ordered to check on something for the church elders. The Order is also expected to assist local bishops when needed. Members who join initiatory groups have the additional duty of doing all that can be reasonably expected to hunt down and eliminate Infernalists.

The Order frequently finds itself caught up in church politics. Conservatism within the Catholic Church is hard to change, and since the Order was founded by a liberal Pope and tasked with investigating magic rather than denouncing it, it frequently runs into opposition. These internal complications vary from diocese to diocese; for example, the Catholic Church in the UCAS tends to be more liberal than the Church in the CAS, but both of these are much more conservative than the remains of the Catholic church in Aztlan, which has been forced to liberalize their agenda to avoid driving away potential members in the face of Aztlan's almost complete dominance of religion.

As part of the order's mission to investigate and document magical happenings, it has built up an impressive library of magical phenomena, and it has the most extensive theurgic library on the planet. The Sylvesterine archives also have extensive hermetic knowledge and many records of unusual creatures. Members of the order have access to these archives if they provide an appropriate tithe or service and receive the approval of the heads of the Order. For most information this approval is nearly automatic.

The Order of St Sylvester meets in chapter houses, which frequently share the grounds of a local Catholic Cathedral, except where this would cause danger to the congregation. The order is often called upon to ward Catholic houses of worship, and individuals are frequently approached by the clergy to solve magical issues for members.

In Seattle, the Order is housed in St James' Cathedral near the University, where they have a securely warded vault in the crypts. They have an excellent relationship with Bishop Madison of the Metroplex. The Order as a whole has a patron Spirit in the Archangel Michael.



- These guys can be pretty good for smuggling jobs. Some of the stuff they use to investigate magic is illegal or really expensive, and sometimes it's cheaper for the church to hire a smuggler than it is to cut through the red tape on importing rare magic crap.
- 2XL

Incoming Message

ORDER OF SAINT SYLVESTER

Members: 200

Headquarters: Vatican City, Rome

Membership requirements: Must follow the Catholic faith

Strictures: Exclusive membership, oath (fealty to the Pope), material link (must provide a blood sample for papal records)

Customs: Service (providing assistance to the local Parish and parishioners)

Resources: High

Dues: Low (tithes)

Patron: Catholic Church

Patron Spirit: Archangel Michael (spirit of fire)

Membership Benefits: Can call on the local church for mundane assistance.

Roles for Mundanes: Some mundane members as analysts and administrative assistants.

Contact benefits: Access to church records.

Secrecy: 0 (official part of Catholic Church hierarchy)

Connection Rating: 3 (6 in Rome)

Incoming Message

A NOTE ON THE ORDO MAXIMUS

The Ordo Maximus is a large sprawling secret magical society. Presented here is what can be learned about the organization through outside observation and investigation. The Ordo Maximus has been implicated in some very nasty business, from having vampire members (or even leaders) to passing blood magic to megacorporations. It is possible these rumors are correct, as there are certainly enough secrets within the Ordo Maximus to allow things to slip below the radar of the general membership. The leadership take extreme measures to keep themselves and their activities secret, even from junior members. It is also possible their bad reputation is the result of a few bad apples lodged in the society. The truth of the matter may never be known by outsiders, and if secrets are reported, there will be no way to confirm whether it is genuine information or a complicated misdirection.

In the end, the important thing to remember about the Ordo Maximus is that most of the members are happy to remain a part of a large secret organization as long as they are able to feel smugly superior and there is not too much work, but hidden in the private clubs and Ordo Maximus meeting halls is a smaller group of members who now have the resources of a larger society to draw upon.

ORDO MAXIMUS

The Ordo Maxmus is an old boy's network, the Ordo Maximus is a conspiracy, the Ordo Maximus is the real power in Europe; these are the thoughts that leap to mind whenever the Ordo is mentioned. In reality, Ordo Maximus is a semi-secret magical society that has a bigger reputation than it warrants.

The existence of Ordo Maximus is an open secret today due to its size. As the group has grown larger, it has become widely known in magical circles through sheer number of people who are members. The society still does not advertise its presence or its activities, but careful observers can pick out the general goals and activities of individual parts of the group. As Ordo has grown larger, it has also changed the way that it operates along with its internal procedures. For example, it is now possible to leave Ordo Maximus if you no longer wish to be a part of it, where two decades ago anyone attempting to resign would be signing on to a life on the run, plagued by spirits and ritual spells.

As the society has grown and matured, the membership has also changed. In the mists of time, the group attracted those who were power hungry and motivated to get the job done, but sometime over the past two decades the recruitment focus changed, so recruits now targeted are those of European, British and Irish nobility who have magical talent, political clout, and wealth. The former motivated and hungry members are still involved in the society, generally in leadership positions, and are very much the movers and shakers on a day-to-day basis.

The Ordo is unusual in that the contacts a member has share their level of seniority and power, so that a member knows his group, and a few people in the group who are slightly more senior or junior, but that's about it. Members who are two or more levels more senior are never seen by junior members, which means they wouldn't recognize them if they saw them. In any other society this would cause ructions and a struggle between the less senior and the more senior, but the leadership keeps the society occupied with activities that suit the members, meaningful benefits, and a reasonable shot at progression, all of which mollify the masses. In addition, considering the wealth and power of the members, the leadership is careful not to expose the junior members to too much risk, due to the backlash that would result if a group of rich and powerful nobles were to be injured or killed in a ritual or other risky event.

Due to the size and secrecy of the group, getting a handle on the overall goals is difficult, and there is evidence that the goals of the group change at each different tier of the organization. Given the stasis at the higher levels, the part of the society that is open to novices seems to simply have a goal of promoting the society, maintaining stability, and building more and more connections.

- Sure, that's the public news, but let's remember Martin de Vries, vampire hunter? Disappeared while investigating the the Ordo Maximus in Europe, reappeared as a vampire himself with a huge grudge against OM. As Hanibelle discussed in the *Street Legends* posting, de Vries is now a best selling author, which gives him an



excuse to tour the world, tracking down vampires where he finds them. He has a special enmity for Ordo, and he won't rest until he's sure the society is vampire free. Maybe not even then—he may go after them until the whole organization is broken.

- Plan 9
- He's wasting his time. The Ordo aren't vampires, and they don't rule Europe—unless a certain head of Saeder-Krupp is a member.
- Pistons
- Not all of them are vampires, but the old leadership is.
- Plan 9

Incoming Message

ORDO MAXIMUS

Members: 3,000+ members

Headquarters: Unknown, presumed Eastern Europe

Membership Requirements: High Lifestyle

Strictures: Attendance (local meetings as proscribed by the local group, usually monthly), exclusive membership, exclusive ritual, oath (never betray the secrets of the Ordo Maximus), material link

Customs: Service (spend some time on Recruiting, or Admin tasks), deed (a large service to the Ordo Maximus is required to advance within the society)

Resources: Medium (at a local level)

Dues: Medium

Patron: None

Patron Spirit: None

Membership Benefits: Worldwide organization

Roles for Mundanes: A very few are admitted to the society, but they can never advance within it.

Contact Benefits: International ties, succor in times of need

Secrecy: 3 (existence is an open secret, but members spend considerable resources keeping their activities out of the public domain)

Connection Rating: 2 (5 when members act openly)

THE PAINTED HORSE LODGE

One of the better-known magical societies in the Native American Nations, the Painted Horse Lodge, welcomes shamans from across the American Continent to share their knowledge. The Painted Horse Lodge has a strong following in the Pueblo, Tír Tairngire, and former Ute nations. It also has small lodges in every other North American country, including Aztlan.

Initially the Painted Horse Lodge was just one small but healthy magical group in the CAS, until simmering resentment of hermetic magicians motivated the society members to break off and form their own lodges in neighboring cities and countries. Over the past twenty years the lodge has absorbed disaffected shamans almost everywhere that it has set up shop. Although many of the members are shamans in the Native American tradition, the Lodge welcomes non-American traditions, making it one of the few societies in the Native American Nations to do so.

Painted Horse Lodge members often have a chip on their shoulder and tend to be anti-authoritarian. This leads to problems on the rare occasions that the Painted Horse Lodge leadership attempts to issue a directive or policy. The Painted Horse Lodge also has an agenda of promoting the place of the shaman in society, although the rebellious nature of the individual members can overshadow this goal. In areas where lodges are close to collections of other mages, the Lodge members alternately recruit or antagonize them.

Becoming a member of the Lodge requires a prospective member to live with a current member their sponsor, for one cycle of the moon, at the end of which the current member gives their opinion of the worthiness of the prospect to the local elders. At the next full meeting the potential member undertakes a vision quest with their sponsor after the rest of the lodge summons a spirit who can guide the uninitiated to the metaplanes. During this quest, the local lodge discusses the member and comes to a consensus on whether to admit the new member. When the prospect returns from the metaplanes, the report they and their sponsor give of their experiences is the final deciding factor. After the meeting, one of the elders approaches the prospect and either welcomes the new member or makes it clear that the prospect is no longer welcome.

Each lodge has a council of elders who run the day-to-day business. It is a mark of esteem among lodge members to be asked to sit on the council, although the member can turn down the offer without loss of prestige. Many members serve some time on the council and then take a break while they focus on other matters, serving again when they feel able. The society as a whole looks to the original Painted Horse Lodge for overall direction, although the original lodge has more of a "first among equals" status than an absolute governance.

Incoming Message

THE PAINTED HORSE LODGE

Members: 150

(Nominal) Headquarters: The original Painted Horse Lodge, Dallas, Texas

Membership Requirements: Members must follow a mentor spirit

Strictures: Fraternity

Customs: Attendance (formal meetings every other month or so, more often during active crises)

Resources: Low

Dues: Low

Patron: None

Patron Spirit: Spirit of the Painted Horse (beast spirit)

Membership Benefits: Access to Plant reagents

Roles for Mundanes: Friends and family of members are allowed to attend and help out

Contact Benefits: Connections to local troublemakers, Terra First!, and gangs

Secrecy: 0

Connection rating: 3



The Painted Horse members have many contacts with Terra First!, anarchists, gang members, and other groups of people at the edge of society. They are often willing to put fellow members in contact with their friends. The Painted Horse Lodge has a patron spirit of a Painted Horse, as does each magical group within the Lodge. Reagents and ingredients that can be found in the wilderness are often available to members, as many of the members spend time communing with the spirits on the plains and mountains.

- Sounds like a bunch of angry no-hopers, I always wondered whether there was anything to them, and it looks like there isn't.
- Hard Exit
- Do not rush to display ignorance. They aren't organized like the army, but they do what they intend to do. They sometimes have a propensity for inaction and complaint, but when they set after something, they move with purpose. The organization is decentralized and anti-authoritarian, which means if you anger one of the lodges, the others might not react, as they have situations of their own.
- Man-of-Many-Names

SEATTLE UNITED CORPORATE COUNCIL CONTRACTOR SOCIETY

The Seattle United Corporate Council has struggled to maintain independence from its parent corporations. Each time the council has ruled in favor of one or more megacorps, it has had to withstand accusations of partisanship and favoritism. To solve this perception problem, the council has become more and more rigorous in documenting every decision they make.

In the past, when the council has required magical expertise, it has had to find competent magicians with no criminal record, or ties to a particular corporation. To solve this problem, the Corporate Council created its own society of contractors with the intention of being able to call on members of the society to provide robust information on pending cases that have a magical component, as well as calling on them to investigate magical incidents.

Members of the Contractor Society must not have any aggravated or violent crime on their record, and their identity must be robust enough to withstand a detailed investigation by the Corporate Council. Members are then placed on a list of experts who may be called on to provide testimony to a court for a modest fee or to investigate magical happenings on behalf of the Council. The society has also received space in buildings adjacent to the Court allowing them to host meetings and social engagements.

The Contractor Society has no other goals for its members or itself. As an entity controlled entirely by a non-society source, it has remarkable transparency and is as apolitical as possible in Seattle. That said, the society is riddled with magicians who have an unstated loyalty to one or other megacorp, and significant politics can occur at the individual level when a case involving megacorporations comes up. Members who are not corporate plants tend to keep the selection process reasonably honest, particularly since a good portion of the society leadership are retired shadowrunner mages who are pleased to have a legitimate source of income to supplement the gains they made while in the shadows.

New members must apply to the Corporate Council, after which a series of background checks and interviews are conducted.

The use of mind probes and aura reading during the interviews (for which the members sign a waiver) mean that corporations who want to influence the Contractor Society (and therefore the council investigations) generally wait until a prospective member has been accepted before approaching with bribes or offers. Furthermore each new member must sign an oath to disclose any external obligations as they arise. Breaking this oath makes initiation more difficult, although as the focus of the group is not on magical advancement, it might be some time before this is discovered.

The society charges a purely nominal fee to its members, the payment of which serves as a fee for accreditation, and the receipt must be submitted before a member can work with local law enforcement or testify in court. The society has no mentor spirit, but it has access to the legal records of almost every civil case in the UCAS that has involved illegal magic or magicians. The society also has a small library of spell formulae, although as the society has members from many traditions, the benefit of this library to any given member is questionable.

Members who prove exemplary in conduct have been approached by Zurich Orbital to be investigators for the Zurich Orbital Corporate Court. No one is known to have declined this offer.

- What the hell? I thought this was meant to be useful on the streets! Sounds like a bunch of corporate sell-outs who want to spend all day sniffing for asbestos.
- Sticks
- Relax, this is useful. This group doesn't just tool about for the council, they go out investigating. They are a good way of getting paid for magical work if you have an enemy in Lone Star or Knight Errant, since everything they do for the Council is legal. The investigation stuff is pretty small beer, as most members hire out to various corps, and the Contractor Society is cool with that as long as they don't testify in any case with that corp for six months after. It's like legal running. You should apply.
- Glasswalker
- She'd need a competent fake ID first. The Corporate Council don't mess around when it comes to checking the paperwork.
- Nephrine

SOCIETY OF THE PHOENIX ARISEN

The formation of the Society of the Phoenix Arisen was the personal quest of one nearly burned-out mage, Troy Danthorpe, attempting to regain his magical ability. Danthorpe expressed some magical talent as an adolescent, but cyberware and drug abuse ate away at his ability until it was nearly gone. Having made enough while shadowrunning to retire, Troy had second thoughts about the path his life had taken, and he looked into rebuilding his magical talent. Troy worked hard and spent considerable sums on the latest genetic therapy treatments, depleting most of his reserves, but he managed to reignite the magic that had almost been extinguished. When word spread that he had rebuilt his magical power, a few other near-burnouts contacted Dan looking for guidance and help. Dan formed the Society of the Phoenix Arisen to provide a mutual support network for recovering



Incoming Message

SEATTLE UNITED CORPORATE COUNCIL CONTRACTOR SOCIETY

Members: 60

Headquarters: Downtown Seattle

Membership requirements: Members must not be affiliated with a corporation and must have a clean criminal record

Strictures: Oath (avoid affiliating with a specific corporation), service (testimony when called on), must provide a material link

Customs: Attendance (attend meetings once a month)

Resources: Luxury

Dues: Low

Patron: Seattle United Corporate Council

Patron Spirit: None

Membership Benefits: Opportunities for legal employment.

Roles for Mundanes: A few mundanes are allowed to join the society as administrative members

Contact Benefits: Access to court records, legal employment

Secrecy: 0 (public organization)

Connection Rating: 4

Incoming Message

SOCIETY OF THE PHOENIX ARISEN

Members: 18

Headquarters: Bellevue, Seattle

Membership requirements: Must have Essence less than 6 to join

Strictures: Service (assisting others initiating, building genetic therapy networks)

Customs: Attendance (when called on)

Resources: Medium

Dues: Low

Patron: Troy Danworth

Patron Spirit: None

Membership Benefits: Access to rejuvenation treatments at or near cost

Roles for Mundanes: Mundane membership is not forbidden, but there is little reason for a mundane to join.

Enemy: Aleph Society

Contact benefits: Connections to therapy clinics and medical services

Secrecy: 0 (Has an official Matrix site)

Connection Rating: 1 (5 for access to genetic treatments)

magicians. Dan also helps those who join to find cyberware and bioware clinics that are able to remove installed augmentations without causing more damage to subjects' magical ability.

Any mage is welcome to join the Phoenix Society, although mages who have not suffered from magic loss will not find many benefits from membership. Members are expected to assist in initiation of other members, and are also expected to do everything they can reasonably do to help members regain any magical ability they have lost. No member is asked to spend more time than they can spare, but members who show real dedication and commitment progress quickly into leadership roles.

Phoenix Society members are not expected to attend every meeting, but they are asked to be contactable on reasonably short notice in case assistance is needed. In practice, more than half of the members attend meetings every month, and these meetings are where group initiation is performed. Members are also expected to volunteer any information that is not too sensitive if it will help another member particularly the contact details of cyber-clinics capable of genetic rejuvenation. The society maintains contacts with talismongers who fence power foci and spell foci, although with many of the group members having recovered from drug and augmentation addiction, mages who rely on foci to boost magic are watched carefully for signs of focus addiction. By the same token, the society occasionally makes careful use of deepweed and spirits who can open astral gateways so mages who cannot astrally project can accompany other members on astral journeys, if that will help them to recover. The society does not push for complete regeneration, but it is encouraged, and for most members, rebuilding their magical potential is the reason they join.

There are no medical experts within the society, and many of the techniques to rebuild magic are trial-and-error, but the society seems to be making progress in working out processes that can rebuild lost magic. Several of the members have built up their abilities so the astral scars in their aura are almost completely gone, and every member who has remained in the organization for more than a few months has improved. Members often pick up knowledge of genetic and surgical therapy to build a knowledge base to work on.

Members recruiting for the Phoenix Society occasionally run afoul of the Aleph Society, who are competing for the same pool of recruits. The Phoenix Arisen offers a path to regaining magic through hard work and dedication, while the Aleph Society offers a much faster route. While the Phoenix Arisen is growing more slowly than the Aleph Society, the members tend to be more dedicated and hardworking. A few former Phoenix Society members have joined the Aleph Society when progress has been too slow, and a very few former Aleph members have sought help from the Phoenix Society when they lost faith in what the group has been doing, or became put off by their methods. The two groups are still reasonably small and have more things to worry about besides each other.

The Phoenix Society in Seattle is a group of eight hermetic mages who trained at the headquarters in Denver and then moved to Seattle to form a local chapter. The Seattle members meet in a small rented apartment in Bellevue, near several cosmetic clinics that offer léonization, genetic rejuvenation, and related products.

- This is a tough concept to accept. Magic loss being permanent has been a hard-and-fast rule for as long as I've been casting.
- Winterhawk



NEO-ANARCHISTS NEW BLOG: YOUNG MAGICIANS FIGHTING BACK!

The old men are winning again. They always do it. They start out young, passionate, trying to do things that matter, but then they find themselves doing the same damn thing year after year, and before they know what's going on they don't know how to change anymore. They're calcified, ossified. They are the establishment.

A few decades ago, people started studying magic seriously, and it was the Wild West back then. Got some ideas? Got some ability? Then think a little about what you're doing, try to make it better, and swap stories about what you pulled off over drinks with your friends. It wasn't confined to the dusty hallways of academia, it was everywhere. And you didn't need a Ph.D. or any such crap to study it. You wanted to study it, you just did it.

But the establishment got its claws into things, and now you can't be taken seriously unless you draw a regular paycheck from a megacorp or have a string of letters after your name. The establishment's doing its normal bang-up job of preserving the status quo, giving tenure to professors who are most likely to keep with tradition rather than shake anything up. And once they're in place, these teachers don't go anywhere. They've got a good job, and they're going to hold on to it as long as they can. The MIT&T Thaumaturgy and Awakened Studies department has not had a vacancy for teaching staff in nine years, and at CalTech the Magical Research Fellowship has only admitted an average of one new member per year into its eighty-person membership. Those young, talented mages? The ones who can change the world because they don't think like anyone else? They're left to scrape up jobs where they can, often tying the noose of corp money around their necks. Some of them try to freelance just to keep a scrap of dignity.

This fossilization at the top of the academic hierarchy has created a gap between new, energetic graduates and old professors who are set in their ways. Groups like the recently formed Sorcerers Institute are a symptom of this rigid, unyielding mindset. Recently formed by young graduate students who found themselves cut off from publishers and magical journals, these dedicated young students are trying to drive change from the bottom up.

They're facing an uphill battle, though. The establishment is going to ignore them as much as they can. When I interviewed several tenured professors across the country, most had not heard of the group, and those that had vowed they would never have a member in their department. Despite this blatant prejudice, the students are pressing on, working to break through. Through sheer force of will, some members have had their research considered by established journals and academics. They're building a reputation as spellslingers who have the goal of becoming a force for change an innovation in a field that has very quickly become unwelcoming of change.

Ultimately these young mages are the future of the field. Groups such as the Sorcerers Institute are their way of seizing the future!

- Advances were bound to happen. Genetic therapy has been around for a while now, and magicians have always been able to grow their magic with time, patience and training. It was a matter of finding a way to use that growth to repair damage instead of growing abilities. What's surprising is that these guys are a magic group and not a registered medical corporation. If they get their methods down, they could make a crap-ton of money fixing burnouts.
- Sticks
- I know they claim to be getting results, but I'm not convinced this isn't some kind of long con. Mana doesn't just repair, and the links between magic and science remain tenuous. There are a lot of victims out there, and whenever you have that, you have people looking to prey on them by offering what they want the most. I'd bet you could find someone willing to lay down some cash to look into whether these guys are legit.
- Snopes

SORCERERS INSTITUTE

Formed only two years ago when a group of academic magicians decided to form their own group rather than become members of the official University of Atlanta group, the Sorcerers Institute is adding members as quickly as it can.

Motivated by a desire to prove themselves independent of the often stodgy and reactionary professors of thaumaturgy at North American universities, the Sorcerers Institute has a lot of enthusiasm and drive. Unfortunately, distrust of the entrenched academic authorities has cut them off from the accumulated knowledge of the older, more established magical groups.

The Institute is also hindered by its lack of history. Academic journals have yet to accept a paper from a member of the Sorcerers Institute, citing a lack of reputation. In response, the society has founded its own publication that has seen some use by students at larger universities but which has not yet been adopted as citable material at any academic institution. One of the goals of the current leadership is to become a recognized and reputable institute of magical knowledge. To this end, the group is focused on exploring magical theories and publishing spell formulae. Progress so far has been slow, but it is increasing in pace.

The atmosphere of the Sorcerers Institute is more like a collaborative research project than a secret society. Each member has something to contribute, and so far no rivalry or bickering has broken out within the group. Given that the Sorcerers Institute is academically focused, this atmosphere of mutual effort may not last for long.

The Sorcerers Institute meets online or astrally when it can, and generally only meets in person for group initiation, or for a yearly get-together in Atlanta. The small membership is spread across the globe, and even with only a few dozen members, there are still some who have never met others in the flesh.

Membership in the Institute is particularly useful when researching new spell formulae and tracking down spirit names. Given the academic bent of the society, they are not a very good source of foci or exotic reagents. Individual members, however, are an excellent source of pizza and a place to crash.

The Institute has a mentor spirit of man who represents "Research and Progress." The dues go to maintaining a small



meeting space in Atlanta and are otherwise put toward the Institute's attempts to produce and publish credible research.

- Another young, vibrant group trying to become old fossils.
- Jimmy No

Incoming Message

SORCERERS INSTITUTE

Members: 25

Headquarters: Atlanta, Georgia, CAS

Membership Requirements: Must have an academic qualification to be accepted

Strictures: Fraternity

Customs: Oath (academic rigor and honesty), deed (become cited by another academic), thesis

Resources: Medium

Dues: Medium

Patron: University of Atlanta (provisional)

Patron Spirit: Questor (spirit of man)

Membership Benefits: Excellent library of spells and access to good tutors

Roles for Mundanes: Mundane researchers are welcomed, but other than the ability to be published there are few reasons to join

Contact benefits: Academic ties, academic records, theoretical magical knowledge

Secrecy: 0 (actively being promoted by the membership)

Connection Rating: 2

VIGILANT IRON SCHOOLING HOUSE

For years, the Vigilant Iron Schooling House has sat at the edge of Redmond as a martial arts dojo and training house. The sensei of the dojo, Jekkik, has been dedicated to the ideal of teaching people in bad situations how to deal with physical trouble.

Although the Schooling House is not officially a magical society, several adepts have banded together in initiatory groups within the Schooling House, and Jekkik has encouraged people to do so. Building the links in society is important for the soft-hearted ork. The house welcomes anyone who knows martial arts and is willing to teach students. In practice, most of the members are idealistic physical adepts who want to make a difference in the world. Membership in the schooling house is particularly fluid, with members drifting in and teaching for a while, and then heading off to wherever they are needed. Occasionally groups of former members set up schooling houses in other areas, and in this way a loose association of houses has grown up organically across the Americas and beyond.

Members gain the benefits of socializing with like-minded members and are welcome to stay at the dojo itself as long as they are not going to bring trouble. Initiatory groups are encouraged, and the international scope of the house means that members can often find a place to stay within a few hours of major population centers. The atmosphere is mutually encouraging.

By the same token, members are expected to spend a few hours a week to teach anyone who comes into the house without

expectation of compensation. There is no oath required, but anyone who stirs up too much trouble can be expelled if the majority of other members in the house think it is warranted. Expelled members have to ask to rejoin the house, and they are expected to provide some significant community service before members take them back.

The inclusive membership policy and lack of an oath has occasionally created problems when a house has been divided between two members who are charismatic and opposed to each other. In cases where there is such a division, and where cooler heads don't prevail, the antagonistic members are encouraged to work out their differences in non-lethal sparring. Sometimes this works, but two years ago the Rio de Janeiro Schooling House fragmented into four rival groups, each with about three members and each of which claims to be the "true" schooling house.

- Nice to see someone with magic giving a damn about mundanes.
- Sticks
- I'll believe that when I see it work for me.
- Clockwork

Incoming Message

VIGILANT IRON SCHOOLING HOUSE

Members: 200

Headquarters: Training house in Pullayup Barrens, Seattle

Membership Requirements: Members must have Rating 3+ in any martial art

Strictures: Fraternity

Customs: Service (teaching mundanes)

Resources: Low

Dues: Low

Patron: None

Patron Spirit: None

Membership benefits: Ready access to martial-arts teachers, worldwide organization

Role for Mundanes: Mundanes are used extensively for training other mundanes, for running the houses, and occasionally for teaching adepts humility

Contact Benefits: Martial arts training

Secrecy: 0

Connection Rating: 3



SMALLER MAGICAL SOCIETIES

Council for Magical Development

Specifically oriented towards sustainable environmental development and studying the way magic interacts with nature, this group is in danger of falling apart due to a lack of clear leadership. Members normally identify with Terra First! or some other ecological group before gaining their membership in the Council for Magical Development.

The TechnoMagicians

This is group of technomancers and magicians who have noticed the surface similarities between the way that magicians interact with the manasphere and the way technomancers interact with the Matrix. This is the only known magical society which has both magical initiatory groups and Technomancer submersion groups. So far there has not been any real success in combining the two branches of knowledge, but both halves of the group are persisting.

- Say what?
- Slamm-0!
- They're crazy. Ten to one they fall apart inside a year.
- Netcat

UNDERWORLD GROUPS

Underworld organizations that span the globe need to have magicians on staff, and members normally form groups within the organization. This is particularly important because most criminal groups take a dim view of members swearing oaths to other organizations. These groups always have the goals of the larger organization at heart unless they are currently engaged in a power struggle, and therefore there is no practical difference between the organization itself and the magical society within it.

CULTS

Most cults are not considered to be magical societies, but there are some charismatic leaders with magic powers who manage to attract both mundane and Awakened followers. The usual operating procedure is to set up a following by inspiring hope and faith in the downtrodden, either through sheer charisma or by greasing the skids with some magical influence. Cults tend to survive as long as the leader remains discreet, doesn't step on the toes of anyone with real power or influence, and avoids the attention of insects.

The latest magic cult to gain some attention is the Planestridders, located in DeeCee. Led by a wide-eyed shaman who calls herself Amber, the Planestridders focus on astrally projecting to other planes as a way of enhancing one's consciousness. Amber believes that the various planes might provide access to other versions of our own reality, and she is dedicated to exploring the planes as thoroughly as possible. Talking with her is a little bit like chasing a butterfly across a flowery meadow, but while her practices and thought processes are unconventional, she has a lot of knowledge buried in her head. Some have sought out her opinions about the chaos last summer involving the closing of the Watergate Rift.



RACIAL GROUPS

While not magical societies in the traditional sense, there are some groups that start when minorities band together and form societies. Normally these fall apart after a short period of time, but occasionally they gain more of a focus and last much longer. The Princes of Tír Tairngire may have started as a magical group, and there are persistent rumors that some of the great dragons have formed a society for exploring magic.

ADVANCEMENT WITHIN A SOCIETY

As a member takes on additional responsibilities within a society, they progress up the ranks and gain benefits. Each society has a bonus based on rank, ranging from +1 to +3 (With a maximum total loyalty of 6) that applies to the Loyalty Ratings of contacts who are also members of the society. When using the society as a group contact, this applies to the Loyalty of the society as a group.

USING SOCIETIES AS CONTACTS

Magical societies can be treated as a group ally (p. 124, *Runner's Companion*). Societies have a minimum Loyalty of 3 toward members in good standing, with the expectation that this loyalty rating will increase to 6 as the member moves up in the society. A society has a loyalty of 5 or 6 toward patrons who support it.

Non-members who are not patrons generally have a Loyalty cap of 3, with the understanding that the society will normally support even raw initiates if there is a conflict between the member and the non-member. It is possible for very long-term allies to have a higher loyalty, but as long as they remain outside the society, they will never have the complete support of the organization.

A magical society is usually a good source for magical services such as warding, quickening, or purchasing spell formulae. Members of the society either represent an entrenched group in one social strata (for example, the Magical Investors Group has many members in the finance sector), or a scattering across different parts of society (Cracking the Bones has contacts that range from street urchins to political leaders). Entrenched groups are reliable when contacting their particular population; scattered groups are not reliable, but have the potential to contact almost anyone.

The Connection Rating of a magical society usually scales with the size of the society, generally ranging from 2 to 5. Secret societies have a lower Connection Rating to represent how hard it is to exert influence while still remaining secret (see below).

Using the friends-of-friends rule with a magical society is an excellent way of contacting different magical resources, particularly reagents, foci, and obscure esoteric knowledge. Societies make very poor fixers and are unreliable as fences, but they can be reasonable and occasionally excessively generous Johnsons.

SECRECY

Secret magical societies have less influence than public societies, but that's a trade off they're willing to make in order to have their operations fly under the public's radar. A secret society imposes a penalty on anyone attempting to perform legwork on it, or on anyone using it to track down and research its members. The exact penalty depends on how serious the society is about remaining secret; it can range from 1 to 6. Each point of the rating reduces the Connection Rating of the society by 1 (to a minimum of 1) but imposes twice the rating as a dice pool penalty on any legwork tests, and three times the rating as a penalty for Matrix searches on the society.

If the leadership of a secret society believes an action is important enough to come out of hiding, they can act at their full Connection Rating. Each time this happens more people hear of the society; if this happens often enough, the gamemaster can decide to temporarily or permanently reduce the organization's Secrecy Rating. When a society's rating drops to 0, they are no longer secret.

If members of a secret organization are foolish enough to leave irrefutable evidence lying around (or if someone manufactures credible evidence), then the society is forced either to go public, to spend large sums covering up or discrediting the evidence, or to hire shadowrunners and hackers in order to go back under the radar.

Often what happens is that the society officially breaks up, but after the heat has died down (which may take years) ex-members connect with each other, and a new society forms from the ashes of the old. This effectively starts the society from scratch, which is sometimes the only way to regain secret status.

STARTING AND GROWING A MAGICAL SOCIETY

Forming an initiatory group also creates a magical society. For a just-formed group, the society and the group are the same entity. As the group gains in members, it becomes harder for new members to join. Before long, some members often split off and form a second initiatory group with some new recruits, allowing the society to grow so that it encompasses more people. Members can remain a part of more than one Initiatory group within the same society, although there is no mechanical benefit for doing so (other than having to attend twice as many meetings).