



TM

ACCESSORY

THE FACTOIS MANIFESTO



THE ◆ FACTOL'S ◆ MANIFESTO

*Being an accounting, covertly Researched under Fear of Death,
of the various Factions, their Leaders, and their Headquarters in the Cage.*

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Listen up, berk, 'cause I'm only going to tell it once. The book you're holding is banned — outlawed by the Guvners, confiscated by the Hardheads, and burned by the Red Death whenever they find a copy. Fact is, the only factions who sanctioned this work were the Anarchists and the Indeps — and even they panned it once they discovered their own darks on display.

INTRODUCTION

Read at your own risk.

Who am I? Your best friend, if it's the truth you're seeking, but I'm not barmy enough to tell you my name. Plenty of bloods lost their lives to help create this work, a masterpiece among faction literature.

Sure, there are other "underground" tomes about Sigil's philosophers. The Fated have their Secret History of Sigil, the Sensates their Kamahexotica, and the Signers their Cyclopaedia Imagica — just to name three. But such

volumes were created by and for a given faction's members, not for readers at large. And their so-called truths are tainted by the authors' views. This volume, on the other hand, represents an objective exposé of all the factions at once, laying each one bare to the eyes of any berk who's brave enough to look. 'Course, that's not what my researchers told their subjects, which is why this book is banned. It took an entire cast of able contributors — many of them Anarchist spies posing as other faction members — to compile the information herein. They claimed to be working solely for their faction's interests, and used every ounce of jink and guile available for the cause. (This book is respectfully dedicated to those who came up short.)

You might assume that I too am an Anarchist, or a Guvner turned stag, and doubt the content of these pages. That's your loss, sod. Truth is all, and I'm a stickler for it. How ironic that its pursuit signed my death warrant. See, I had to verify every submission to ensure this tome would serve its purpose. So I employed the services of a creature free of faction allegiance: the arcanoloth spy called Shemeshka the Marauder (it's with no little pleasure that I expose her name here). Naturally her fee was steep to begin with. Then she tried to up the ante, threatening blackmail. When I refused her ploy, she slipped a copy of my masterwork to the Mercykillers. Now one of their high-up bloodhounds has been ceremonially bound to my trail. Giving the Red Death the laugh will take every resource I have left — and if I fail, I could be swinging from the leafless tree or feeding the Wurm before you even read this. It won't matter, so long as you believe.

My goal is none other than the continued safety of Sigil. I claim complete neutrality in the matter, though I'll confess one fervent opinion: The Anarchists aren't far off when they say greed and corruption form the underpinnings of the establishment. While some factions spin a web of self-serving secrecy, others openly strive for greater power. By exposing the heart of their philosophies and plans, this tome may help maintain precious balance. My detractors assert that such aspirations are not only dangerous but presumptuous. But the Lady herself encountered me in the midst of my work, late one eve after I'd met with Shemeshka in the Hive. I escaped the Lady's glittering

SAY: +HA+ AIN'T A COPY
OF THE FACTOL'S MANIFESTO.
IS IT, SOD?

— LAST WORDS

SAID +@

ULAY THE UNFORTUNATE

blades unscathed, so I can only surmise that she did not object. Were it not for the Mercykiller warrant, I'd start my own sect out-of-town (or out-of-touch, if need be), dedicated to the objective dissemination of truth. Who knows? One day I too could be a factol — if I'm not dead first.

— The Editor

Except for Clueless primes — otherwise known as Outsiders — nearly every cutter walking the crowded streets of Sigil knows about the *factions* — 15 groups that make and break the laws of the city, each with its own philosophy about the multiverse and what it means. Things used to be a lot more confusing back when 50 or so factions roamed the Cage. However, in the Great Upheaval some 630 years ago, the Lady mandated that there be only 15 factions to end the needless chaos of conflicting interest groups. (*Details of the Upheaval are recounted in the chapter on the Free League.* — Ed.)

Factol's Manifesto expands the faction material in the *PLANESCAPE™ Campaign Setting*, supplementing *A Player's Guide to the Planes*. This tome offers revelations about each group's history and future plans, an exposé of the factol (the high-up in charge), an introduction to useful nonplayer characters (NPCs), plus a private tour of each faction's headquarters. But be forewarned: The tour may reveal recesses that typically remain dark to all but trusted faction members. In this and other sensitive areas, the Dungeon Master (DM) has final say on how much any player character (PC) knows for sure.

Each chapter also answers questions about the faction membership at large — such as how alignment, class, and race shape individual roles, and how rank and commitment to the group can add to character benefits.

Finally, *The Factol's Manifesto* presents current chant about each faction's activities, plus new darks for the DM. The chant's rarely common knowledge. Rather, it represents rumors that a clever cutter might unearth while hanging around the faction headquarters or neighboring kips. The rumors might be false, but most contain a grain of truth. Many serve as adventure hooks that a DM can develop in play. Anything labeled "DM's Dark" is just what it says, berk. DMs can embrace or ignore this secret information as they see fit. So players, don't read it — and don't count on benefiting from its content if you're a soddin' cheat who reads it anyhow.

◆ FACTION HIERARCHIES ◆

Not every faction has an official hierarchy, but residents of Sigil recognize four basic categories that apply to most groups. From the lowest rank to the highest, these categories are as follows:

Namers wear the colors of their faction while avoiding much involvement in the shifting plots devised by the factol and other high-ups. Most PCs fit this description. Also called "the file," namers might give the faction's bloods a place to flop for a night, keep eyes and ears open, and pass the chant along. They won't tolerate an insult to their badge (brawling is a popular pastime in Sigil's taverns), but neither will they risk life and limb in a simple dispute. A namer can usually say no even to a high-up's request, but it's not likely he'll be asked again, nor rise beyond the rank of namer.

Factotums are full-time factioneers. They regard official faction business as their primary employment. The most visible factotums act as guides and messengers in Sigil, but many more serve their factol as soldiers and scholars, diplomats or enforcers, or even spies and knights of the post. Unlike namers (almost expected to balk at life-threatening missions), factotums can handle 'most any order from a high-up. Usually, the factotum receives the necessary tools to complete the job, too: Factions look after their devoted members.

Factors are the high-ups of the factions. They govern strongholds and oversee operations spawned by the factol's policy. Factor councils often control most of a given faction's affairs, especially day-to-day business. Few members attain this rank. Furthermore, some factors pretend to have a lower stature when such a subterfuge suits the faction's (or factol's) cause.



The highest rank, of course, is *factol* (leader of the faction). Most factols were factors before ascending to the top of the pyramid, but occasionally a popular factotum can seize control. Factols wield great power; the sod who crosses one might end up in the dead-book. These leaders have the resources of their factions at their fingertips; besides commanding devoted followers, they can supplement their personal equipment with faction assets whenever the need or desire strikes them. Note that two factions have no official leader: the Free League (Indeps) and the Revolutionary League (Anarchists). 'Course, it should go without saying that the Clueless (Outsiders) have no factol either.

Namers gain the faction benefits introduced in *A Player's Guide to the Planes*. Higher-ranking members may acquire further advantages, as detailed under "Within the Ranks" in upcoming chapters. Due to space constraints, NPC descriptions in this book do not itemize standard abilities and equipment. Consult "Within the Ranks" and *A Player's Guide to the Planes* for a list of faction benefits. The *Player's Handbook* and *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* describe standard race and class abilities.

◆ A WORD + JOINERS ◆

Anarchists claim that most factions accept anyone who shows up with a bit of jink and a promise to toe the line (or *not* to, if a body's looking to be a Xaositect). Fact is, unless the Free League's involved, becoming a member's not that simple. Sure, anybody can declare allegiance to a faction. Talk's cheap, and the streets are filled with loud-mouthed urchins who change their colors every other week. No one

takes 'em seriously. At the DM's option, true namers — entry-level members welcome at faction headquarters and wielding basic faction abilities — should be recognized by a factotum sponsor.

The first step toward that recognition is embracing the group's philosophy. Actions speak louder than words, so a cutter should live the creed a while, trying it on for size. If his actions seem questionable, the factotum might arrange a mission to test the namer's devotion. Rituals sometimes mark the advancement from namer to factotum (see details in each chapter) but are more common for promotions to higher ranks.

As stated in the *Campaign Setting*, every planar PC starts out with a faction, and Clueless primes must declare their philosophy in due time. To add depth, a player creating a PC background should invent a sponsor — someone who has vouched for the character's readiness to join the

chosen faction. The sponsorship might be as informal as procuring some happy bubbler's endorsement, but having "friends in low places" won't help much in the future. With the DM's approval (and perhaps a side adventure), a PC can side with a factotum whose name carries more weight 'round headquarters.

After choosing a faction, it's not easy for a cutter to switch without losing face. Except for the Indeps (who don't see themselves as a faction anyhow), factions don't take kindly to the fickle-hearted. Once the word's out that a sod can't make up his mind about things, folks question his loyalty — unless he's abandoned the gods (in which case the Athar might take him in), or he's decided all the other factions should be broken apart (in which case the Anarchists might acquiesce).

◆ F+CTIONS A+ A GLANCE ◆

Designed to help the Clueless peruse their options, this section offers a shorthand description of all 15 established philosophies.

ATHAR (DEFIERS, LOST)

Philosophy: The gods are frauds; the unknowable truth lies beyond the veil.

Factol: Terrance.

Sigil HQ: Shattered Temple (Lower Ward).

Home Field: Astral.

Allies: Believers of the Source.

Enemies: —

BELIEVERS OF THE SOURCE (GODSMEN)

Philosophy: All life springs from the same divine source, ascending and descending in form as the cosmos tests it.

Factol: Ambar Vergrove.

Sigil HQ: Great Foundry (Lower Ward).

Home Field: Ethereal demiplanes.

Allies: Athar, Doomguard (temporary ally).

Enemies: Bleak Cabal, Dustmen.

BLEAK CABAL (BLEAKERS, THE CABAL, MADMEN)

Philosophy: The multiverse ain't supposed to make sense; there's no grand scheme, no deep meaning, no elusive order. The only truth worth finding lies within.

Factol: Lhar.

Sigil HQ: The Gatehouse (Hive Ward).

Home Field: Pandemonium.

Allies: Doomguard, Dustmen, Revolutionary League.

Enemies: Fraternity of Order, Harmonium, Mercykillers.

DOOMGUARD (SINKERS)

Philosophy: Entropy is ecstasy; decay is divine. The multiverse is *supposed* to fall apart. We're just here to keep leatherheads from interfering.

Factol: Pentar.



YEAH, BU+
WHICH F+CTION
PAYS BES+?
— JUS+ AN+HER
CLUELESS PRIME

Sigil HQ: Armory (The Lady's Ward).
Home Field: Each negative quasiplane.
Allies: Bleak Cabal, Dustmen.
Enemies: Fraternity of Order, Harmonium.

DUSTMEN (THE DEAD)

Philosophy: We're all dead — some more so than others. So, we explore our current state with patience, purge our passion, and ascend toward the purity of True Death.
Factol: Skall.
Sigil HQ: Mortuary (Hive Ward).
Home Field: Negative Energy Plane.
Allies: Bleak Cabal, Doomguard.
Enemies: Society of Sensation, Sign of One.

FATED (TAKERS, HEARTLESS)

Philosophy: The multiverse belongs to those who seize it. No one's to blame for a poor sod's fate but the sorry sod himself.
Factol: Duke Rowan Darkwood.
Sigil HQ: Hall of Records (Clerk's Ward).
Home Field: Ysgard.
Allies: Free League, Mercykillers (loosely).
Enemies: Harmonium.

FRATERNITY OF ORDER (GUVNERS)

Philosophy: Everything has laws; most are dark. Learn the laws of the multiverse and you can rule it.
Factol: Hashkar.
Sigil HQ: City Court (The Lady's Ward).
Home Field: Mechanus.
Allies: Mercykillers, Harmonium.
Enemies: Xaositects, Revolutionary League.

FREE LEAGUE (INDEPS)

Philosophy: This ain't no faction, and *nobody* tells us what to do. Keep your options open; nobody's got the key to the truth.
Factol: None.
Sigil HQ: Great Bazaar (Market Ward).
Home Field: Outlands.
Allies: Fated (sometimes).
Enemies: Harmonium.

HARMONIUM (HARDHEADS)

Philosophy: Peace is our goal. But if it takes a little war to get others to set things right, the *Harmonium* way, so be it. That's how we'll reach our golden harmony.
Factol: Sarin.
Sigil HQ: City Barracks (The Lady's Ward).
Home Field: Arcadia.
Allies: Guvners, Mercykillers.
Enemies: Indeps, Revolutionary League, Xaositects.

MERCYKILLERS (RED DEATH)

Philosophy: Justice is everything. When properly applied, punishment leads to perfection.

Factol: Formerly Mallin, now Alisohn Nilesia.
Sigil HQ: Prison (The Lady's Ward).
Home Field: Acheron.
Allies: Harmonium, Guvners.
Enemies: Often Sensates, Signers, Revolutionary League.

REVOLUTIONARY LEAGUE (ANARCHISTS)

Philosophy: The status quo is built on lies and greed. Crush the factions. Break 'em all down and rebuild with what's left — that's the only way to find the real truth.
Factol: None.
Sigil HQ: Mobile.
Home Field: Carceri.
Allies: Doomguard, Xaositects (weak tie).
Enemies: Harmonium, Guvners.

SIGN OF ONE (SIGNERS)

Philosophy: The multiverse exists because the mind imagines it. The Signers — it could be any Signer — create the multiverse through the power of thought.
Factol: Darius.
Sigil HQ: Hall of Speakers (Clerk's Ward).
Home Field: Beastlands.
Allies: Sensates.
Enemies: Bleak Cabal (especially), Harmonium.

SOCIETY OF SENSATION (SENSATES)

Philosophy: To know the multiverse, experience it fully. The senses form the path to truth, for the multiverse doesn't exist beyond what can be *sensed*.
Factol: Erin Montgomery.
Sigil HQ: Civic Festhall (Clerk's Ward).
Home Field: Arborea.
Allies: Signers; occasionally Indeps and Guvners.
Enemies: Doomguard; often Mercykillers, Dustmen.

TRANSCENDENT ORDER (CIPHERS)

Philosophy: Action without thought is the purest response. Train body and mind to act in harmony, and the spirit will become one with the multiverse.
Factol: Rhys.
Sigil HQ: Great Gymnasium (Guildhall Ward).
Home Field: Elysium.
Allies: Most factions.
Enemies: Harmonium (suspicion).

XAOSITECTS (CHAOSMEN)

Philosophy: Chaos is truth, order delusion. Embracing the randomness of the multiverse, one learns its secrets.
Factol: Karan.
Sigil HQ: Hive (Hive Ward).
Home Field: Limbo.
Allies: Doomguard, Bleakers.
Enemies: Harmonium, Guvners.

THE A+HAR

"Today I met with another young priest who feels he's among the Lost. I decided to see him, as I did all the others, because he makes me think of my own temple life — it seems so long ago. I promised him I'd inform no one he'd been here or talked with me. He seemed so worried his superiors would discover his faith had been shaken. I had not the heart to tell him that, once shaken so profoundly, that same faith never returns.

"This youth had the same questions that bring all to the Athar. He looked pitifully dependent upon my having the answers. He'd been wondering why the powers seemed so distant at this, a particularly difficult time in his life. Even his own Yen-Wang-Yeh felt like a mere shell of the grand, divine presence he once was. Why did his god's Palace of Judgment and his fellow priests remind him of the offices and underlings surrounding faction high-ups, he wondered? Why do the tithes resemble the taxes imposed by lords and their ilk?

"The pattern is always the same. I had these initial, sneaking doubts before awakening to the truth. This priest

seemed desperately relieved to hear that I had experienced such feelings myself, and that I had answers for him. 'Do you remember a time in the past when the window in your case refused to open?' I asked. 'Hmm? You pushed and pushed; the sash didn't budge. So what did you do? You calmed your mind, took a deep breath, and gave a concerted heave. The sash rose, didn't it, under your burst of sudden strength?'

"He nodded but didn't appear any more at ease. Certainly such a commonplace occurrence didn't mean anything, he must have thought.

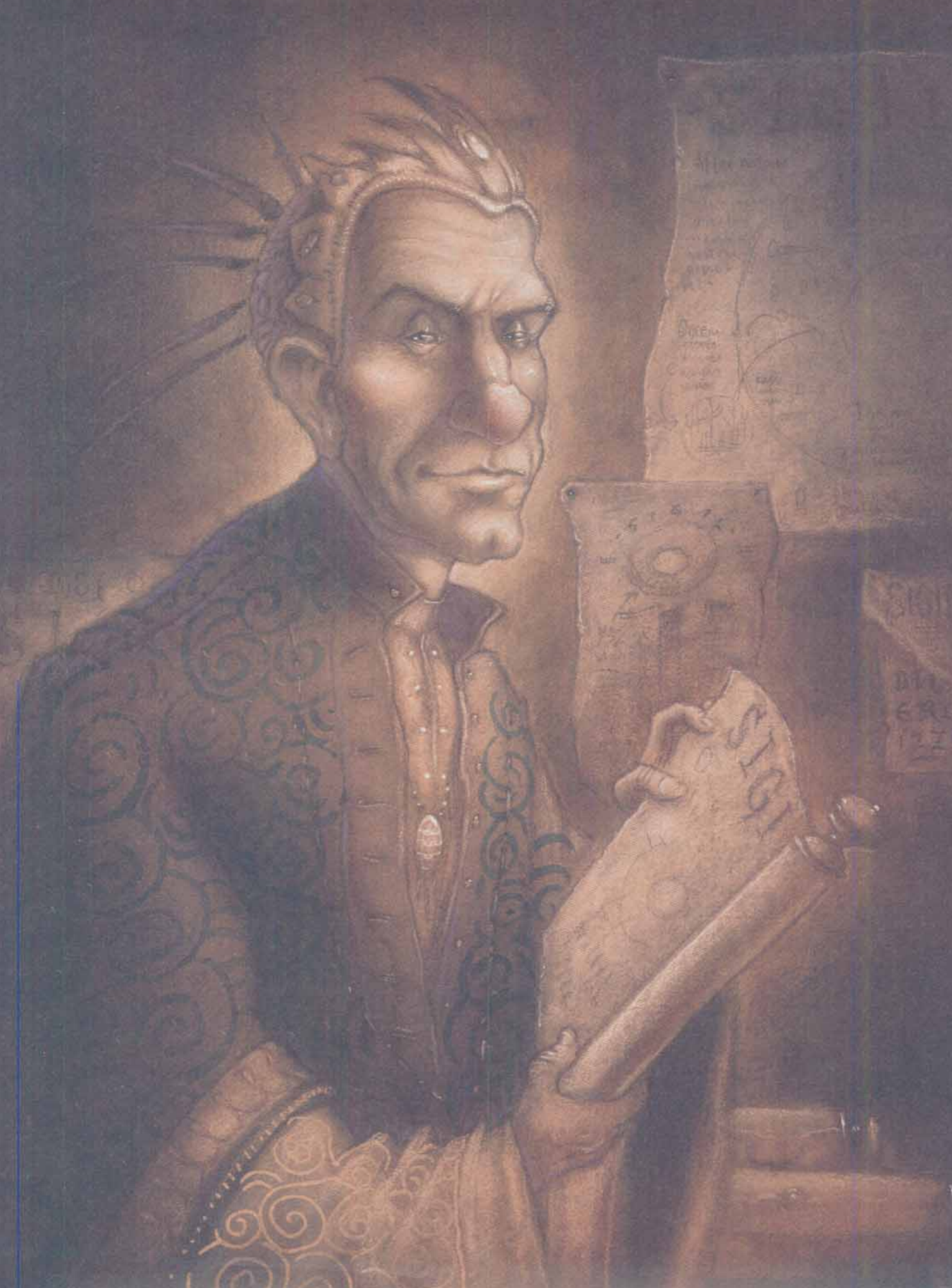
"Think back to that moment not too long ago when the crowd jostled you on the Fhurling Bridge and pushed you through the gap in the railing,' I said. 'Your hands caught at the gargoyle adorning the span, and you dangled from the creature's horns. When you prayed, you were rewarded with another burst of strength, which you used to hoist yourself to safety.' The youth's eyes grew wide, and all the color drained from his face. The question in his expression was clear: How could I possibly know such a thing? Of course, this child had no idea of the Athar's far-reaching influence. He'd be equally shocked to hear that we'd learned of his crisis in faith a while ago. Indeed, I had been expecting him to visit me for quite some time.

"But I didn't give him time to ask his questions. He certainly was not ready to learn our methods. Instead, I went on. 'Believe me, that sudden surge of energy you felt both times sprang from one source. Yen-Wang-Yeh never granted you the vigor to open the window, nor the vitality that saved you on the bridge. That strength was yours, *is* yours.'

"The youth looked peery, hearing that. Oh, why do I waste my time with these leatherheads? They can see the truth right before their faces — they even *know* it, deep down. But they refuse to accept the fact that all they'd built their lives around comes to nothing more than a grand falsehood perpetrated throughout the multiverse. I wish I could give all these questioning, obstinate berks the kind of instant enlightenment I experienced. Instead, I have to think of something to say to this shattered priest who comes to me, the factol of the Athar, thinking that my advice would reassure him that the Athar are wrong, and that *his* power remains true. 'You want to know whether all the powers are frauds,' I said, and I'm afraid I sounded rather

THESE DEFIERS
LAUGH AT THE GODS:
POWERS, SCHMEWERS,

— THE EDITOR



short. 'Do they really milk worshipers of gold and belief to sustain their influence? Certainly, we have no proof. Yet, don't the circumstances look peery to you? If the powers are truly divine, why do they need wealth? They require followers to keep death at bay. Even Yen-Wang-Yeh has these needs.'

"Then, cringing, he asked me the question they all ask just before the final break. 'Are there no gods, then?'"

"I pitied the poor berk. 'Well, I wouldn't go so far as to say that divinity does not exist. Who knows what might lie beyond the veil of our limited awareness? What might the visage of that mystery look like? Perhaps mere mortals cannot fathom it. But, I assure you, this divinity bears little resemblance to the powers who cavort here in the Great Ring.' I almost told him that, as a priest of this Great Unknown divinity, I still have access to spells, as any other priest has. But that is a dark I don't reveal lightly. And, I didn't want to influence him any more than I already had. He had a choice to make.

"He left then, thanking me politely but without animation. Of course, what did I expect? I had crushed his last, foolish hope. Now comes the young priest's hardest challenge. Usually, when faced with the truth, these struggling doubters do one of two things: They come back to the Athar to stay, or they write themselves into the dead-book.

"I think we'll be seeing this one again."

— Excerpt from the personal journal
of Factol Terrance of the Athar



◆ DEFIANT FROM THE STARS ◆

The Athar have been around as long as most factions, so don't go askin' for the entire history of their doings (or undoings). If some basher were to recount this group's saga start to finish, his listener's hair would've turned old-man white with the tale only half told. But a few events of note live in any Defier's gray cells.

The faction began centuries before the Great Upheaval, soon after two cutters — Dunn and Ciro — encountered one another in Sigil amid the ruins of the Shattered Temple. The shrine existed in its broken state even back then, but Dunn and Ciro looked at its decay from very different viewpoints. See, Dunn had been bilked of everything he possessed by the jealous god Poseidon. His wealth lay in the treasury of the sea god's temple in the gate-town of Sylvania. His wife, lured from him by the chief priest, now graced the enclosed pools of that cleric's Arboreal pavilion. His daughter had been swept away to the plane of Arborea by the power's proxy. Dunn eyed the Shattered

Temple, seeking a way to make Poseidon as dead as Aoskar, the power once worshiped there.

Ciro had more of a philosophical bent. He, too, had lost his possessions to a god — Loki — and the god's religious hierarchy. But he'd found he *liked* his unencumbered life. Roaming the multiverse as an itinerant sage suited him more than slaving in a counting house to maintain a modest town house with its oak furnishings. But Ciro wondered why a power should need to bribe his priests with gold, should require the belief of worshipers to feed his immortality, if he were really a god. Surely divine beings, if they existed, followed different rules than the mortals of the planes. They'd be stronger, yes, like the powers are. Yet deities ought to possess fewer weaknesses, too — they shouldn't need faith as men needed food, and they should ably support their priests through divine means, rather than stripping poor mortals' hard-earned jink.

Athar historical texts say that Ciro, adrift in mental meandering, would have overlooked Dunn completely had not that basher mistaken the philosopher for a last surviving believer in Aoskar and attacked him! The outcome is well-known: the duel of swords, followed by the duel of words, followed by a mutual pledge to meet among the ruins again in half a year bringing tales of their deeds against the powers, along with a few like-minded recruits.

Their numbers grew slowly, and obscurity marked the early years of the Athar — a fortunate fact for a group with such controversial ideas as destroying worship of the powers. Eventually, the Harmonium, which uses religion to generate conformity and harmony, tumbled to the full weight of Athar philosophy. The Hardheads diverted their patrols to make a full-scale attack on the Shattered Temple, the faction's *de facto* headquarters. The Lady of Pain soon put a stop to such blatant proceedings — all it took was sending the factor behind this movement to the Mazes. However, the Harmonium continued the war with discrete guerilla raids for a long time. When physical efforts failed, they moved the dispute into the Hall of Speakers, pulling the Mercykillers and Fated into the fray on their side. (*The Fated figured that since might makes right, the powers — clearly able to hold their own as deities in the multiverse — must be what they claim. And, if the gods were frauds, then the Red Death gained new targets far too powerful to bring to justice: not a good thing for the Mercykillers' status and reputation. They figured Defiers must be wrong.* — Ed.)

The members of the Athar fought back, both on the streets and in the Hall, but reserved the bulk of their efforts to attack the minds of Sigil's populace. One of the most notable initiatives — during a peak of political clout and material resources — was a tour the Defiers gave of their headquarters. The tour culminated in a pass through a portal into a portion of the Astral Plane where floated the dying bodies of six different powers! The crowds loved the spectacle, but few abandoned belief in their favorite god. After all, Zeus (or Annam or Loki or Odin) had greater

power than those pitiable specimens, and so could never die. The tours had to end due to lack of results.

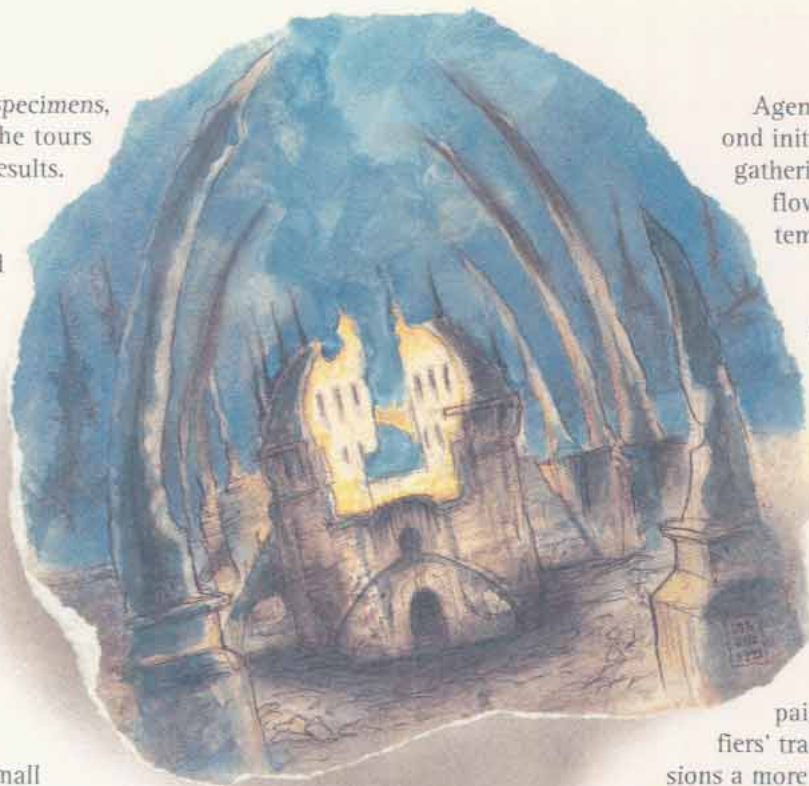
So, the Lost turned to publishing anonymous propaganda pieces designed to "prove" the gods were frauds through reason, comic illustration, or the stories of individuals bilked by the powers. The tracts continue to appear according to fashion and the degree of censorship imposed on written materials.

Long, long after the Campaign of the Silver Cord, the Believers of the Source created new trouble for the Athar. The Godsmen began erecting small shrines honoring their more prestigious members. Though initially the shrines centered around the Great Foundry (the Believers' headquarters), construction soon moved toward the Shattered Temple. The Godsmen's invasion of both the Defiers' mental territory and physical precinct did not sit well.

The Athar responded by training proselytizers of their own to wait at the false altars and accost would-be worshipers. Their first tactic? Distraction. Defiers made up stories to convince the erring berks that they had business elsewhere, perhaps giving them "news" of a friend newly returned to Sigil. If distraction failed, the Lost attempted direct persuasion, elaborating on the folly of revering normal beings as gods. Only when both distraction and persuasion produced no effect might the proselytizer resort to physical violence. The Defiers grew so skilled at turning away prospective tithers, the Godsmen declared the cost of maintaining the personal shrines prohibitive. The altars abandoned, the two factions forgot their hostility; the similarity of their philosophies brought friendlier relations.

Under Factol Terrance, Athar bloods fight a defensive campaign on the philosophical battlefield. Always alert to attacks from the other factions, they can devise strategies in response very quickly. Mostly, though, they limit their aggressions to two less-than-flamboyant battle plans. Both require heaps of paper, gallons of ink, and armies of scribes and copyists.

The first marks a new twist in the ongoing propaganda campaign. Since a lot of the Clueless walking Sigil's streets cannot read, current Defier tracts skip the paragraphs of rousing prose. Instead, a single rune, activated by a glance, triggers a voice that recounts the tale devised by the Lost for that week's distribution. Seems membership is up, so the talking leaflets, called *whispering runes*, must be working.



Agents involved in the second initiative spend their time gathering information on the flow of funds through the temples of all the powers.

Where does the jink come from? How do the priests get it? How much do they keep in reserve? How much do they spend and on what? Faction members organize these facts into a rather unflattering picture of religious allocation of funds. Tidbits from this espionage campaign show up in the Defiers' tracts, but Terrance envi-

sions a more sinister long-term use of the information. See, once the Athar understand the flow of wealth through the

temples, they can disrupt that golden stream quite nicely. The factol believes poverty'll make a lot of priests, sisters, and brothers hear new calls. 'Course, that'll cut the size of the flocks. Pity.

◆ FAC+OL TERRANCE ◆

Male human planar

19th-level priest of the Greater Unknown, Athar (factol)

Lawful good

STR	13	INT	14	HP	67
DEX	10	WIS	18	AC	6
CON	12	CHA	16	THACO	8

EQUIPMENT: *Cloak of protection* +4, *amulet of proof against detection and location*, *drums of panic*, *boots of the north*, *hood of comprehending languages and reading magic* (as *helm*), *hammer* +3.

SPILLS/LEVEL: 11/11/9/9/6/4/2.

SPECIAL: Terrance casts spells from these spheres: all, astral, charm, creation, divination, guardian, healing, necromancy, and sun. He has other standard priest and faction abilities.

Terrance seems much less bitter than many of the Athar. He feels a trust in the multiverse at large and in simple existence. He'd like to teach his viewpoint to all the Defiers and to the denizens of the Great Ring, but this desire is a muted one. See, Terrance is no fire-eater. As he guides the Athar through the maze of intrigue enmeshing Sigil, he

can enlighten a few deceived sods along the way. That's good enough.

The factol realized the fraud of godhood more gently than most. The second son of a rich man, he was well educated and destined for the religious life. His father's garnish to a temple of Mishakal on Elysium ensured a warm reception for the new novice. 'Course Terrance used his natural leadership and organizational skills to capitalize on this promising beginning. Inside of 10 years he'd become patriarch of the community of healers.

Nothing terrible happened to him there. Sure, he had troubles — any basher does. But all in all, Terrance had a rewarding and comfortable life. No complaints. Then one day he awoke to the hidden dark: His own intellect and intuition had given him the solutions to every problem he'd faced in life. No power ever gave him divine guidance or strength. 'Course, as patriarch, he'd enjoyed a few moments of communion with his deity, Mishakal. But he'd sensed no halo of the divine in those exchanges — really, just simple conversations, with a frill or two the power threw in to excite his mortal capacity for awe.

With a dry chuckle, Terrance acknowledged the new dark within himself: He no longer revered Mishakal as divine. Sure, he still respected the power's sphere of interest (healing) and the extent of her influence, but felt no "proper" religious fervor. The patriarch's faith had turned a corner, and, as a man of integrity, he resigned his post. Why guide a bunch of berks to Mishakal when he himself had departed from the goddess's teachings?

Terrance came to Sigil, joined the Athar, and became quite popular with other Defiers. Most of the Lost embrace bitterness to themselves like a lover. Terrance, an island of quiet serenity and moderation, came as a welcome relief. His skills made him popular as well. Once Terrance proved he could gain spells through meditation and fervent belief in the Great Unknown — which Athar claim is the source of *all* priestly power — he quickly rose in the ranks.

The ex-patriarch gets on well with Factol Ambar of the Godsmen; he likes the half-elf's compassion and lack of the self-centeredness that plagues most Believers. The two often cooperate on initiatives in Sigil, out of friendship and because both their factions believe in powers beyond the powers.

Terrance pities Factol Pentar of the Doomguard, but views her as an enemy. She seems to personify the passion for extremes that he deprecates. Nor does her faction currently pursue goals in the least compatible with those of the Athar. The epidemic of random violence she seeks likely would dispose the populace to lean harder on their false gods, moving them ever further from the Athar's blessed self-sufficiency.

THE SHATTERED TEMPLE

Not a lot of bashers are lining up to visit the Athar's headquarters. Sure, the Clueless tramped all over the place back when the Lost still gave tours that included a look into the Astral, but those that don't have faction business there generally avoid the whole area on account of its bad omens. After all, there's a *reason* it's ruined. Looks like a cataclysm — some say the Lady's wrath — razed not only the Shattered Temple, but the entire surrounding neighborhood in a blocks-wide area.

Folks still live just at the edge of the devastation, though; visitors there come upon freshly cobbled streets and tightly clustered houses, shops and inns. The beams and stones of these buildings look old, bobbed from the tattered remains in the area, but the construction seems new and tidy enough. Heading toward the temple, a body might note the Soused Duck on the right, with copper tubs of periwinkle at its door. This tavern and the Generous Coin mercantile next door popped up long ago to serve faction members.

The bustle and hubbub of the Cage fades as a body approaches the temple. A breeze whispers through coarse grasses littered with tumbled stone and splintered wood. Some of Sigil's poor wander here and there, gathering up loose stones and beams from the surrounding falling-down buildings. The sods look more than a little uneasy, and they don't linger.

The tilted skeleton of the Shattered Temple looms above these and other, lesser ruins. Razorvine curtains its ragged walls, listing buttresses, and cracked towers. The Lost have shored up the remains of the crumbling sanctuary, but they like the ravaged mood of the place. They gain comfort from this mute witness to the fact that powers can die — as did Aoskar, the near-forgotten god of portals once worshiped here when the place was still called the Great Temple of Doors. (*'Course, sages'll tell a body that the destroyed husks drifting in the Astral, like Aoskar, are neither dead nor alive, but linger somewhere in between.* — Ed.)

At the end of a nameless Lower Ward street off Brandy Lane stands a decrepit outbuilding made of worn, moss-covered stones. Two guards bearing the Athar's insignia watch the entrance (and similar faction guards wait at three other crumbling guardhouses at the edge of terraces around the temple's perimeter). They'll likely seem surprised at a visitor's approach at first, then recover enough to remember to put their hands to their weapons and demand to know the berk's business. If they're in a good mood, one of the guards'll summon a guide from the temple, signaling with a shrill line of notes from a little reed pipe.

One of the regular guides, Caylean, is a lad with intense dark eyes, a thin face, and a grin that accords strangely with his lethal, wiry frame. (*The temple still offers tours, but they don't let folks peek into the Astral anymore, as that portal closed several years ago.* — Ed.)



PEACE
VIA FRAUD

IS UNACCEPTABLE.

— FACTOL TERRANCE.

ON THE HARMONIUM

THE SHATTERED TEMPLE





CAYLEAN

Male tiefling planar
4th-level ranger, Athar (factotum)
Chaotic good

STR	13	INT	15	HP	27
DEX	14	WIS	14	AC	7
CON	14	CHA	17	THACO	17

EQUIPMENT: Bastard sword, studded leather armor.

SPECIAL: Caylean has standard tiefling, ranger, and faction abilities.

Caylean is an enthusiastic, cheerful basher — the exact opposite of most Defiers (and most tieflings). He sings, he laughs, he cracks jokes, and tends to trust his host of acquaintances. The Athar would've ousted him 'cept for two things. First, the factol likes this blood and views him as proof that a more benign attitude can mix with Defier philosophy without diluting it.

The second reason brings up the interesting story behind Caylean's decision to join the Lost. See, the tiefling spent his childhood as a cripple, unable to walk due to the withered legs he was born with. The day he denounced the gods as frauds and joined the Athar, his limbs became whole and healthy. The Lost saw it as a sign that a force beyond mortal understanding could operate once a body'd banished the interference of the powers. The way they see it, Caylean's clear proof that the Athar philosophy has the right of it.

The ranger has no place of his own to call kip — he stays at the case of a poor namer and his family. Before he came, this basher's brood went hungry most days, and their scrawny elbows poked through holes in their too-small clothes. But, Caylean has made their lives a sight better. When he comes in, he tosses the kids on his knee, sings a nursery rhyme, or swoops them away to eat meatrolls from a street vendor. His efforts have given the children rosy cheeks and have made their parents smile.

Caylean's faction duties involve guiding guests through the headquarters and carrying messages for his factol. This is one cutter with a future in the faction, and he knows it. For now, he revels in the experience of standing, walking and running on his own two legs.

Leaving the guardhouse with their guide, visitors to the Shattered Temple emerge upon an expanse of rough grasses humped by mole tunnels and pocked with thistle and dock. A careless berk could lose his footing on the uneven walkways that lead from the peripheral outbuildings toward the incredible pile of stone that is the temple. Guards patrol the grounds, from the four overgrown terraces to the decrepit temple itself. The Lost didn't break much of a sweat fixing the place up, but visitors can see why the faction members like the place so: Its ragged heights suggest the irregular battlements of a mountain fortress. When it rains, a body can tell that every stone in the Piebald Tower on the left seems a slightly different color.

A quick walk across the grass leads a party to the Scriptorium, where the Defiers create their books and, of course, the propaganda tracts that always seem to be blowing like leaves in the streets of the Cage. Those entering this detached Old Temple Wing first notice the gaping, glassless windows in its upper floors and its distinct lack of a roof. The ground floor seems sound enough, though. Beyond the anteroom is a light-filled chamber where nearly 50 scribes sit at tables stacked high with paper. The scratch of quills and the murmur of lowered voices sounds as long as light lasts. Makeshift shelves and old tables hold pots of ink — scarlet, cobalt, verdigris, and gold for the books that become part of the faction's library. The tracts get only black. Seems the Athar know how to spend their jink.

Back outside and over into the other side of this building, visitors step into another anteroom. The long oak tables in the chamber beyond suggest the room's purpose: the refectory. The Lost don't eat too bad, goes the chant. The kitchen beyond has the same tall but glassless windows as this dining area.

The clearest path up to the most sound Shattered Temple entrance winds left around the central building. Heading up the path and into the buttressed bulk of the temple itself, the curious pass under a massive arch. Some say going in there feels like entering a tomb. In the vaulted entry hall, ornate portals stand to the left and the right, and a light shines through an opening at the far end.

A quick look into the room on the right reveals nothing but a maze of falling-down shelves holding boxes of papers and piles of ledgers. The left portal leads to what was once a shrine. Now, books and more books fill the shelves lining the walls. A ladder (attached to a rail that encircles the room at head height) gets a body up to a narrow balcony, from which yet another tier of shelves springs upward. A visitor's likely to encounter a thin blood in hooded robes flipping through the pages of some thick tome at one of the tables in the center of the floor. This is Hobard, a grouch of a mage who'll spare a moment to grumble at strangers under his breath before poking his nose back in his book.

HOBARD

Male githzerai planar
9th-level mage, Athar (factotum)
Chaotic neutral

STR	8	INT	15	HP	19
DEX	11	WIS	11	AC	4
CON	10	CHA	6	THACO	18

EQUIPMENT: Bracers of defense (AC 6), ring of protection +2.

SPELLS/LEVEL: 4/3/3/2/1.

SPECIAL: Hobard has standard githzerai, mage, and faction abilities.

Hobard, a pessimistic, drab Defier, possesses a knack for getting the job done. He'll complain enough for three while he goes about his business, forecasting doom for whatever activity he's about. Thing is, success usually finds the cranky githzerai anyway. Fellow factotums often ask him to join their adventuring parties — 'course, then they have to endure his whining with gritted teeth.

A mess that requires a sneaky, underhanded approach — now that's Hobard's delight. He'll create a leak in the undercroft of a monastery and follow it up with rumors that the sudden dankness invading the wine cellars stems from undead. The basher'll install a flight of bats in the bell tower of a cloister, then spur the carillon player to test the keyboard. Many a temple, abbey, and shrine has suffered his ploys. 'Course, Hobard handles a lightning-fast raid or extended slug-fest with the best of 'em — he just enjoys petty nastiness more.

This tall, bony cutter has the thin face, long nose, and yellow eyes of his race. He wears olive robes with the draping sleeves cut away to accommodate leather vambraces set with agate studs. He shaves most of his head, leaving only a strip of black tresses down the middle of his scalp.

After meeting Hobard in the library, visitors to the Shattered Temple generally find themselves drawn to the light at the end of the entry hall. Is it a courtyard? Perhaps a fountain plays there. From some 20 feet away, a body can see something glistening in the chamber beyond, like water or dew. Passing through the opening, one suddenly emerges into the daylight again. This is no courtyard, but the old sanctuary of the temple, its elaborate vaulting lost long ago. Cracked ivory and lime tiles cover the vast expanse of floor, punctuated in the exact center of the huge room by a great tree. Its dark green leaves shine so, they reflect the light like a mirror. Or does the tree *itself* glow? Deep red fruits nestle among the foliage along with pale silver blossoms. A scent of citrus blended with sweetness rises from this living fountain. This is the Bois Verdurous, the pride of the Athar. (And the reason for the guards patrolling the grounds. For more on this magical tree, see "The DM's Dark," page 15. — Ed.) After laying eyes on the

enchanted tree, visitors leave the temple thinking that maybe the Defiers have something to believe in after all.

SAFE HOUSES. On the Outlands and the far reaches of the Great Ring, the Defiers use abandoned religious buildings for refuge: any place the powers have left a footprint. When the faction's enemies've got the upper hand, the Lost find inspiration in reminders that the works of the false gods don't last. Ruined abbeys, empty convents, toppled hermitages, and decrepit chapels form a network of places to go to ground. They stock their rundown sanctuaries with food, wine, bedding, clothing, and extra weaponry. The more perilous or vital spots have resident caretakers.

Many of these ruins are haunted — so goes the chant among the locals. 'Course, the Athar only encourage such superstitions by impersonating ghosts or other undead. If the natives avoid the area, the chances of anyone unearthing the hideaway are few.

◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

Nearly all the Athar feel a need to show the deluded, who still have faith in the powers, the error of their ways. However, most of the Lost feel peery of priests of specific deities and avoid their temples. Why should a body expose himself to the one place where the enemy is strongest? Defiers steer away from overt hostilities against the various faiths: The survival of their faction depends on discretion. After all, too many open attacks on established temples will simply unite their foes into a force the Athar could never withstand.

ROLE-PLAYING THE ATHAR

Not all the Lost are bitter, but most have had a power turn stag on 'em. That's why folks join the Defiers, and a lot of them carry around a heavy load of cynicism, paranoia, and resentment. Whatever their attitude, Defiers follow the Rule of Three by having three main goals: to prove publicly the falsity of the so-called gods, to lessen or destroy their influence, and to part the veil of the unknowable to glimpse the truth.

ALIGNMENT. Defiers of various ethical systems all look at the Athar philosophy a little differently. A basher with a bent toward charity wants to save the "faithful" sods from suffering the pain of the inevitable betrayal by their powers. A few Lost value honesty, and so find motivation in a love of truth. Self-centered Defiers hope to pull down the powers to leave more room for their own schemes to gain wealth, pleasure, or even revenge: Strip the false gods of power by stripping them of believers. 'Course, the Defiers who naturally refrain from passing judgment still detest shams. What is, is — and fraudulent gods only muddy the waters.

Lawful Athar think a berk who follows the rules of the powers follows the wrong guidelines; he needs to see past the powers to the order of the Greater Unknown. Chaotic Defiers insist that the multiverse has no rhyme or reason and think the powers just form part of a false veneer of order. The neutral Lost believe the phonies distort the balance between law and chaos.

CLASS. A basher's profession determines the reason for joining the faction and the methods used to pursue its aims. Fighters seek combat with all who serve the powers and believe that the truth will out in melee. Rangers consider deities who enslave animals more vile than others and claim that animals in their natural state provide clues to sublime truths. Paladins hope to convert all beings from worship of their idols to reverence for the true (though unknown) source of all majesty. Priests also look beyond the powers in search of the Greater Unknown god. Druids insist the powers interfere with the natural cycles of the multiverse and want to see them operate without these interlopers. Wizards claim the powers deliver tainted magic, and thieves want ecclesiastic wealth for themselves.

RACE. Many planars in the Great Ring serve a power and would never join the Athar (nor find themselves welcome). This fact makes the Lost less multiracial than some other factions, such as the Believers of the Source and the Free League. Bariaur, half-elves, humans, tieflings, dwarves, elves, gnomes, and halflings are all well represented. Githzerai seem few and far between, though: The majority revere either their race's nameless wizard-king or the legendary Zerthimon as a god.

ATHAR MEMBERSHIP

Folks can join the Lost just by presenting themselves at the Shattered Temple.

Some of these namers find jobs at the Temple. (See "The Chant," page 15. — Ed.) All of 'em must provide room and board for needy factotums, since the temple itself offers no housing. The faction treasury gives them a bit of jink for this service, but not enough to cover all the costs. The excess? Consider it the namer's contribution to the cause.

Defier factotums are called *athaons*, a term meaning "godless" in the sacred tongue used by priests of the dead power Aoskar. A namer becomes an athaon in a night ceremony in the Shattered Temple. The basher must bring three articles (weapons, books, or symbols) imbued with the magic of a fraudulent god and destroy them all at the proper time during the rite.

In addition to the room and board an athaon can receive from namers, a Defier factotum receives steady work from the factors. Low-level athaons generally function as guards, messengers, or technical experts. Mid-ranked athaons (4th to 7th level) serve as envoys, independent operatives, or overseers.

Athaons wanting to advance to factor rank must cause a significant victory over a power or its proponents. Routing a battalion of devas from Elysium or a legion of hell hounds dispatched by Hecate might do. Slaying a paladin of Ra? Definitely.

The factors choose the replacement factotum when the office-holder dies, resigns, or grows incompetent. Candidates for the top position must defile an active chapel or temple before assuming the factotum's dignities. (*Methods of defilement depend on the deity the temple honors. They may be as simple as uttering a profanity or as challenging as stealing the temple's most sacred item and burning the place down.* — Ed.) For all too many factors, their first attempt at this requisite is also their last. See, when a body pushes a power too far, it pushes back — hard.

FACTION ABILITIES. All Defier ranks prove immune to the following faith-based spells: *abjure*, *augury*, *bestow curse*, *curse*, *divination*, *enthrall*, *exaction*, *holy word*, and *quest*. The Lost all also pay a price for their defiance: Priests of specific deities may not aid known faction members with spells or other uses of divine power, particularly healing. Only extreme situations might lead a priest to violate this ban. 'Course, no Defier blood would accept this aid anyhow.

Athaons receive a +2 bonus to their saving throws vs. priest spells cast by clerics, proxies, and servants to any of the powers. The bonus also applies to the spell-like abilities of creatures such as devas and baatezu serving a power. The *banishing* skill of groups of four or more athaons remains the Athar's most prized ability. (See "The DM's Dark," next page. — Ed.)

Factors (9th level or above) learn a special *obscurement* technique that cloaks them from observation by powers and their minions. Priests, divine servants, and the powers themselves using spells or spell-like abilities to locate or discover information about an Athar factor can do so only after a successful saving throw vs. spell. *Obscurement* counters the following wizard spells or abilities: *detect evil*, *detect invisibility*, *ESP*, *know alignment*, *locate object*, *clairaudience*, *clairvoyance*; *magic mirror*; *contact other plane*, *sending*; *ensnarement*, *legend lore*; *demand*, *foresight*. It also counters these priest spells and spell-like abilities: *augury*; *detect lie*, *divination*, *reflecting pool*; *magic font*; *find the path*; *exaction*.

WHY DON'T YOU
TRY BRINGING
SOME OF YOUR
JUSTICE TO THE
"POWERS"?
— HOBARD,
FOUNDING A
MERCYKILLER

◆ THE CHANT ◆

Know how to read and write? Need jink? The Defiers hire scribes. 'Course, their Scriptorium's overflowing with scribbling namers, so they've had to usurp the tables in the refectory and even set up trestles in the old meditation cells. Not a bad way to turn a copper.

But a body wanting to witness a little legislative excitement as a member of the Athar should swing by the Hall of Speakers. A new ordinance the Hardheads propose would make it illegal to distribute or possess pamphlets mocking the powers. Factol Terrance could use extra supporters as he argues before the speakers.

'Course, cutters with the dark can find excitement away from the Cage, too. The chant talks of a new fountain just sprung up in Marduk on Arcadia. Seems the Harmonium's bathing converts in it night and day; one dip, and namers obey Hardhead dictums without question. Does the *water* cause such fidelity? The factol needs to know, so someone's got to go.

"Leaf in gilt, leaf in copper, green flees the harley-down, and Lost is lost forever," whispers a stranger on a bridge. Could it be a plot against the Bois Verdurous? Who knows the significance of the tree, save the high-up Defiers? Why would they seek its death? And how would they do the deed? Factol Terrance has a few ideas, but he bides his time.

◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

The Athar hasn't made its enemies on the strength of its much-loathed philosophy alone. Many a priest has lost his flock, his home, and his wealth to the machinations of the Lost. And not a few churches have suffered similar fates. The Shattered Temple harbors a respectable supply of riches, magical items, and weaponry, most confiscated from temples. How much? Let's just say the Defiers can equip themselves nicely. But if this hits the chant, the Athar could get bobbed.

Its ruinous condition makes the Shattered Temple appear hardly defensible. Nice illusion, eh, berk? The tattered walls are *magically reinforced*. And the keystone of the Defiers' unique citadel is their Bois Verdurous, which thrives in the headquarters' roofless sanctuary.

The enchanted tree absorbs the spells of all the magical items destroyed during athaon initiation rites. Terrance believes the tree is a gift from the Great Unknown. The tree enhances his powers; as long as he touches it, the factol can cast any priest spell, one round after another. Range is limited, however; these spells can take effect only within the zone of destruction surrounding the temple.

Alternately, the factol may pluck a fruit or a flower and carry it with him for use elsewhere. The harvested blossom or fruit contains one of the tree's stored spells that the factol chose and can cast at will. No one except Factol Terrance may safely touch the Bois Verdurous. Others suffer 1d12 points of damage each round they maintain contact with the tree itself.

Spellcasters lose their magical abilities until they've rested overnight, and magical items they hold that fail their saving throws, the tree drains of power.

Only rarely and with the utmost discretion does the Athar use its most beloved asset: the power of *banishment*, as the 7th-level wizard spell. Four or more midlevel athaons (of at least 4th level) may link hands, encircling their target. By concerted force of will (one round in which they may perform no other action), they can *banish* petitioners, servant creatures, or proxies of a power back to the god's domain on his home plane. (*Up to 2 HD or levels of creature per caster level.* — Ed.)

Petitioners who fail a saving throw vs. spell are *banished*, unable to leave their power's realm for a year. Servant creatures who fail the saving throw find themselves constrained for a month, and *banished* proxies stay confined for a week. For every athaon in the circle beyond the minimum of four, the target suffers a -1 penalty to the saving throw.

Unlike the spell, Athar *banishment* works only on representatives of a power and requires no material components.



"We can *all* be gods.

"All beings are sacred, haloed by the divine,
ordained for a greater destiny. Each time we die,

we rise again to new life. The multiverse acts as a forge for us, in every life we live. As we are shaped by it, we evolve: from grue to prime, to planar, to power — and then into the unknown sublime. Reincarnation turns the wheel of existence: teaching us, testing us, remaking us.*

"The lessons of experience may be obscure, esoteric, unfathomable, but the one who overcomes them and survives is the one who succeeds and ascends.

The difficulties of living are more than unpleasant irrelevancies to avoid. They are *opportunities*. And the one who fails to prove his worth when challenged by the multiverse risks more than the loss of gold or love: Sentient spirits can

and do descend

the great ladder of evolution, to be re-

born as vargouilles or slugs. Courage and

intelligence are necessary qual-

ities in the upward stretch toward the Source of all life. . . .

"We must become partners with the multiverse to sculpt our own beings. We cannot wait upon the vagaries of life to transform us, as people wait in line to pay their fines at the Courts in the grand City of Doors. Passivity invites self-pity and stagnation. Those who allow their agony to merely wash over them become small and hard and mean. And those who simply acquiesce to joy forget to embrace it! Their spirits shrink, and all unknowingly, they prepare themselves for a descent after death.

"While gripped in the vise of life's ills and joys, we must bend all our virtues toward participation in our experience. The man who expands his duties and responsibilities while suffering and allows the pain to urge him on toward greater achievement will grow. The woman who allows her joy to drive her to new experiences rather than trying futilely to cage that joy finds the emotion has infused all she sees and all she does. These *active* participants in the forge of existence are preparing themselves for the more rigorous challenges prevailing on the higher rungs of the ladder to the Source. These people become strong and flexible, the goal of the ascent toward their destiny. . . .

"One should never give too much meaning to the forms we gain in our ascent toward our goal. Only the ignorant believe the purpose of our evolution is to acquire the body of a human, a halfling, or an elf. A being's physical form merely mirrors one's spiritual development — not the other way around. Inner development is our aim.

"Yet a profound mystery remains concerning the form manifested by a being who reaches the top rung of the ladder of the multiverse and steps off it to some sublime existence beyond. Is his body fashioned so finely that we lesser kindred cannot even perceive it? Or might it be that formlessness itself is the measure of the ascended one's triumph?

"This, as all other knowledge, we will learn in time."

— Excerpt from *Destiny of Being*, a treatise in three volumes
by Factol Ambar Vergrove of the Believers of the Source

BELIEVERS OF THE SOURCE

A HALF-ELF
LIVING IN AN
IRON PALACE?
THAT'S FACTOL AMBAR
FOR YOU;
PAR+ SMITH,
PAR+ BARD.
HE'S NOT YOUR
TYPICAL FACTOL.

— THE EDITOR

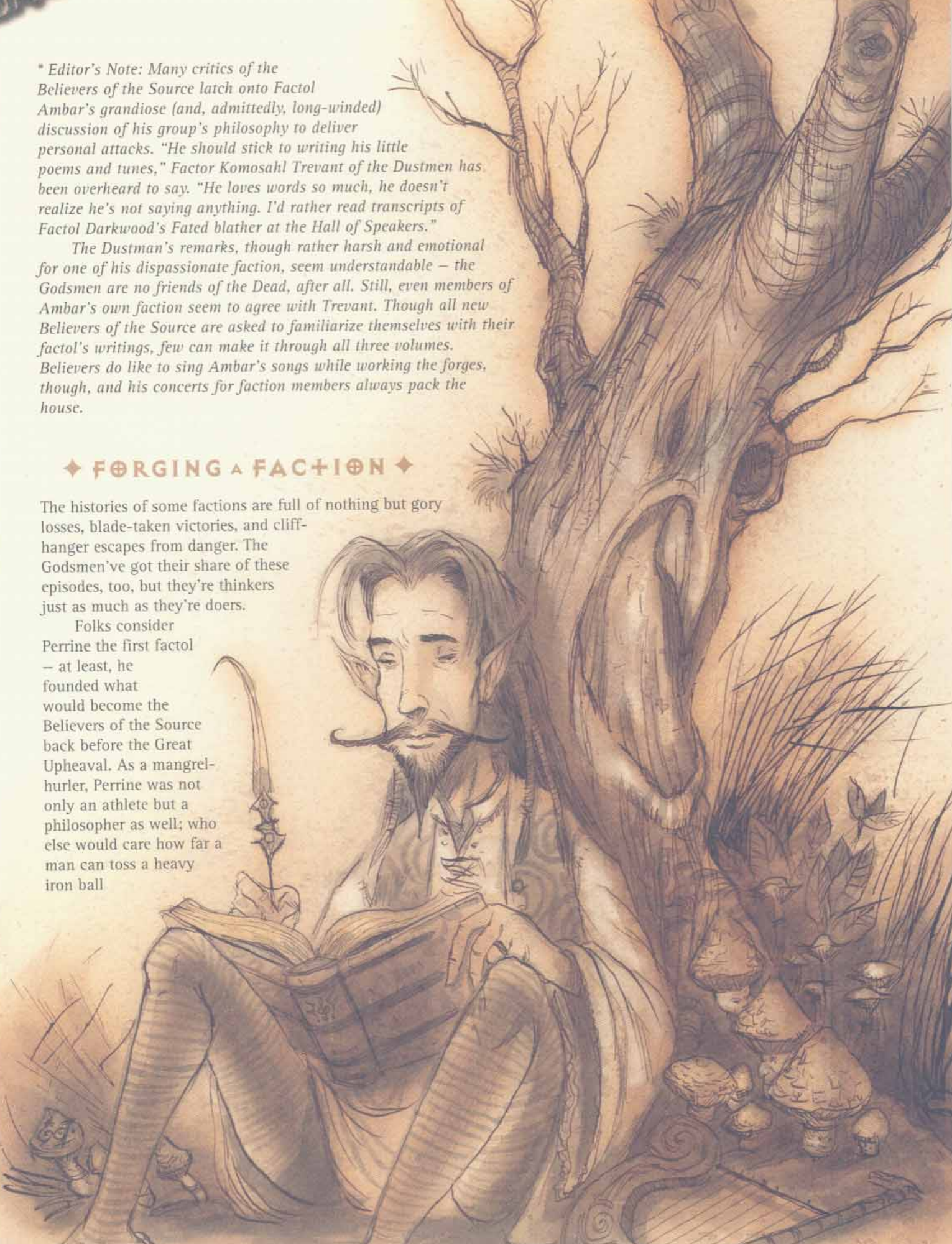
* Editor's Note: Many critics of the Believers of the Source latch onto Factol Ambar's grandiose (and, admittedly, long-winded) discussion of his group's philosophy to deliver personal attacks. "He should stick to writing his little poems and tunes," Factor Komosahl Trevant of the Dustmen has been overheard to say. "He loves words so much, he doesn't realize he's not saying anything. I'd rather read transcripts of Factol Darkwood's Fated blather at the Hall of Speakers."

The Dustman's remarks, though rather harsh and emotional for one of his dispassionate faction, seem understandable — the Godsmen are no friends of the Dead, after all. Still, even members of Ambar's own faction seem to agree with Trevant. Though all new Believers of the Source are asked to familiarize themselves with their factol's writings, few can make it through all three volumes. Believers do like to sing Ambar's songs while working the forges, though, and his concerts for faction members always pack the house.

◆ FØRGING A FAC+IØN ◆

The histories of some factions are full of nothing but gory losses, blade-taken victories, and cliff-hanger escapes from danger. The Godsmen've got their share of these episodes, too, but they're thinkers just as much as they're doers.

Folks consider Perrine the first factol — at least, he founded what would become the Believers of the Source back before the Great Upheaval. As a mangrel-hurler, Perrine was not only an athlete but a philosopher as well; who else would care how far a man can toss a heavy iron ball



trailing a 3-foot leather strap fringed with iron spikes? This blood knew he could win mangrel tosses only after much prior preparation. No surprise, he figured victories in less athletic pursuits also stemmed directly from a body's previous decisions and actions.

Not content to ponder the matter alone, Perrine founded a society of equally curious bashers. Together, they developed the Godsmen's core belief — existence is a forge that shapes us — and an accompanying lifestyle called "sequel observance." See, a body pays strict attention to the consequences of every one of his actions, so he can figure the way to produce only good results in the future. Learning from experience, that's the idea, and ability to reason clearly, that's the tool.

During the Great Upheaval, a cutter named Augy of Faunel solidified the society as a faction and forever altered its philosophy. Seems Augy'd been reincarnated a thousand times and could remember her past lives. Each built on the last, she said, and she went up or down the ladder of existence in response to her choices. Augy even claimed to recall her first incarnation and the glory that came before it. "Light poured through my essence like water," she wrote in her journals.

*Singing pounded me in ocean waves.
Without sight, without hearing,
I perceived the radiance
And the music.
Such was my Source,
The origin from which all lives spring.*

She introduced Perrine's society to the merits of intuition — it's usually a past life trying to get something across — and to the benefits of peering back beyond a body's own memories. This philosophy lets a basher evolve without merely sticking to cold logic, in a process that reaches beyond death into one's next incarnation. Evolve enough, and a body becomes a god.

Augy gave the society the name it bears to this day: the Believers of the Source. As factol, she directed her followers into intense research. They collected biographies and interviewed anyone claiming to recall a past life. Perhaps this study would reveal the reason the multiverse inflicts lives of tests on a body.

While their first priority remained comprehending the tests of the multiverse, Godsmen often stumbled upon other secrets along the way — like the chamber of bones beneath Sigil's Armory. Such a room might hold valuable hints about death (and thus life and evolution), Factol Augy figured. Plus, she'd taken to reading the rotting memories of berks in the dead-book. So, she snuck in — and wound up in the blinds. See, while reviewing images in an old thigh bone there, she got scragged by the trapped spirit of the fiend Fosnatu'u.

This tanar'ri took control of the factol's mind and told

Believers that evil acts best enabled a body to evolve. But soon a friend of hers, Roscoe, got peery at Augy's apparent philosophical shift. The good news? Roscoe banished Fosnatu'u back to its thigh bone prison. The bad news: In doing so, he sent Augy on to begin Life No. 1,001.

More bad news: The Doomguard caught the chant that Augy'd been visiting the Armory uninvited. Seems the Sinkers felt antagonistic to the Godsmen in those days — the way they saw it, the desire to ascend to godhood opposed entropy. Hearing of a spy in the secret heart of their headquarters was all the Doomguard needed to launch a rampage against the Godsmen.

The work of a mathematician and musician named Luce sparked the next vogue among the Godsmen. See, Luce said that any given moment in time and space possesses a unique, associated resonance. This resonance, though beyond hearing range, could be transposed down several octaves for mortal listeners to enjoy. The Godsmen felt convinced this "Music of the Multiverse" could tell a basher which way he's moving on the ladder toward godhood. When a new blood claimed to "hear" the celestial symphony, more Believers abandoned their biographies and work at the Great Foundry (*the faction's headquarters — Ed.*) to try cultivating the sensitivity.

Empyrean harmonies became the rage in Sigil. Mathematicians in every ward started composing, as did amateurs all 'round the Great Ring. The Hardheads saw the Godsmen's discovery as an attack on their goal of peace through conformity. Verbal hostility reigned in the Hall of Speakers, while covert bloodshed raged between the City Barracks and the Great Foundry.

While violence of word and sword still thrives between the Believers and their traditional enemies (*the Dustmen and the Bleak Cabal, both of whom detest Godsmen philosophy — Ed.*), the most significant conflict facing the faction now springs from within. Basdank (Pl/♀ human/D5/Believers of the Source/N), a factotum with a considerable following, attacks her faction for placing the form of a dog or zebra low on the ladder toward the sublime, while half-elves, tieflings, and humans sit on higher rungs. As a Shapeshifter druid with considerable experience in animal forms (*described in The Complete Druid's Handbook — Ed.*), Basdank even calls instinct superior to rational intelligence. Many fear her notions, so close to the Cipher ideal of action mated without thought to circumstance.

The factol's not just rattling his bone-box, and he's borrowed from the past to further his debate-oriented strategy. Recalling the one-time popularity of empyrean harmonies, he has organized a program to train all Godsmen in singing or playing an instrument. Students learn melodies that provoke strong feelings in listeners, plus techniques to transform these emotions into debate among the audience after a performance. The first graduates of Ambar's "Bardic Qualm Curriculum" have hit the Cage, and the results look favorable. Small groups cluster around the Godsmen bards and engage in spirited argument once the music ceases.

FAC+OL ◆ AMBAR VERGROVE ◆

Male half-elf planar

19th-level ranger, Believers of the Source (factol)

Neutral good

STR	18	INT	13	HP	95
DEX	18	WIS	18	AC	2
CON	16	CHA	17	THACO	2

EQUIPMENT: *Amulet of the planes, ring of protection +4, boots of elvenkind, brooch of shielding, crown of telepathy (as helm), robes of displacement, gem of seeing on a beaded chain, iridescent spindle ioun stone, invisible sword of dancing +2, staff, harp.*

SPELLS/LEVEL: 3/3/3.

SPECIAL: The factol has standard ranger and half-elf abilities, plus faction abilities. (*Ambar uses the "Exceeding Level Limits" rule in Chapter 2: Player Character Races in the DUNGEON MASTER Guide. — Ed.*)

In a place on the Outlands named Fayrill to some, Fayrie to others, and unknown to most, an elf gave birth to a half-human son. This woman, Galina, found herself ostracized by her kin — not for her choice of father for her child, but for her refusal to shape her demeanor to the stiff formality customary for those of the Quybier, her clan. Galina loved to dance, sing, laugh, and play the harp. Not too unusual for an elf, right? But then, all Galina knew was her own rigid family. Fortunately for her and her child, she also knew which plants she could eat and how to weave shelter from fallen pine boughs.

Her son, Ambar, never knew he was poor. He slept on the softest moss by night, drank clear spring water by day, and thrived amid the beauty of the forest. To his eyes, his home seemed a mansion. He learned his mother's songs and played with fox cubs dened nearby.

The youth discovered his poverty only after he spotted Caye, a maiden of the Quybier, straying through his wood. Her brown, silken hair brushed her ankles; her mahogany eyes carried a hint of purple in the depths of their unfathomed mystery; her lithe form was slim as a birch, but her manner seemed so solemn, like nothing Ambar had ever imagined. The half-elf went to ask the maid's sire, Florian, for her hand, but found himself brusquely refused.

Ambar felt astonished. Caye would live in a wooded palace, dine on the finest of viands, enjoy the gladdest of music, and have the most devoted of bridegrooms — what more could a father want?

Ambar's mother enlightened him: Social status, political or military power, a castle built by hands rather than by nature, and monetary rather than inner wealth were necessary attributes for wedlock among the Quybier. The youth believed Galina, but he also believed in himself. He wooed Caye without her father's consent and won her. For a time, all three exiles dwelled contentedly in their woodland glade: bride and bridegroom in a pavilion of willow wands and grape vines, Galina in her pagoda of pine boughs opposite. The trio sang mad melodies, indulged in woodland feasts, told stories, and danced wild jigs. The news that Caye was with child delighted them.

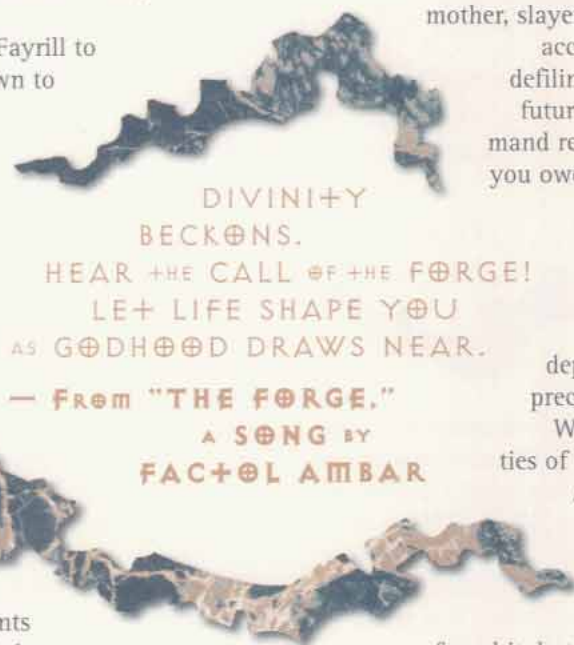
The warriors Florian sent ended all that. They slew Galina and Caye in the scuffle and brought Ambar in chains before the Quybier lord. To the patriarch's accusation of abduction, the half-elf replied eloquently.

"I accuse you! I accuse you, murderer of my mother, slayer of my consort and unborn child! I accuse you of killing my happiness, of defiling my home, and robbing me of my future. Dare you deny me? Dare you demand recompense in the face of that which you owe me?"

In fact, the Quybier dared not. To assuage their guilt over the deaths, they presented Ambar with a velvet casket filled with gems and begged him to depart Fayrill forever. He accepted the precious stones and left.

With a fortune in gems and the abilities of the woodwise, a half-elf can go far. Ambar guided travelers through the Outlands, invested his wealth in profitable ventures, and searched the Great Ring for a spot he might call home. He never

found it, but he collected a vast selection of artwork and rare musical instruments. Eventually he fell in with the Believers of the Source and discovered that, although no place could feel like home again, a group of people could. His courtesy and kindness — he still likes everyone to call him by his first name — earned him many friends among the Godsmen, and in time he became factol. He is beloved of all his namers, factotums, and factors — half of whom believe him well on the way to becoming a power. Most of them would lay down their lives at his beckoning. To his credit, Ambar rarely requires such sacrifice. His goal as factol? He wants both the faction and its members to flourish. Unlike many of his followers, Ambar values individuals more than the philosophies they espouse.



◆ THE GREAT FOUNDRY ◆

Clueless catching sight of the Great Foundry for the first time look like real leatherheads. Their eyes get as big as fried vrock eggs, and they swivel their heads around like they're mounted on mop sticks trying to take everything in. This Foundry ain't the village smithy.

The Godsmen make their headquarters in the heart of the Lower Ward. It's a grimy section of Sigil, with narrow, twisting streets and crooked, soot-covered shops and houses. The sods here look pale, bent, and furtive, most of them artisans intent on hoarding craft secrets. Visitors asking locals the way to the Great Foundry will likely get no answer. Only bubbers too long on nearby Alehouse Row'd have a hard time seeing the stacks of the metal-works belching smoke above the roof line.

The Great Foundry's two 10-foot-wide main gates never fail to impress a basher. The wrought-iron frame's as tall as most neighboring inns and houses, and each gate swings on hinges as thick as a smith's thigh!

The guards here look as intimidating, too. (*'Course, they don't give cutters in Godsmen colors any trouble. — Ed.*) And a glance at the jagged, massive metal-works (called just the foundry) nestled in its semicircle of stacks tells a body that a powerful faction indeed runs the place.

The Great Foundry's main yard looks dismal and dirty — a gravel expanse surrounded by dingy walls and humped with piles of rubble and unsmelted ores. The roaring of fires and ringing of forges grows deafening after just a few minutes. Still, the imposing mass of the metal-works reaching toward the sky lends grandeur to its sodden surroundings. This brick edifice looms a full 10 stories tall. Huge, iron-mullioned windows flood its interior with light. Equally huge portals allow wains full of ore to roll right inside.

Spending time inside this foundry building makes a body start to think Baator'd be a nice place to cool off. Fiery-mawed furnaces the size of barns seem to yawn everywhere one looks. Pulleys bigger than the bashers working them boom like giant hemlocks. Crucibles large enough for an ogre's bath brim full of molten metal. Namers scurry about in the sweltering heat, bringing drinking water to the metal men. Some don't last long — seems they decide they don't have a taste for dodging drops of boiling steel in air hotter than an oven.

The sheet-works, bar-works, and mold-works are all just smaller versions of the huge and complex metal-works. Few smithies, prime or planar, can prepare a body to work the liquid metal at the Great Foundry.

A basher touring these facilities might spy a small tiefling woman chasing down some animal that's found its way into the 'works. She moves at break-neck pace and always manages to capture whatever bird or critter she hunts, calming it with a few soothing words. 'Course, she never acts soothing or calm around *people*.

ZENA

Female tiefling planar

9th-level ranger, Believers of the Source (factotum)

Neutral good

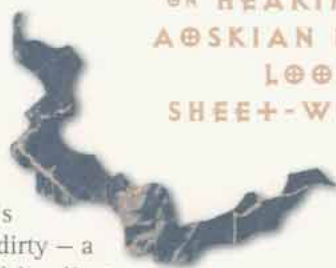
SIR	14	INT	13	HP	46
DEX	16	WIS	14	AC	4
CON	14	CHA	10	THACO	12

EQUIPMENT: Quarterstaff, leather armor +2.

SPELLS/LEVEL: 2.

SPECIAL: Zena has standard ranger and tiefling abilities, as well as those of a factotum of her faction.

UH —
WHERE'S ZENA?
— A GODSMAN FACTOR,
ON HEARING OF AN
AOSKIAN HOUND
LOOSE IN THE
SHEET-WORKS



Zena's specialty is animals. The warm-hearted factotum loves any beast that runs, creeps, slithers, swims, or flies. Her case in the Lower Ward looks (and smells) too much like a zoo for anyone but her to stay there. Not only do fellow Godsmen avoid the kip, they steer clear of Zena herself.

Oh, she's attractive enough: A cloud of soot-black hair frames a face graced by high cheekbones, dark eyes, a thin nose, pointed chin, and pouting lips. She wears gowns of diaphanous gauze and ankle boots. (*No one knows how she stays free of animal hair, feathers, and dander. — Ed.*) But Zena can get intense. Most bashers weary quickly of her speeches on the suffering of animals and her mandates to treat one's feathered and furry brothers with compassion.

Despite this ostracism, which Zena barely notices, high-ups regularly summon her to situations requiring her expertise. Someone has to heal an injured lizard that might lead to a thief of equipment from the Foundry: Call Zena. A scroll detailing the ingredients for a long-sought spell lies in a pit of asps: Get Zena. While never given the missions other factotums receive, she gets involved in many indirectly, thanks to her unique skills.

'Course, hundreds of bashers work at the Great Foundry more often than Zena: metal men, artisans, laborers, and messengers. The place can daunt workers newly arrived to do their part in the manufacture of the metal everyday items the Godsmen produce. (*Basic iron items like utensils, screws, etc. — Ed.*) Their best friend's a tall, brown-skinned blood named Ombidias, who takes new recruits under his wing. He's gentle and slow of speech, but strong. Despite his factor status, he always seems to have a moment for namers needing guidance.

THE ONLY REASON
THE MULTIVERSE IS A FORGE
IS BECAUSE YOU IMAGINE IT
TO BE THAT WAY.

— A SIGNER,
CONVERSING
WITH OMBIDIAS



THE GREAT FOUNDRY



OMBIDIAS

Male voadkyn prime
7th-level shaman, Believers of the Source (factor)
Neutral good

STR	15	INT	13	HP	49
DEX	13	WIS	16	AC	8
CON	12	CHA	18	THACO	16

EQUIPMENT: Giant-kin mace (1d8x2), giant-kin long bow and 24 large arrows (+1 bonus to attack rolls, 50% bonus to range, 1d8 points of damage).

SPELLS/LEVEL: 5/5/2/1.

SPECIAL: Ombidias casts spells from the all, charm, divination, and healing spheres. He can *polymorph self* into any humanoid creature between 3 and 15 feet in height. Wood giants, like elves, prove 90% resistant to *sleep* and *charm* spells. They have infravision up to 90 feet. Opponents in forests, where voadkyn can hide easily, suffer -4 penalties to their surprise rolls.

Ombidias has the size, large head, and prominent jaw of the voadkyn, but the disposition of a sage hornhead saurian. He weighs his words carefully, speaks slowly, and comes to decisions only after long internal debate. The tribe he once served as shaman on the obscure prime-material world of Glemayne ceased to exist more than 50 years ago, when the world was overrun by hellcats and hordlings at the behest of a baatezu lord. Ombidias found himself taken prisoner and locked away in the iron city of Dis. He survived unspeakable tortures but escaped, convinced that his clan needed him now more than ever. In fact, all had died.

Ombidias wished he had gone with them. He thought of returning to Baator to put as many of his gaolers into the dead-book as he could before they wrote him his own page. However, his giving voadkyn nature and his shaman's instincts would not allow it. Instead, he decided to dedicate the rest of his life to serving the downtrodden, the undervalued of the multiverse. He left the ruins of Glemayne forever, ensconcing himself in Sigil (through which he had passed during his escape) and joining the Believers of the Source. His work with the memories of his tribe has meshed well with the aims of the faction. Many Godsmen expect him to become the next factol, after Ambar evolves into a power.

The 9-foot wood giant has a somber face and skin so dark brown, it looks black. Draped in the deep green and black robes he prefers, Ombidias cuts an imposing figure, but in conversation he seems more approachable. His warm manner and compassion endears him to all.

The council chamber atop the metal-works remains off limits to namers — even friends of Ombidias. It resembles a terrace with a low stone balustrade tucked in among a forest of chimneys. The chamber's enclosed by a

bubble of glass panes supported by arching steel beams and iron mullions forged in the foundry. The oval council table of polished bronze (measuring 15 feet by 25 feet) features a central opening that aligns with a window of glass block in the granite floor to provide the debating factors with a view into the metal-works below. Both the floor window and the glass bubble require frequent washing to remove the pervasive soot.

The factors and factotums who supervise the running of the Great Foundry have luxurious suites atop the lesser 'works. Namer quarters are what one might call a bit more — modest. They sleep in small closets in the clerks' residences behind the foundry, in the storage yards amid warehouses and piles of scrap. Their tiny spaces each do include a window, though, as well as clean sheets and warm quilts. When these new recruits advance in seniority, they find themselves transferred to better chambers in Ambar's Palace in the Ethereal Plane.

OTHER REFUGES

Godsmen find themselves well received most places they travel, but they enjoy visiting some places in particular.

AMBAR'S PALACE. Everyone looks forward to a trip to Factol Ambar's escape: a study in perpendicular gothic executed in polished steel, rather than stone, on an island in the deep Ethereal. The complex possesses many high-ceilinged wings, and newcomers feel awed by its intricate vaulting and stained-glass windows. Gilt furniture, an eclectic mix of art, and vases overflowing with flowers appoint the rooms. Marble terraces, lily-ornamented reflecting pools, rose-grown arbors, and bowers of blossoms comprise the palace courtyards.

Ambar dwells in this miniature paradise with his factors and many factotums and namers who labor in the Great Foundry. High-ups hold conferences and issue orders to factotums here. One permanent portal in the metal-works of the Great Foundry connects to the workers' wing of Ambar's domain. Another, in the wire-works, leads to the impressive front steps of his palace.

SAFE HOUSES. Godsmen find they can rely on a network of people for help in a pinch, rather than on hidden caves, cellars, garrets, or other normal refuges. An innkeeper here, a farm wife there, a loyal monk, an herbalist, a castle guard — in the Outlands and on most Outer Planes, a place might fail a body, but friends won't. (At least, not the friends of the Believers of the Source. — Ed.) Usually, bloods can borrow their friends' resources too, which gives them easy access to weapons, clothes, medicines, disguises, or bits of news.

The Godsmen oversee a barmy asylum called Harbinger House in either The Lady's Ward or the Lower Ward — the chant can't decide. The factol has appointed House-

master Bereth (P1/♂ human/0-level/Believers of the Source/CG) to care for the troublemakers brought here but will welcome bloods from the faction as well.

◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

Considering their extroverted natures, it's no surprise most Godsmen join the faction to help others "evolve" and see their own potential. (A few ruthless bashers join assuming they can easily get ahead in the ranks within such a swarm of well-meaners.) Believers hate it when berks act apathetic or resigned toward the multiverse – they'll tolerate bashers who become selfish and wicked, but not those who lack interest in self-improvement.

ROLE-PLAYING THE BELIEVERS OF THE SOURCE

Despite their concern for others, don't call Godsmen softies. They insist a basher learn from his mistakes, and they won't interfere in "life lessons." Sure, a body can count on a Godsmen to help out in a pinch, but the blood'll never rob another of a learning experience.

'Course, some lean on the notion that these lessons of the multiverse act as a forge, while failing to recognize that this forge works equally on *everyone*. These bashers figure some sods have more potential than others, so they have no qualms about contributing to the tough "education" of those that come up short. So, bubbers wanting sympathetic handouts from these Believers had better look elsewhere.

ALIGNMENT. Having what looks like a compassionate outlook doesn't mean a Believer has to espouse the principles of goodness. Many Godsmen are evil (wanting to inhibit others' progress toward godhood) or neutral (professing that noninterference in others' lives allows the multiverse to do its best work).

Lawful Godsmen view regulations as essential in the process of evolving toward divinity. "Follow the rules, and a body'll pass all the tests the multiverse offers up," they insist. Chaotic Godsmen evaluate all situations case by case. After all, giving one beggar a free dinner might give him the energy to play a pennywhistle for the entertainment (and coins) of passersby. Feeding another might just convince him to put off doing anything for himself yet one more day. Sometimes killing a sod is the best thing a body can do for him. Neutral Godsmen fall somewhere in between.

CLASS. A Godsmen has two preoccupations: his own progress up the chain of evolution and the progress of the rest of the bashers in the multiverse. 'Course, no two will express these concerns quite the same way – it depends on a body's area of expertise. Fighters think battle teaches a basher life's lessons, so they press conflict on others to

help them grow. Godsmen paladins believe they evolve by helping others and expect those they aid to offer succor, too. Rangers, biased toward beasts, frequently see their animal friends' potential unmatched in sentient races.

Godsmen priests seek to emulate the divine evolution of their deities, yet they know that no power leads to the Source. Druids, trusting in the cycles of the natural world, believe these cycles will bring into a body's life the appropriate level of testing and illumination. Believer wizards, frequently arrogant, believe magic is the key to evolution and pity those who don't dabble in this art. Godsmen thieves think secrets're best stolen and love forbidden knowledge. Bards know they can spark inspiration: After a heroic ballad, they want listeners to emulate the song's hero.

RACE. Due to their belief in the divine potential of every being, Believers of the Source welcome a diverse membership. Wemics, pixies, satyrs, bariaur, tieflings, dwarves, and half-elves mingle with one another and the odd erinyes, lammasu, githyanki, slaad, or moon dog.

GODSMAN MEMBERSHIP

Believers want to drill into members that life is a forge, shaping personalities and spirits. Therefore, to join the faction, bashers all have to take their turn at the forge. A body tells the guards at the Great Foundry's main gate that he's interested, and before he knows it, he's sweating rivers in the wire-works or one of the others. If the back-breaking labor doesn't send them running, these namers can seek greater involvement in the faction by asking a more experienced member to sponsor them.

Namers serve informal apprenticeships with these mentors, learning the rigors of Believer philosophy. But different mentors provide very different experiences: Some virtually ignore their charges, while others insist on daily lessons reinforced by assigned tasks. When a mentor considers his protegee ready for a factotum's responsibility – to seek the inherent worth in all – he presents the namer to a factor for evaluation.

The candidate then undergoes a series of tests: unusual puzzles or challenging tasks, specifically tailored to probe his fears and limitations. 'Course, the factors don't measure prospects against perfection. They just try to gauge the malleability of a namer in the multiversal forge. A similar test is administered at Ambar's Palace to factotums chosen to advance to factor rank.

FACTION ABILITIES: Regardless of rank, all Godsmen gain the same special benefits and hindrances. Their belief that everyone can achieve godhood generally translates into fair treatment of all they encounter. This reputation for a consistent lack of prejudice makes them well received throughout the Great Ring. They gain a +2 bonus (or +10 percentage points) to all encounter reactions with planar

beings. However, Godsmen can't be resurrected or raised. With the DM's permission, they can be *reincarnated* as a PC race (chosen by the DM).

Godsman priests who venerate a specific deity (as opposed to the Source) suffer from lack of ultimate faith. After all, they know a power ain't anything special — just some basher who occupies the next-to-last rung on the ladder of evolution. This priestly problem of faith results in -1 penalties to all saving throws.

The Believers of the Source possess a faculty they don't truly understand. See, in the Great Ring, beliefs matter more than they do in prime-material worlds. Whole burgers can vanish or move because of belief — take Plague-Mort, the gate-town that's regularly pulled onto the Abyss, then pushed out. Entire planes can be born or destroyed because of belief. And, because the Godsmen believe ordinary bashers may one day evolve into powers, *they actually can*. So far, the Godsmen've seen only one of their fellows evolve to this stage: the previous factol, Curran, who grants her followers spells of healing and protection. Many think Ambar'll be next.

◆ THE CHAN ◆

Been for a spin on the wheel of incarnation more than once? Bashers whose brain-boxes're soaked with memories of past lives stay shy of the Great Foundry. See, Godsmen love to catch new subjects of study and pump 'em dry — especially of death memories. 'Course, they give a body a bit of jink for the trouble, but most say the gold ain't worth reopening the dead-book.

The Hall of Speakers seems a safer spot to see Godsmen up close. Right now, the Dustmen propose a bill to "let the dead stay dead." They consider research into past lives obscene. Passage of their bill means it'll become illegal to exhume the memories of the dead.

The Harmonium supports a mandate giving themselves the right to destroy any printed material distributed without their approval. The Athar, with their piles of leaflets, feel most threatened by the motion, but the Godsmen don't like it any better. They figure that acquiring knowledge, written or otherwise, is the main way to evolve. Plus, what if the Hardheads decided they didn't approve of the biographies and journals of past lives in the Great Foundry's records chamber?

It's likely neither measure'll become law. Precious little in the Hall of Speakers need worry the faction that keeps its eyes open wide. But plenty rattles the Cage and dances in the Ring that should command the respect of bashers with something in their brain-boxes.

Zena just got back from Torch with a vampire bat on her tail. She killed this pursuer at the main gate of the Great Foundry and spilled a few indiscreet words to a guard there before reporting to the factol. Seems Zena discovered a magical shroud in one of the gate-town's spires:

a shroud newly acquired by a dozen Dustmen. A berk wrapped in the shroud's folds longer than it takes a basher to fill his lungs six times is dead, never to be reincarnated. That's no shortcut to the unknown sublime, either; the sod would have no chance *ever* to ascend!

Another, worse rumor rises from the Dead. Word has it that some Dustman factotum stationed in Rigus has freed the fiend Fosnatu'u from his prison. The tanar'ri, out for revenge, has focused its gaze once more on the Godsmen. How that old thigh bone came to Rigus (if it did), nobody knows. It's in splinters now, if Fosnatu'u learned anything from the last episode, so binding the fiend a third time'll prove more than a little tricky.

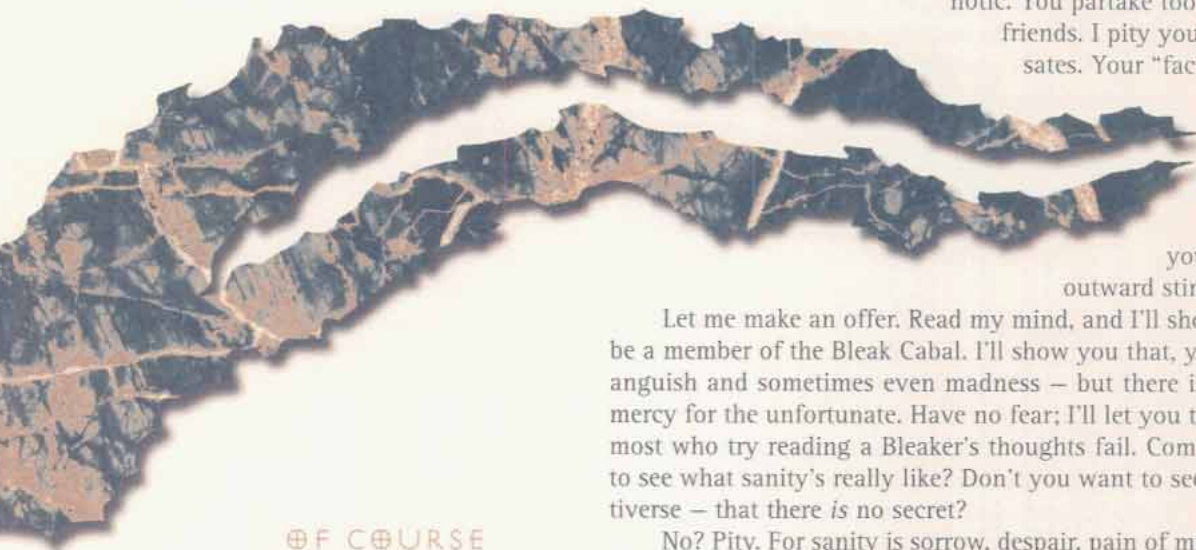
◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

Besides its normal hinges, cooking implements, and rivets, the Great Foundry produces a more unusual item: magical stones called *source tokens*, manufactured at a secret forge in the deep Ethereal. (*A shifting portal in the council chamber atop the metal-works opens onto this secret forge once a year for only a day; the rest of the year it cycles through each plane of the Great Ring and each Elemental Plane.* — Ed.) *Source tokens* look like translucent pebbles, cloudy gray with dark swirls at their core. A Godsmen with a *source token* may enter the Ethereal at will from anywhere in the multiverse. Each *token* works once, then disappears. Only factotums or factors on faction missions receive the *tokens*, since they're fairly scarce resources.

The Godsmen possess a more unreliable resource in the relationship between Zena and her identical twin sister, Zakarias, a Sensate factor (PI/♀ tiefling/R9/Society of Sensation/NG). Zena has, on occasion, gained entrance to the inner sanctums of the Sensates by impersonating her sister. Don't expect any political pull from the connection, though — the twins detest one another, each feeling the other joined the wrong faction.



THE BLEAK CABAL



OF COURSE
THE BLEAKERS
CLAIM THEY'RE SANE.
ALL TRUE
MADMEN DO.

— THE EDITOR

You call us the Madmen. But we're saner than any of you. We know the multiverse makes no sense, but we don't run around trying to convert it into logic or anarchy. Nor do we spurn our brethren for realizing there's *nothing* to what we say, like so many other factions do (that is the point, after all). All you so-called leaders — your people have become *my* people because of your rigid angers; you've rejected your comrades, and they've come to the Cabal.

Your lies and false values, dressed up as truths and ideals, have failed your followers. Your castoffs become the stuff of my faction's strongest members, the core of mercy and despair.

I'll grant that sometimes those who join the Cabal are unable to find the necessary meaning inside themselves, yes, and therein lies madness. But you must remember that the "truth" is always the enemy of delusion, and delusion is a self-administered hypnotic.

You partake too often of that drug, my friends. I pity you, particularly you Sensates. Your "faction" is merely a frivolous social club for

shallow hedonists who can't find any inner meaning because

you're always looking for outward stimulus. What folly!

Let me make an offer. Read my mind, and I'll show you what it's like to be a member of the Bleak Cabal. I'll show you that, yes, there is despair and anguish and sometimes even madness — but there is also compassion and mercy for the unfortunate. Have no fear; I'll let you touch my mind, though most who try reading a Bleaker's thoughts fail. Come now, don't you want to see what sanity's really like? Don't you want to see the secret of the multiverse — that there *is* no secret?

No? Pity. For sanity is sorrow, despair, pain of mind and soul and heart. Torment, rage, and anguish at the loss of belief. There's no faith, no hope, no trust — nothing to believe in. You say there must be an answer. There is not. Not the primes, not the petitioners (wouldn't the dead have answers?), not the proxies and not even the powers have *The Answer*. There's no sense to life, to the world, to the multiverse, to it all.

Is searching for *inner* meaning, then, the only salvation, the only hope? Indeed, is there even hope? Or is there only pain and despair, melancholia deep and dark and without end? The world is merciless. And yet, that's the very reason why mercy is most needed, why we tend to the hungry and the homeless, the orphans and the mad.

It's a conundrum, unfounded and unfocused. The only meaning is that inside myself, which comes to the fore at times such as these, and it is my salvation, my hope, my anchor to this side of life. Bleakers live shorter lives than other faction members, and we change factols frequently. I've been factol for just over three years. That's considered quite long by my people. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, only one other blood's lasted longer than I have — and you've no doubt heard the stories of what happened to *her*.

It's not madness, this bittersweet melancholia that lets us see into our inner hearts and minds. It's relief. For without this ability, we could not face the world. That's the dark of being a Madman. Don't look for meanings behind everything; accept what happens without question and look inward. I've found inside me all I need to deal with the world, my world, and that is a madness of my own making.

— Factol Lhar



◆ MADNESS AND MEANING ◆

The Bleak Cabal's an ancient faction; it seems there's always been a need for some to repudiate the tenets of others. Cabalists believe in nothing, save whatever twisted meaning they can wring out of themselves. They look sadly on those who have a belief in something external. Indeed, the very concept of someone (like the Harmonium) believing there's *order* to the multiverse isn't just alien to the Bleakers — it's anathema. Likewise, many factions have equal difficulty in understanding the Cabal's lack of belief, though the Doomguard, the Dustmen, the Revolutionary League, and the Xaositects all view the Bleakers with some sympathy. *(The Sign of One's been hated by the Cabal ever since they took credit for the mysterious death of Nobey, a former Bleaker factol; many feel Nobey was "thought" to death. — Ed.)*

Ever since the faction was born more than nine centuries ago, acceptance of the Bleakers has waxed and waned according to whichever philosophies had the biggest toehold in Sigil at the time. During periods of intense recruitment by other factions, when a factol would try to boost his numbers for some scheme or another, the Bleak Cabal's numbers would fall to the point of almost nonexistence. *(Never in the*

Cabal's history has the faction actively tried to recruit members, instead growing solely via word of mouth. —

Ed.) But in time, the other factions' numbers swelled and grew ungainly. When attitudes eventually shifted and some other philosophy came to the fore, folks'd all jump on the latest bandwagon. At the end of all these cycles of up and down and up and down, many members would renounce their vows, seeking freedom in the nihilistic approach offered by the Cabal — that the multiverse made no sense. Thus, the Bleak Cabal regularly became the single most powerful faction in the Cage; every few hundred years, its point of view prevailed throughout most of the city.

Although the Bleakers had (and still have) some desire to mold others to their way of thinking, the very nature of being Madmen defeated them. See, when their numbers increased, so did the pressures and tensions of dealing with the loss of belief. Particularly stressful was the influx of new members, for many of them hadn't yet found the peace and acceptance notable in older Bleakers. And when the Cabal's ranks became glutted, the tensions became too much for older faction members. Many went truly insane, fleeing Sigil or retreating into the depths of the Gatehouse. *(The Gatehouse is an asylum that serves as faction headquarters for the Bleak Cabal. — Ed.)* Most often, this madness lingered until merciful death.

The Grim Retreat, as the Bleakers came to call their strange illness, struck each time their faction numbers swelled too quickly. The factol and other high-ups in the Cabal were frequently the first victims, leaving only inexperienced members behind to take the reins. Today, even after the Cabal's focused on achieving inner peace, they've got the highest factol turnover rate of any faction. (Several ex-factols are said to be still alive and functioning — if those terms truly apply to the insane — in the darkest cells of the Gatehouse.)

Although modern-day Bleakers still contract the Grim Retreat now and again (mostly because of the pressures and tensions of living in the teeming City of Doors), the faction's learned a thing or two about mental health over the centuries. The success rate of patients' recovery is now quite high. The faction also tries to keep the number of Bleakers stable, currently maintaining a registered membership of some 10,000 beings in Sigil, though a considerably larger population inhabits Pandemonium (the Madmen's primary plane of influence). Lhar's been factol for approximately three years now, and he's determined to maintain the policies established by the previous factols — mostly because they seem to work. It's been over 30 years since a mass

Grim Retreat, and the number of Madmen seeking voluntary commitment in the Mad Bleaker wing of the Gatehouse has dropped dramatically.

Part of this good fortune stems from the Bleak Cabal taking a greater interest in Sigil. Oddly, of all the factions in the Cage, the Bleakers are arguably

the most charitable. Why do they like to help others? Some no doubt find relief in caring for sods worse off than they are; a few Bleakers even suffer from messiah complexes and want to save the world from madness and death. But most just figure that by doing good works, they'll move closer to finding the true meaning that lies within. And besides, expanding the faction's presence and influence in Sigil is never a bad thing.

More than a century ago they opened up an almshouse in their faction headquarters, helping to care for the poor and lost. It still operates today, along with small soup kitchens throughout the city. These places of safe haven are open to a body in need of a warm meal, regardless of race or creed. And if the sod happens to be a Bleaker, he and his cutters can get a cot in a back room for a night. The Fraternity of Order, the Harmonium, and the Mercykillers all view such concern for the welfare of the city's poor with something other than a compassionate eye. These lawful factions've had their run-ins with the Bleak Cabal in the past, and they're suspicious of the Madmen's motives.

I DON'T MIND BEING MAD:
I MIND YOUR THINKING I'M MAD.

— A BLEAKER IN A HEATED
PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSION



Most of the those who work at the kitchens're content to simply dish out food, but one Bleaker in particular's quite well known for always having a joke or a good word to pass on — which is probably why other faction members think he's gone over the edge. Fact is, his real name — if he ever had one — has long been lost, and folks just call him "Addle-pated," or "Addle" for short.

ADDLE-PA+ED

Male tiefling planar

Cook at the Cold Bowl and 0-level NPC, Bleak Cabal

Chaotic good

STR	10	INT	9	HP	6
DEX	12	WIS	11	AC	10
CON	9	CHA	14	THACO	20

The head (and only) cook at the Cold Bowl soup kitchen, Addle's a Bleaker whose outlook on life ain't very bleak — in fact, it's downright cheerful. Addle's form of madness took a strange turn several years ago after an extended stay in the Mad Bleaker wing of the Gatehouse, and he's been in a giddy, manic state ever since. The Cold Bowl — only a dozen blocks from the Gatehouse — sits in the grimmest, most dispiriting part of the Hive. Still, Addle's happy to be working, and the tiefling chatters on endlessly to the poor sods who line up for a meal. Every now and then he also helps out at Allesha's Pantry, another soup kitchen in the Hive.

Addle returns to the Gatehouse once a week for sessions with those who care for barmy Bleakers, bringing with him tales of things he's seen and heard in the Hive. (*Most of which get chalked up to madness.* — Ed.) Addle's considered little more than a simpleton by many of the Gatehouse Bleakers, but outside the faction headquarters he's highly respected by the homeless and hungry of the Hive.

◆ FAC+OL L HAR ◆

Male half-orc planar

8th-level fighter, Bleak Cabal (factol)

Chaotic neutral

STR	16	INT	10	HP	43
DEX	9	WIS	14	AC	4
CON	14	CHA	8	THACO	13

EQUIPMENT: Banded leather armor, bastard sword, short sword. Lhar disdains magical items, fearing they can warp the user. He wields a bastard sword made for his physique and fighting style (+2 bonus to both attack and damage).

SPECIAL: Lhar has standard fighter and faction abilities; as a half-orc, he also has infravision to 60 feet.

Lhar was born in the Hive, the worst part of Sigil, to a blind human father and an orc mother. His parents came to the Cage seeking only acceptance; his mother's grotesque appearance made them outcasts on their Prime Material world. They found that acceptance, but it didn't put food on their table. To make matters worse, shortly after Lhar's twelfth birthday, his mother became pregnant again. The couple couldn't care for a newborn and a fast-growing adolescent, so they turned Lhar over to the orphanage at the Gatehouse, the establishment where the family'd received food and shelter in the past. Left at the entrance to the building, Lhar never saw his parents again. (*Factol Lhar's sought his parents — to no avail — ever since.* — Ed.)

Even today, the Gatehouse is all that Lhar knows.

He's intimately aware of every square foot of the structure, having spent many hours as a child roaming the gray-slatted halls. Aghast at the growing squalor of the

Hive surrounding the Gatehouse, Lhar realizes the increasing need for expanded facilities and more faction members to help run the headquarters. As such, he's planning to build an additional wing jutting out of the back of the Gatehouse to house more orphans and indigents. Further, he's planning the potentially risky maneuver of increasing membership in the faction. History shows the strong possibility of triggering another Grim Retreat in the Cabal, but Lhar hopes to stagger the influxes and somehow avoid the trauma of past increases.

Lhar's set up soup kitchens in the other wards (all of which are considerably richer than the Hive) in the hope of gaining donations, for the proposed wing will cost considerably more than what's in the Bleakers' coffers. Likewise, he's creating his network of Madmen to understand more of the political nature of Sigil; too often in the past, Bleakers've turned a blind eye to events influencing the other factions. Lhar wants to be prepared for any event, and he wants to understand the forces moving throughout the Cage. He's struggling to keep his faculties together long enough to raise the jink necessary for the wing's construction. Once it's finished, Lhar plans to succumb to the Grim Retreat.

Unlike his predecessors, however, Lhar intends on *returning* to his position as factol — something never before accomplished in Madman history. To that end, he's promoted four bloods in his faction, in the hopes that they'll help see him through his coming madness. (*The four high-ups — Ezra, Tessali, Tyvold, and Sruce — are discussed on page 31.* — Ed.)

ONLY THE SAME
CAN PREPARE FOR
THEIR INSANITY.
— FAC+OL L HAR.
GETTING READY FOR
THE GRIM RETREAT



◆ THE GATEHOUSE ◆

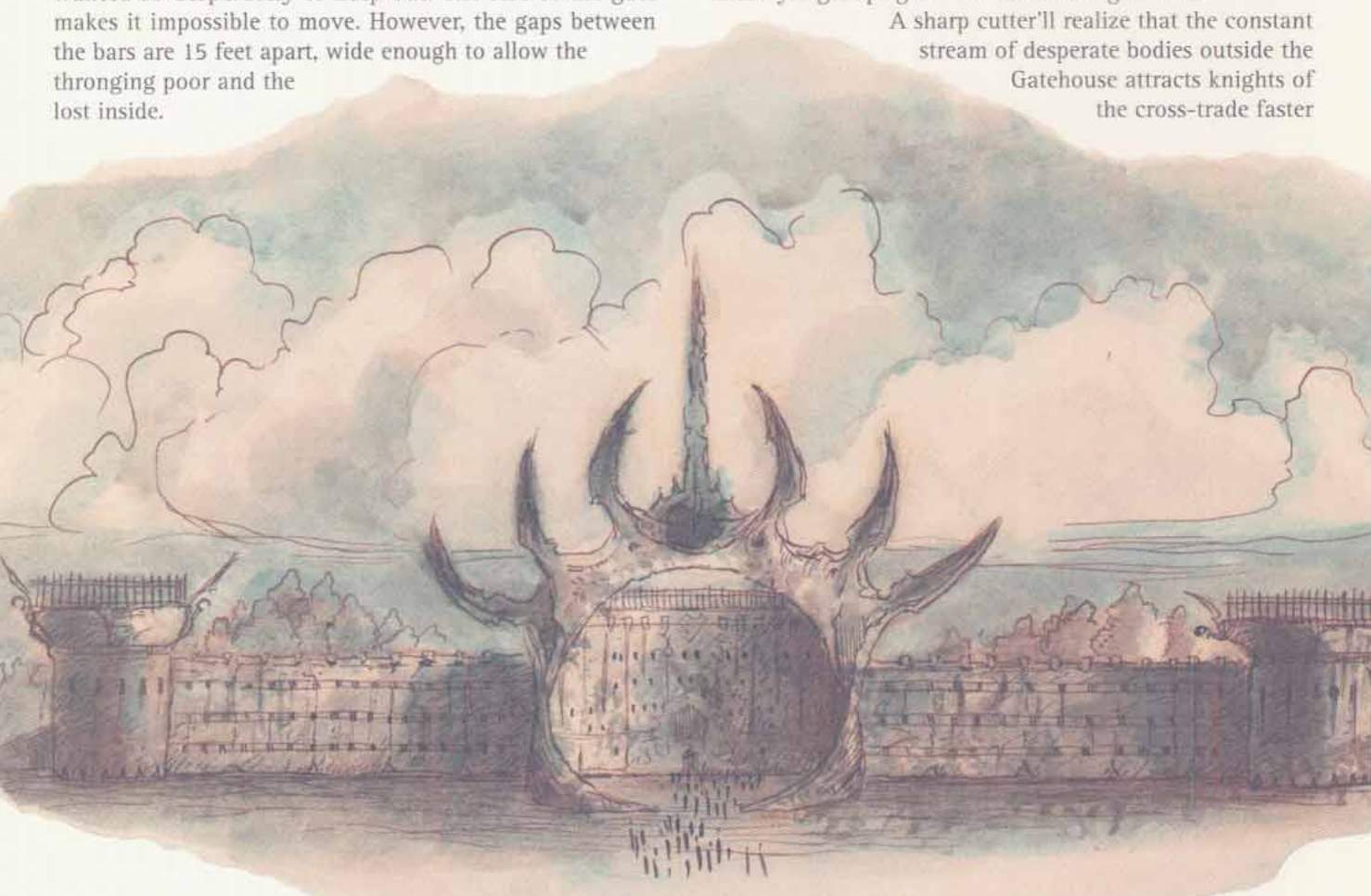
Located on a slight hill on the very edge of the Hive Ward in Sigil, the massive Gatehouse lies at the end of a curving, elevated road called the Bedlam Run. Once known as the Bedlam Blight, the building's original function was to house the contagious. Five hundred years ago, the Bleakers took over the asylum, renaming it the Gatehouse (berks in the Hive swear that's because the building sits at the edge of the Lady of Pain's Mazes). Since they arrived, the territory surrounding the building's deteriorated even further, despite the positive influence the faction's had on the ward.

The central part of the Gatehouse is a tall, semicircular, roofless tower with numerous sprawling wings attached to it. The Bleakers admit to adapting their faction symbol from a design inlaid in the tiled floor of the tower. *(Who or what the tiled pattern represented has been lost in the millennia; the Gatehouse is an ancient structure, even by planar standards. The Madmen derive a certain ironic serenity from using an empty symbol in a world where nothing means anything. — Ed.)* The entry to the building looks like nothing more than a giant portcullis, but the steel bars are fully 5 feet in diameter. Scholars have long speculated on what the former inhabitants could've wanted so desperately to keep out. The size of the gate makes it impossible to move. However, the gaps between the bars are 15 feet apart, wide enough to allow the thronging poor and the lost inside.

During the last hundred years or so, the Gatehouse has been opened up to the indigent. Outside the headquarters, sods without a coin to their name line the street, waiting for their turn to enter. They're looking for a hot meal and a bed for a few days before having to return to their slums, and they can usually find it in the Almshouse wing of the asylum. But the Gatehouse also holds an orphanage and several different wings for those whose minds have snapped. Many sad parents wait in line with children they can no longer care for, ready to hand them over to the orphanage, and just as many tearful children wait to commit their aging, addle-coved parents to a mental health wing.

Sad fact is, most of the folks who wait patiently to enter the doors are mentally ill. Some seek treatment on their own; others are brought by caretakers as a last resort. The Cabal tries to accommodate everyone, but it can only let in 50 sods each day, regardless of which wing they're directed to. The rest must wait outside, the line of those seeking admittance snaking down the Bedlam Run and back into the Hive. Some parties wait weeks before finally getting inside the tower. Even if a body only wants to ask a Bleaker a few questions, waiting in line is the only way most sods ever get into the Gatehouse. An impatient berk could swap places in line with someone who's been waiting longer — for the right price. Faction members and friendly high-ups get in without having to wait.

A sharp cutter'll realize that the constant stream of desperate bodies outside the Gatehouse attracts knights of the cross-trade faster



than razorvine brings the dabus. Many berks who need muscle for shady jobs here and there just flash a bit of jink, and a dozen hungry sods from the line'll scramble to sign up. And there's plenty of peelers looking to cheat a dimwitted body out of his last copper piece. Most of the criminals who prey on the folks in line come from the Gatehouse Night Market, an underworld bazaar a few blocks deeper into the Hive where the right price'll buy secrets, stolen property, or even slaves.

'Course, that's not to say that the criminal element is all a body'll find near the Gatehouse. Bleaker artists canvas the long line of sods, boldly sharing the sour fruits of their introspection with the masses. The atmosphere outside the asylum is often that of a funereal circus, with the latest anguished poems, elegant dirges, and gloomy stunts all battling for a spectator's eye. If a body shows any interest, one of the "Bleakniks" (as they're called) will most likely take him back to an artist's tavern or cafe a few blocks away, there to beg his sponsorship or simply discuss the great Cabalist poets of the last hundred years. Indeed, a pub called The Weary Head is a well-known gathering place for Bleakniks of every artistic persuasion.

THE TOWER AND THE WINGS

The central tower of the Gatehouse houses the faction's bureaucratic offices, as well as the living quarters of various high-up officials; Factol Lhar resides on the fifth floor. Folks who've waited in line are ushered into the open area behind the huge portcullis for processing. Half a dozen Bleakers are posted here each day, answering questions and directing those in need of help to the right wing (only fellow Bleakers are allowed into the faction quarters). Sods being admitted to the asylum are separated from their caretakers and sent to another Bleaker hovering nearby, who escorts the new inmate to the proper wing. Only the processing rooms located in the first floor of the tower are open for public viewing; the upper floors of the tower are for Bleakers only.

Lhar's promoted four Bleakers — Ezra, Tessali, Tyvold, and Sruce — to the high-up status of factor; the four are second only to Lhar himself. They serve as administrators in the Gatehouse, each overseeing one of the four wings.

The scholar Ezra (Pl/♂ bariaur/0-level/Bleak Cabal/NG) runs the Almshouse wing. He regulates the number of beings who're let in each day, how long they're allowed to stay, and what work (if any) they must perform in exchange for the charity. The conditions in Ezra's wing are

often cramped, dirty, and squalid. He's woefully understaffed, having only a handful of helpers at the Gatehouse — most of the Bleakers in his jurisdiction are out in Sigil operating the kitchens. In times of great need, Ezra can cram upwards of 3,000 homeless sods in his wing, though that leaves virtually no room for sleeping or moving about in the small (20-foot by 20-foot) quarters.

Tessali (Pl/♂ gray elf/F5,W7,T6/Bleak Cabal/CG) and Tyvold (Pl/♂ gray elf/F5,W7,P6/Bleak Cabal/CG) are elven cousins from Arborea. Their most important contribution thus far to the Bleakers' treatment philosophy was a maze-like, walled garden to the back of the Gatehouse. Greenery's

a bit rare in Sigil, but the Gatehouse has a full-time staff of 40 members tending the grounds and fighting off razorvine.

Tessali's got the formidable job of trying to control the aggressive berks in the Criminally and Irretrievably Insane wing. The barmies confined to

these tight (5 feet by 15 feet) quarters are truly the worst of Sigil, and it's mostly their screams that passersby hear throughout the day. The two-story wing can hold 188 patients in individual rooms. Unfortunately, it's currently full to capacity and then some, with many rooms holding two berks each. Because these inmates are the ones most likely to try to escape from the Gatehouse, they're allowed to exercise only in the two walled courtyards at the ends of the main wings, and then only under heavy guard.

Tyvold has perhaps the easiest area to govern: the Orphanage and Insane Asylum wing. He has a staff of 45 Bleakers, but Tyvold's never at a loss for new assistants. Many cutters who join the Bleak Cabal have a deep interest in mental health and in healing others, though few have the courage to apprentice in Tessali's wing, and apprenticeship to Sruce is by invitation only. Furthermore, each of the three floors in Tyvold's wing is, for the most part, a large, open space, which makes cleaning and observation easy. The top floor is earmarked for Sigil's orphans, children age 14 and younger. The bottom two floors are devoted to mentally ill folks who're expected to recover, given a little time and treatment.

The wizard Sruce (Pr/♀ human/W14/Bleak Cabal/CN) is in charge of the five-story Mad Bleaker wing, the area that houses faction members in the throes of the Grim Retreat. She's originally from Krynn, though she didn't venture onto the planes until her fiftieth year. Now 70 years old, only her haunting eyes betray what she's seen and endured the past two decades. The pressure to heal the mad Bleakers and return them to their duties is enormous, but Sruce does what she can. The wing contains 280 barren cells, each 10 feet by 10 feet, though currently only three floors hold Cabalists struggling to regain their minds.

Sruce lets out the extra rooms to travelers. Bleakers stay for free, but others must pay 10 gold pieces per day — and take a solemn vow never to discuss the odd sounds heard at night.

The cells are by no means luxury accommodations, as they're meant for Bleakers who feel they're truly going insane. Fact is, each cell contains only an old straw pallet for bedding. The outside of the windows are lined with bars, the inside with black, dilapidated shutters that always remain closed. (*Among the Hive children, it's a mark of bravery to run up to one of these windows and try to peek through the cracks in the shutters.* — Ed.)

When a Bleaker commits himself to the wing (or is taken there by friends), one of Sruce's staff escorts him to the nearest unoccupied cell and closes the ironbound door, locking it with a heavy steel bar. A metal shutter slides into place across the door, cutting off all light and life. How long the Bleaker chooses to remain there — forgoing all food and drink, in a state of transcendent despair — is up to him. A number have died in their cells, never finding the strength to grasp the faction's code. Most, however, cry out their reaffirmation of the Bleaker philosophy, even as they collapse from starvation or dehydration. A staff member finds the fallen sod sooner or later. If he's not dead, his door's left open by the worker so the Bleaker can later stumble away on his own. But if the Bleaker looks bad, he's taken to an upper floor and tended to until he's well enough to leave. (*The faction forbids its members to discuss the Mad Bleaker wing with anyone other than fellow Madmen.* — Ed.)

Fact is, no matter which wing they're taken to, most folks eventually leave the Gatehouse fully recovered. But they all keep mum about their treatment, saying only that the Bleakers were "kind" to them.

◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

Playing a character who's a member of the Bleak Cabal is likely to pose a challenge for many players — and it's equally likely that the faction's too grim to interest many players. After all, it's hard to play someone whose outlook on life is, by choice, depressing and fatalistic. But the opportunity to play a character on the edge of madness can be a challenge — and exciting, too, as the faction lends itself well to numerous possibilities. For example, a Bleaker can apprentice with Ezra to aid the homeless, with Tyvold to help orphans, with Tessali to watch the dangerous barmies, or with Sruce to tend Bleakers in the depths of the Grim Retreat.

ROLE-PLAYING THE BLEAKERS

The question often arises as to *why* any Bleaker would bother to join a party of adventurers or undertake any sort of quest in the first place. Wouldn't it be easier to remain in Sigil and perform charitable works to ease the pain and suffering of others, as well as one's own? Wouldn't it be more fitting to lie in bed all day and refuse to show interest in anything the world has to offer?

Perhaps, but a true Madman welcomes his duty to embrace the pain of life, wrestle with the demons of insanity, and emerge the stronger for it all. For the same reason why the Cabal endures the tormenting winds of Pandemonium, so do Bleakers set out on adventures — the madness of it all moves a cutter farther along on the path toward self-awareness. After all, the faction's core belief says that a body's got to find meaning within himself, but such meaning can't come without first experiencing the intrinsic folly of the rest of the multiverse. Exploring the ruins of a castle or escorting an infant prince across a desert won't mean much to a Bleaker other than what he can take away from it — how the experience can help him look inward and find truth.

A Bleaker doesn't dwell on treasure the way other adventurers often do, but that doesn't mean he won't take his fair share. He'll hold on to it, prepared to spend it in whatever fashion he thinks best — perhaps to bolster a struggling orphanage or aid a sage's medical studies toward relieving mental illnesses. But if he can't think of a suitable use for a pile of jink, a Bleaker just might leave it where it lies — one of the many reasons why other factions call them Madmen.

Of course, all of this assumes that a Bleaker's made his daily saving throw against the futility of existence. As stated in *A Player's Guide to the Planes* in the PLANESCAPE Campaign Setting boxed set, a Bleaker must roll 1d20 at the start of each game day. A result of 20 means the sod's thrown into a fit of melancholia, overcome by the pointlessness of life. He won't take any actions unless his comrades can provide a convincing philosophical argument as to why he should bother. Demonstrating that the action will relieve the Bleaker's depression may work, as might appealing to the sod's charitable inclinations. However, the mere sight of a friend being menaced by a monster isn't enough to rouse a Bleaker who's failed his daily roll. What's more, a Madman who is role-played to the hilt is

likely to steel himself against arguments that his cutters throw at him repeatedly, forcing them to come up with new and better reasons for the Bleaker to take action.

A Bleaker's daily roll can get him into trouble in other ways, though. A roll of 1 indicates a state of manic euphoria. The character's overcome with flights of fancy and free association, and he's likely to believe that he's some sort of a messiah. Fortunately, this only lasts for one day. To role-play this manic state of mind



THE GATEHOUSE

Dining Hall

Almshouse

Ezra's Office

Ezra's Private Quarters

Entrance Courtyard

Guards Room

Shifting Portal

Courtyard for the Poor and Orphans

Ezra's Office

Indigent Processing

Processing Area

Tyrol's Office

Insane Asylum
(1st and 2nd floor)

Orphanage
(3rd floor)

Bleak Cabal's Private Courtyard

Mad Bleaker Processing

Tessal's Office

Processing for Criminally Insane

Criminally and Irretrievably Insane Wing

Processing for Mentally Ill
and Orphans

Observation Lounge

Exercise Yard
for the Insane

Infirmary

Dining Hall



0 50 100
Feet

320 feet

780 feet



effectively, a player can speak very quickly, jump from one thought to another without logic, and respond to everything he hears by word association.

ALIGNMENT. Bleakers can be of any alignment save lawful. Lawfully aligned characters can't stomach the basic premise of the Cabal, that the multiverse doesn't make sense, for without sense there's no order.

However, further distinctions of alignment seldom trouble Bleakers. "Good" and "evil" aren't necessarily the standard definitions to Madmen; instead, they prefer "sanity" and "insanity." The thin line that separates these extremes for any given Bleaker is often a faint one, blurred by trying to live and keep at bay a body's inner demons. A member of the Cabal can be quite sane one day, and a fortnight later be in the throes of a depression bordering on true insanity. It's all a matter of outlook.

Similarly, Bleakers of opposite alignments can work well together despite clashing viewpoints. If the factol assigns two Bleakers to tend the soup kitchens near the Foundry, they will. The chaotic evil fellow will dish up broth with as much speed and determination as his chaotic good partner, though his heart may not be as gladdened by the deed. The two Bleakers have a far more primal urgency to deal with – their own internal struggle for sanity. At one point or another, all Madmen share the pain inherent to their faction, and not even alignment can separate two Bleakers who *know* the terrors the other has endured.

CLASS. Intelligent characters – notably wizards, priests, bards, and other classes with scholarly inclinations – are particularly attracted to the Bleak Cabal, with its emphasis on the mental over the physical. Thieves and fighters can also join the faction, but these classes typically do so later in life. Perhaps a warrior sees too much killing, or a highwayman spends too many years on the run – whatever the case, the burden of life takes its toll and sends him a bit off the edge. Their haunted pasts drive them to even greater acts of sacrifice and compassion.

In game terms, this means that all Bleaker fighters and thieves of 10th level or above must turn over 50% of all treasure gained to a local charity (most likely the soup kitchens run by the Cabal, but not always). By trying to soothe their consciences in this manner, these characters receive some measure of relief from despair. Interestingly, these characters gain one extra Charisma point for every 2 levels they rise (regardless of their racial limitations), to a maximum Charisma of 25. An aura of beneficence surrounds these characters, even if their physical appearances are displeasing; they're looked on with great favor and often considered genuine heroes by folks in Sigil. When a Bleaker's Charisma score reaches 25, he's automatically granted the best possible outcome in any meeting with those of opposing viewpoints – a Harmonium patrol won't even scrag the Madman for jaywalking.

BLEAKER MEMBERSHIP

At first, it seems like joining the Bleak Cabal's as easy as stepping through a portal. A body's just got to decide that he wants to be a member and then make his decision known to any Bleaker, whether at the Gatehouse, in a soup kitchen, or on the howling plane of Pandemonium. But then comes the initiation period, which tends to break most berks. The Bleaker's response to the applicant won't be much more than a grunt or a shrug of the shoulders. He won't explain what to do, where to go, or anything of the sort – the sod's on his own. Oh, he can tag along with the Bleaker he's attached himself to and continue to struggle for acceptance, but the Madman'll try to ignore the sod and may even try to talk him out of joining. Most berks change their minds in the face of such repeated disinterest or downright antagonism. But those whose hearts are truly bleak, whose will is such that they persevere, eventually get accepted into the faction as namers. Typically, this initiation period lasts from six months to one year.

A sod who makes it through the initiation has to drop his last name or family name; all members of the Cabal are known only by their given name. It's a sign of their willingness to give up a life of past "meaning."

FACTION ABILITIES. Those who persevere and make it into the faction find themselves with a number of special powers tied to their beliefs. First of all, as stated in the *PLANESCAPE Campaign Setting*, Bleakers are immune to all madness-inducing spells such as *chaos*, *confusion*, *delude*, *feeblemind*, *Otto's irresistible dance*, and *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter*. They're also allowed a saving throw vs. spell against all *ESP* spells directed at them.

What's more, Bleakers are naturally immune to certain psionic abilities, including ego whip, psychic crush, and psychic surgery. And once a faction member reaches 7th level, he gains an ability that's a natural extension of his own immunity: the power to absorb artificially-induced madness in others. This power works on sods driven insane by spells or magical items, but not on those who've gone insane naturally. To use the power, a Bleaker must first meditate for one hour, cleansing his mind of all thoughts. (*This is often impossible. A Bleaker's got a 15% chance of failure; if he fails, he can try only one more time to cleanse his mind for the same victim.* – Ed.) The insane berk's got to hold still, either voluntarily or otherwise, and the Bleaker then begins a ritualistic massage of the victim's head. The massage must be kept up until the barmy's body grows numb, at which point the insanity is absorbed by the Bleaker. The process is exhausting, taking 1d12+4 hours to complete. If the ritual is interrupted, the Bleaker must start over; otherwise, success is guaranteed and the victim regains full mental health immediately. However, the Madman'll suffer mental anguish for two days afterward, during which time he sorts out the absorbed insanity.

A spellcasting Bleaker of 5th level and above who's served the faction well is taught the use of the following spells, both of which were expressly created by the Cabal:

DESPAIR (Enchantment/Charm)
4th-level wizard spell

Range: 30 yards
Duration: 1 round/XP level
Area of Effect: 2d4 creatures
in a 20-foot by 20-foot square

Components: V, S
Casting Time: 4
Saving Throw: Special

Despair allows a Bleaker wizard to share his world view with others. When this spell is cast, 2d4 sentient creatures (of Intelligence 3 or better) in the area of effect must successfully save vs. spell or lapse into a severe depression that lasts for one round for each level of the caster. Victims of *despair* are unable to attack, cast spells, move, or even engage in basic activities such as eating or drinking. Berks suffering from *despair* don't even bother to defend themselves; opponents can automatically strike, disarm, or bind them without resistance. If a body's bound or damaged, he gets another saving throw to shake off the effects of the spell. Interestingly, primes and members of the Free League are somewhat resistant to this spell, perhaps because they're not stuck on any particular philosophy; they gain a +2 bonus on their saving throws.

HOWL OF PANDEMONIUM (Conjuration/Summoning)
6th-level wizard spell

Range: 0
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: 30-foot-radius circle or 60-foot by 20-foot cone

Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 6
Saving Throw: Special

Although the *howl of Pandemonium* spell derives power from the plane of Pandemonium, it can be used by Bleakers anywhere in the multiverse. *Howl* enables a mage to channel the screaming winds of the plane through his own body, giving voice to a numbing wail that incapacitates all nearby. The howl must be maintained for at least one

round to have any effect, but it lasts as long as the wizard concentrates, to a maximum of one round per level (the wizard can't move or do anything else while maintaining the howl). The effects linger even after the spell ends, lasting as long as the spell was maintained. When casting the *howl of Pandemonium*, the wizard can opt to affect all creatures within 30 feet, or he can channel a cone 60 feet long by 20 feet wide. The material component is a pebble from Pandemonium, which must be consumed by the caster.

All creatures in the area of effect are deafened and disoriented; communication of any kind is impossible. They also suffer -2 penalties to their saving throws and attack rolls. Nonmagical missiles are deflected by the force of the *howl*, and sods who try to physically approach the caster must successfully save vs. spell before doing so. Furthermore, all sound-based attacks are negated, drowned out by the *howl*. (This spell has no effect on creatures or petitioners native to Pandemonium. — Ed.)

In addition to the above effects, creatures whose Hit Dice or levels are lower than the spellcaster's must successfully save vs. spell or become confused. The DM should roll 1d10 for sods who fail and consult the table below to see how they're affected. (Any creatures with 2 or fewer Hit Dice who fail their saving throws are simply driven into a catatonic state that lasts for 2d6 hours. — Ed.)

D10	EFFECT
1	Wander away for duration of effect.
2-6	Stand confused for one round, then roll again.
7-9	Attack nearest creature for one round; roll again.
10	Act normally for one round, then roll again.

'Course, members of the Cabal have to endure a few setbacks along with their new abilities. The most immediate problem is the daily 1d20 roll against futility. A Bleaker who fails the roll three days in a row (or five days during a single month) may be considered for incarceration in the Mad Bleaker wing of the Gatehouse. 'Course, it's up to him whether or not he wants to commit himself to the asylum. But if he chooses to postpone or forgo the



trip, he faces the possibility of extended madness – the very next time his daily 1d20 roll results in *either* a 1 or a 20, the Bleaker immediately goes insane and will remain in that condition until he's taken to the Gatehouse for treatment. What's more, the player must make the roll secretly, so other players won't automatically know if the Bleaker's gone mad. While insane, the Bleaker may wander off if left alone, may try to lead his group into trouble, won't be able to take direction or cast spells, and won't make a distinction between enemies and friends in combat.

Any faction member who enters the Mad Bleaker wing for treatment is allowed as much time as he needs to recover, receiving the care (such as it is) of Sruce and her workers. Only one of three things can happen.

- ✦ The Bleaker dies in his cell. There's a base 10% chance of death; for each Constitution point above 14, the chance is reduced by 1%.
- ✦ After much soul-searching, the Bleaker returns to his faith in the Cabal and is released. He won't be subject to extreme melancholia for the next six months of game time (he needn't roll a 1d20 each day).
- ✦ If the Bleaker neither dies nor reaffirms his faith, his will to live is shattered by the horrors within his mind and the weakened physical condition brought on by inaction. He can do nothing to escape, nor can he intimate to anyone that he wants to escape.

In this last case, the Bleaker's cutters may try to rescue him. But even if they make it through the Gatehouse to his cell, the Madman's likely to scream at the sight of his former friends and resist rescue. Should the group succeed in taking the Bleaker from the Gatehouse and care for him intently, the sod's got a 70% chance of making a full recovery after 1d4 game months of rest (the chance is increased by 2% for each point of the Madman's Intelligence over 14). However, if he fails the recovery roll, he retreats into a catatonic state for either 1d6 months (if cared for constantly) or 1d20 months (if cared for haphazardly). The Bleaker's cutters may choose to return their catatonic friend to the Gatehouse for treatment.

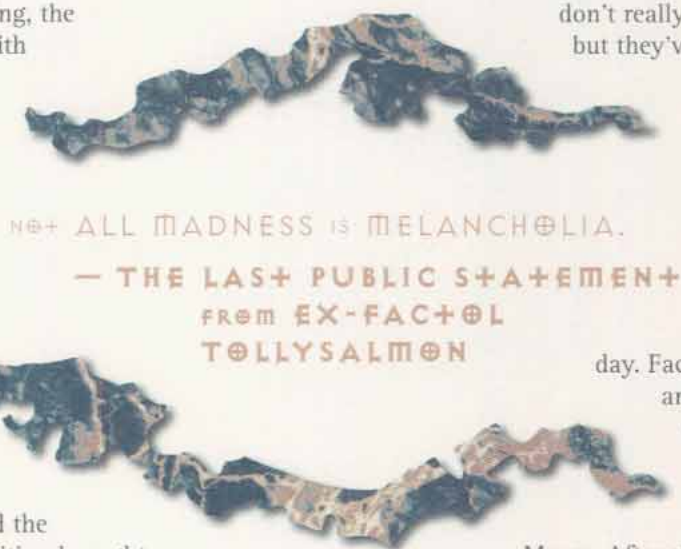
Even if a Bleaker keeps making his daily 1d20 roll and never goes insane, he still faces a greater drawback to belonging to the faction. All members of the Bleak Cabal suffer from a shortened life span, as years of living with mad-

ness and melancholia eventually take their toll. For humans and tieflings, this penalty is relatively minor: a subtraction of 10 years from a character's expected life span. Halflings lose 20 years, while gnomes and half-elves lose 50 years. Full-blooded elves are the hardest hit, losing 100 to 200 years of their life span; gray elves are docked 400 years. (Oddly, dwarf and bariaur Bleakers suffer no ill effects.) 'Course, many faction members see this as not a curse, but a *blessing*. Think about it – who'd want to live long in a multiverse that didn't make sense?

◆ THE CHANT ◆

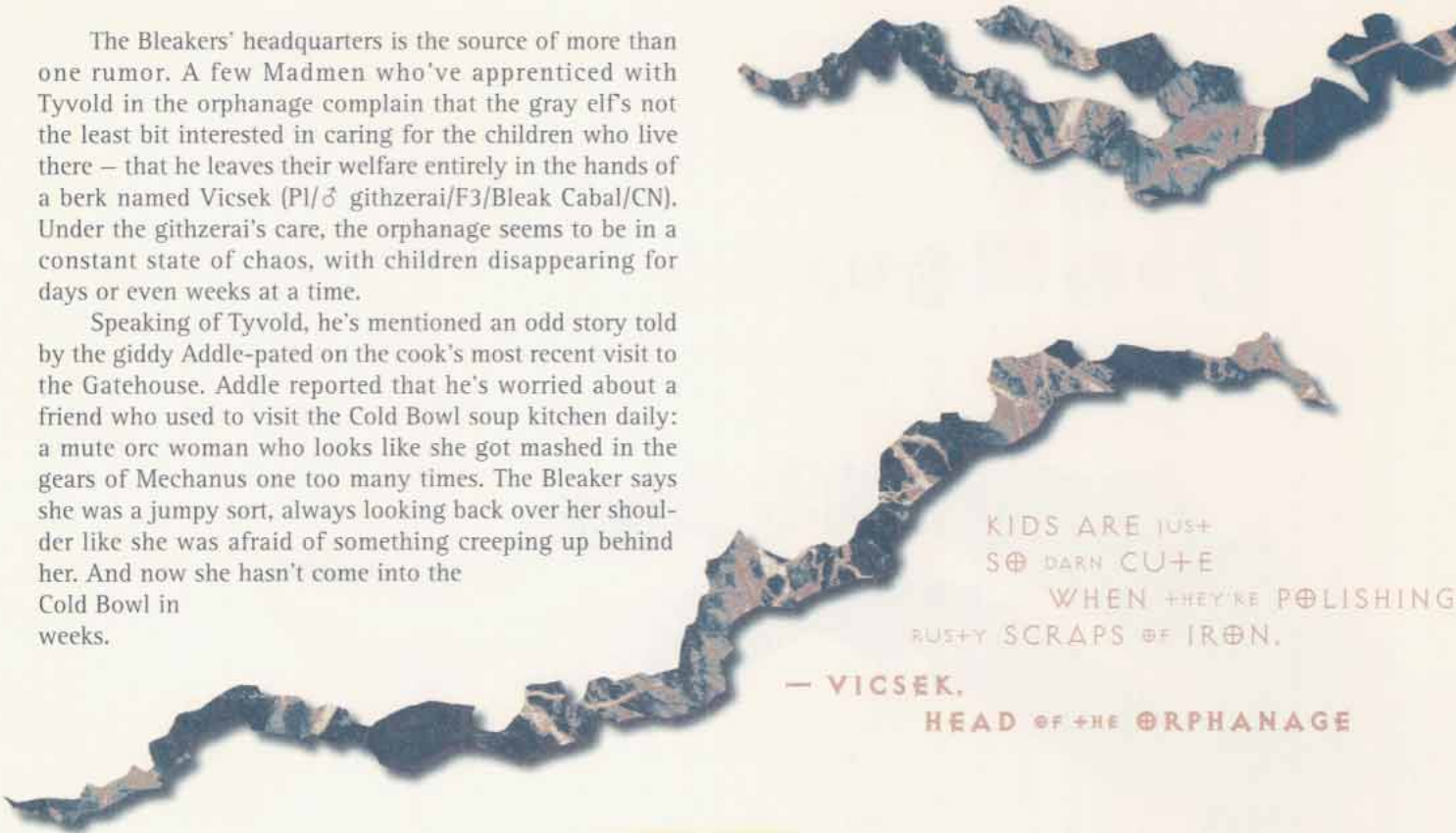
Folks who've visited many of the Bleaker's soup kitchens report that other factions – particularly the Mercykillers and the Harmonium – seem to be taking more than a passing interest in the places. The lawful bashers don't really care what goes on in the Hive, but they've staked out the kitchens in the other wards, especially those found in The Lady's Ward – an area of Sigil with relatively *few* hungry or homeless sods. So far, the only thing they've seen at the kitchens is mercy, but they're still peery and growing more so every day. Fact is, the faction's opening more and more soup kitchens throughout the Cage, and some lawfuls fear the growing web of havens has got something to do with the Lady of Pain's Mazes. After all, rumors that the Gatehouse is somehow connected to the Mazes just won't die.

Factol Lhar's unaware that Factol Nilesia has set her Mercykillers to watching the Bleak Cabal's headquarters as well. But even if he knew, he wouldn't care, for he's slowly succumbing to the madness inherent to his position. Lhar fears that he'll follow in the footsteps of his two predecessors, Esmus (Pl/♂ human/W8,T9/Bleak Cabal/CN) and Tollysalmon (Pl/♀ githyanki/knight 7/Bleak Cabal/CE). For some reason, the two ex-factols each had an especially difficult time with the Grim Retreat, and both had to be committed to the Criminally and Irretrievably Insane wing of the Gatehouse. The Bleakers report that the ex-factols've been drained of their aggressive urges over the years, and that now they're harmless – barmy, but harmless. However, the chant passed around by Bleakniks in the Hive says otherwise, warning that it's all the faction can do to restrain the two ex-factols. Somehow, it's said, Esmus and Tollysalmon've gained mental powers so strong and frightening that Bleakers in the Gatehouse can't even *kill* the berks – and not because they haven't tried.



The Bleakers' headquarters is the source of more than one rumor. A few Madmen who've apprenticed with Tyvold in the orphanage complain that the gray elf's not the least bit interested in caring for the children who live there — that he leaves their welfare entirely in the hands of a berk named Vicsek (Pl/♂ githzerai/F3/Bleak Cabal/CN). Under the githzerai's care, the orphanage seems to be in a constant state of chaos, with children disappearing for days or even weeks at a time.

Speaking of Tyvold, he's mentioned an odd story told by the giddy Addle-pated on the cook's most recent visit to the Gatehouse. Addle reported that he's worried about a friend who used to visit the Cold Bowl soup kitchen daily: a mute orc woman who looks like she got mashed in the gears of Mechanus one too many times. The Bleaker says she was a jumpy sort, always looking back over her shoulder like she was afraid of something creeping up behind her. And now she hasn't come into the Cold Bowl in weeks.



KIDS ARE JUST
SO DARN CUTE
WHEN THEY'RE POLISHING
RUSTY SCRAPS OF IRON.

— VICSEK,

HEAD OF THE ORPHANAGE

◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

Factol Lhar's intention in establishing a network of soup kitchens is simply to provide maximum relief for the poor and hungry of Sigil. However, there is more going on than is widely known. A shifting portal exists in the Gatehouse's central tower; one end remains in the tower, while the other shifts among eight different locations in Sigil, each shift lasting for about three days. Lhar's ordered that the new soup kitchens be constructed around those eight locations.

The kitchens have nothing to do with the Lady's Mazes, but it turns out that the lawful factions might have something to worry about after all. The wings of the Gatehouse are full to bursting with the poor and the barmy, and a few overworked Bleakers try to alleviate their load by sending a harmless-looking berk here and there through the shifting portal. 'Course, sometimes a sod's pushed through the portal who shouldn't have been; last week, ex-factol Tollysalmon used her innate mind-control power to trick a worker into sending her through to a soup kitchen. Now the faction's trying to locate her, but in a hushed manner — they don't want to alert the Mercykillers or the Harmonium to their mistake.

The Gatehouse also contains a permanent portal that leads to a Bleak Cabal outpost called the Madhouse, a town in the layer of Pandemos on Pandemonium. The portal's found at the top of the spiral stair on the fifth floor of the Mad Bleaker wing, which makes for quite a nerve-racking trek for would-be portal jumpers, what with the screams and moans of the inmates.

As for Vicsek, the githzerai masquerades as a member of the Cabal but secretly works for the Sensates. He's supposed to be reporting on the activity at the Gatehouse, but the sod's not above abusing his position. He's got a deal going with Alisohn Nilesia, factol of the Mercykillers. She needs bodies to clean portions of the Prison (inmate workers might try to escape down the sewers or air ducts). Thus, the factol's hiring on work-gangs of children, and once a week Vicsek escorts a few able-bodied orphans to the Prison. The kids are paid well and set loose on the city once their job's finished, so they don't complain. Some even return to Vicsek for another stint at cleaning duty. 'Course, a few disappear in the Prison from time to time, but so far no one's really noticed, what with the huge numbers of orphans seeking admission to the Gatehouse on a daily basis.



THE DOOMGUARD

"The explosion woke me on the morning of my eighteenth birthday.

"I tumbled from my bed in the Leihani Inn and ran to the veranda. There, in the distance, the mountains the natives called the Sleeping Sisters were finally erupting! The volcanoes' rumbles grew louder, drowning out the screams of my fellow tenants, and the spouts began to belch forth spumes of black smoke. Eagerly I jumped over the railing, landing a dozen feet below in the soft volcanic sand lining this side of the island. Then I began running toward the twin mountains, fighting against the flow of panicked natives racing the other way.

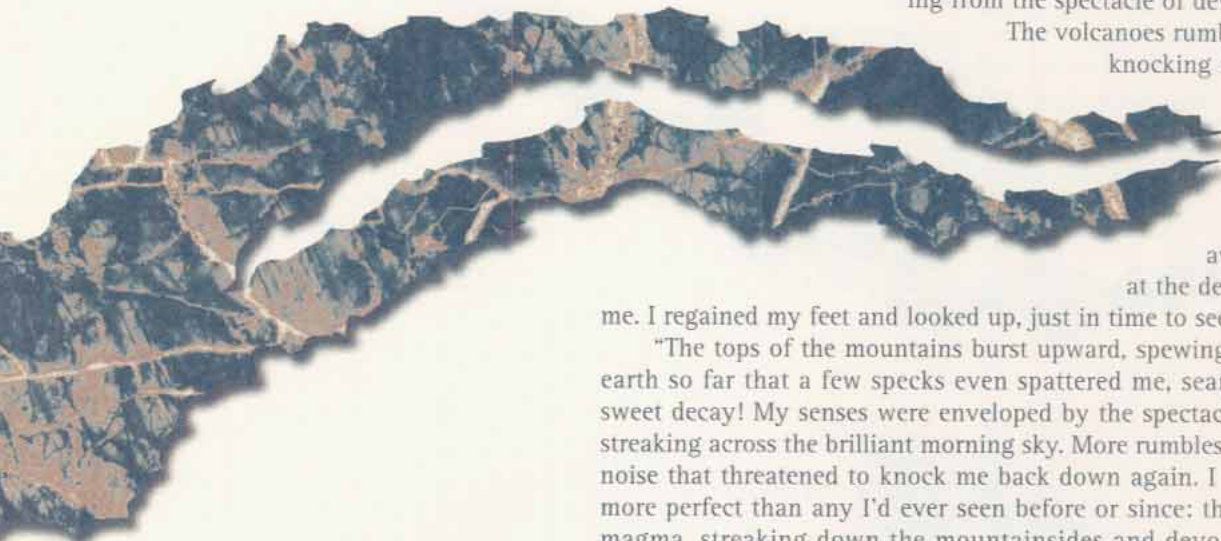
"Outside the village limits I ran, my eyes never straying from the spectacle of devastation before me. The volcanoes rumbled again, this time knocking me to the ground. A jagged cleft in the earth appeared not more than a half-dozen strides away, and I marveled at the destruction all around

me. I regained my feet and looked up, just in time to see the Sisters blow!

"The tops of the mountains burst upward, spewing pieces of rock and earth so far that a few specks even spattered me, searing my skin. What sweet decay! My senses were enveloped by the spectacle of livid red scars streaking across the brilliant morning sky. More rumbles, and then a blast of noise that threatened to knock me back down again. I then beheld a sight more perfect than any I'd ever seen before or since: the flow of red-black magma, streaking down the mountainsides and devouring all within its path. Trees, boulders, and everything else fell before that monstrous flow, incapable of standing against the force of pure destruction. With awesome majesty the flow picked up speed, consuming the land before me, as my body was consumed with sheer primal joy.

"I shivered in ecstasy."

— From the private journals of Factol Pentar



SURE,
EVERY+HING
BREAKS DOWN
OVER +IME.
THE DOOMGUARD
PHILOSOPHY,
FOR INST+ANCE.

— +HE EDITOR

◆ HARBINGERS OF DECAY ◆

The Doomguard's one of the more troublesome factions in Sigil; many berks just can't get a good handle on them. Sinkers — as members of the faction are called — cherish the forces of entropy, dancing while everything around them decays, falls into ruin, and disintegrates with the passage of time. The fate of the multiverse is a foregone conclusion: It's all supposed to crumble and fade away, so why rage against it? If the gate-town of Plague-Mort's about to slide onto the Abyss, let it. Better yet, help it along! Few Sinkers are content to just sit back and *watch* things fall apart; they do their best to assist the decay, whether that means taking a direct action (like starting a fire) or preventing one (like stopping a berk from putting out a fire).

'Course, members of this faction have to keep an eye on the big picture. Most Sinkers don't go around tearing up roads or putting sick folks in the dead-book; sure, the multiverse is going to collapse, but it doesn't have to happen overnight. Allowing a river to take a thousand years to erode its



SOMEDAY,
YANEK,
NONE OF THIS
WILL BE YOURS.
— A SINKER FATHER,
SHOWING HIS SON
HIS ESTATE



banks is every bit as strong and beautiful an act of entropy as is setting a fire. A lot of Sinkers'd even prefer the river, as it's a *natural* force of decay — one that's surely meant to be.

Like the Mercykillers, the Doomguard owes its charter to the Great Upheaval, when the Lady of Pain forced the nearly 50 factions in Sigil to reduce their number to only 15. The Lady's shakeup — a glorious example of entropy in its own right — made the loose gang of Sinkers formalize their organization and set themselves a purpose: patrolling the streets of the Cage. But the idea of guards promoting disorder and decay didn't sit well with the other factions; the Harmonium was sent in, and war broke out. The Sinkers retreated to the Armory, which they conquered handily, as no berk'd ever had the audacity to attack the monstrous structure. With fresh supplies, the battle raged for months. It was thought that the Lady of Pain might step in to set things right, but she never did; only her dabus took part, repairing roads and public structures damaged in the fighting. It finally took a vote of the other factols in the Hall of Speakers — one that threatened to revoke the Doomguard's faction status — to make them call off hostilities. The Sinkers even signed a blood pact swearing that they'd never again instigate a war in the Cage. In exchange, the Doomguard got to keep the Armory as its headquarters and settled into a new duty: making and dispensing weaponry, a task well suited to the faction's beliefs.

Even today, the enmity between the Sinkers and the Hardheads continues to boil; their philosophies are just too directly opposed for any kind of coming together. Other lawful factions have a similarly hard time dealing with the Doomguard. The Fraternity of Order tries to stem the tide of entropy with its narrow interpretations of law, and the Mercykillers long to punish Sinkers who take criminal actions to further the cause of decay. On the other hand, the Doomguard has a strong ally in the Dustmen; fact is, Factol Skall was instrumental in preventing the rest of the factols from revoking the Doomguard's status during the war. And while the Bleak Cabal scorns the idea that the multiverse has *any* goal, entropy or otherwise, Bleakers and Sinkers find common ground in decay.

But order lurks even in the midst of entropy. Following the multiversal Rule of Three, the Doomguard often finds itself split into three quarrelling subgroups, each tak-

ing a different approach to fostering decay. The first clique thinks that the multiverse ain't crumbling fast enough. These Sinkers periodically embark upon rampages of destruction: defacing or dismantling personal property, disrupting trade or negotiation in public places, and so on. They're countered by a more sophisticated bunch of Sinkers who take a longer view, seeing the construction of a new bridge as part of the process of decay. After all, masons chip the stone, miners empty a lode of iron, laborers add more creaks to their worn bodies, and razorvine weakens the span until it eventually collapses. According to this group, the disintegration of the multiverse is right on schedule; no need to hurry it along. And finally, a third pack of Sinkers — albeit a minority — thinks that everything's falling apart too *fast*, that they must take steps to slow the rate of decay. Too much destruction too quickly isn't entropy; it's just bedlam.

Interestingly, Factol Pentar's lent her support to the first group, the most violent of the three. She incites her Sinkers to acts of arson and vandalism, especially if the blame can be pinned on a sod from another faction. (*Which causes more chaos and anarchy, two powerful tools of entropy.* — Ed.) Yet rumblings of discontent brew in the ranks; the old-fashioned Sinkers who prefer a slower or more natural erosion of order disapprove of the factol's activities.

THE DOOMLORDS

The faction high-ups most loyal to Factol Pentar are her factors, called the *Doomlords*. Only the most powerful and ruthless Sinkers get picked to be Doomlords; they must then undergo a transformation on the Negative Energy Plane so horrible that it's spoken of only in whispers and innuendo. When they return, they wear robes and black-and-red masks emblazoned with the faction's skull symbol. The chant's that the Doomlords never again remove their masks. The transformation's also said to drain a Sinker of his original personality, remaking him into a zealous ambassador of decay.

The faction has four greater Doomlords — though other *lesser* Doomlords exist — who're somehow tied to the quasidelemental planes nearest the desolate Negative Energy Plane. Currently, the four greater Doomlords are: Devland (Pl/♂ half-elf/F14/Doomguard/LN), the Doomlord of Ash; Nagaul (Pl/♀ dwarf/P10/Doomguard/NG), the Doomlord of Vacuum; Roth (Pl/♂ tiefling/F14/Doomguard/CN), the Doomlord of Salt; and Pereid (Pr/♀ human/T19/Doomguard/LN), the Doomlord of Dust. The four spend most of their time in the faction's citadels on their respective planes, but they sometimes return to the Armory to take a more direct hand in Sinker affairs.

To aid the cause, the Doomlords create champions of entropy — cutters charged with overcoming specific threats to the process of decay. For instance, a champion might

oppose a priest who's preventing a town from slipping off into the Ethereal. The Doomlords also give their champions blades of tremendous power — specially forged on the quasialemental planes — each specifically designed to combat a single threat. Once the threat's been negated, the blade turns to dust. 'Course, disposing with a major threat may take considerable time; an entropy champion might spend his whole life trying to complete a mission, passing his blade on to a worthy successor if necessary.

An *entropy blade* is generally a short sword imbued with a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls. However, when used against the threat it was designed to fight, the bonus increases to +4. *Entropy blades* aren't subject to the usual adjustments applied to magical weapons crossing the planes — after all, *entropy is everywhere*. When used against their intended threat, the blades have other powers, too, depending on the plane where they were forged:

- ✦ An *ash blade* protects the bearer like a *ring of fire resistance* and can cause a *chilling touch* three times per day.
- ✦ A *dust blade* protects the bearer against earth- or stone-based attacks and also *disintegrates* stone or earth by touch once per day.
- ✦ A *salt blade* provides the bearer with water resistance (per the *ring of fire resistance*, though against water-based spells or attacks). The bearer also can *lower water* or *destroy water* (both as a cleric of 12th level) three times per day.
- ✦ A *vacuum blade* makes the bearer immune to gas attacks, such as a green dragon's breath or a *stinking cloud* spell. Moreover, it can *enfeeble* (per a *ray of enfeeblement* wizard spell) three times per day by touch.

◆ FAC+OL PEN+AR ◆

Female human planar
20th-level ranger, Doomguard (factol)
Chaotic neutral

STR	13	INT	18	HP	78
DEX	14	WIS	14	AC	4
CON	15	CHA	18	THACO	1

EQUIPMENT: *Blade of modron death* +2 (*dust blade*; +4 against modrons undergoing the Great March), *sword of the planes*, bow +2, *arrow of slaying* (modrons), *leather armor of blinding* +4 (can appear as ordinary clothing), *Daern's instant fortress* (cube becomes a 20 × 20 × 30-foot tower), *cubic gate* (leading to the

Prime; the Quasialemental Planes of Ash, Dust, Salt, and Vacuum; and the Outlands).

SPELLS/LEVEL: 3/3/3.

SPECIAL: Pentar has standard ranger and faction abilities; she can cast spells from the animal and plant spheres, but only those that involve no healing or creation.

Born in the gate-town of Xaos on the Outlands some thirty-odd years ago, Pentar grew up in an environment steeped in chaos and destruction — which she embraced with arms open wide. Even as a child, she sought situations rife with danger and decay; as a teenager, she nearly lost her life reveling in a volcanic eruption.

In many ways, Pentar's the model of a perfect Sinker, preferring to let her long, raven tresses flow freely rather than tie them back, no matter how impractical. She's completely without fear in battle or any other hazardous situations. And that attracted the attention of the Doomlords, who early on imbued her with the power and responsibility of a champion of entropy. When the previous factol of the Doomguard met a glorious end in the midst of a slave uprising he himself had sparked, the Doomlords voted to appoint Pentar the new factol.

The decision's proven well founded. Pentar's been factol for over five years now, and she's *always* eager to perform her duties; she even sleeps garbed in battle gear, her swords and bow at the ready. Pentar also has an ancient *dust blade*, historically titled the *blade of modron death*, that's been handed down from one factol to the next. It was forged specifically to quell the Great March of the modrons. (*Every 17 years, thousands of modrons set off from Mechanus and make a clockwise trip around the Outer Planes, though no scholar's yet found the dark of it. — Ed.*) So far, though, every factol who's tried to stop the march has failed — some've even died in the attempt.

Pentar's aware that many of her Sinkers disagree with her call for active, violent disorder. Fact is, she secretly delights in the growing seeds of rebellion, hoping to push the faction to the point where it'll display a little entropy of its own — perhaps by falling apart completely. Besides, the next Great March will take place in about a year's time, and she's busy training to be the first factol to stop that threat of order and regulation. As such, she's come to leave more of the day-to-day dealings at the Armory to her most sturdy blood, a tanar'ri named Ely Cromlich.

ELY CROMLICH

Male fiend (marquis cambion) planar
18th-level fighter, Doomguard
Chaotic evil

STR	20	INT	18	HP	112
DEX	18	WIS	13	AC	-2
CON	15	CHA	12	THACO	3

EQUIPMENT: *Bastard sword* +2 (additional +4 against lawful good opponents), short sword (balanced for Cromlich's sole use), plate mail.

WIZARD SPELLS/LEVEL: 4/2/2.

SPECIAL: In addition to standard fighter, faction, and cambion abilities, Cromlich can *detect magic* by touch and *polymorph self* three times per day.

The cambion Ely Cromlich (*his human mother was from Elysium and named her son after her home plane — Ed.*) can always be found at the Armory, guiding the production and dispersal of weapons. He's completely in accord with Pentar, and the two of them are close friends — some say lovers. The fiend's an expert weaponsmaster, capable of using any kind of arms; he frequently tests weapons brought to the Armory for sale and gives demonstrations of any unusual weapons a sod might want to buy. He's most inclined and helpful to folks who bring him a weapon he's never seen before (an unlikely event, as he's worked at the Armory for more than a century now). Cromlich also forges much-lauded Doomguard weapons that even chaotic berks line up to buy.

His able assistant, a man named Spragg (Pr/♂ human/0-level/Doomguard/LG), handles a lot of the paperwork for prospective buyers and sellers. This sad-eyed, excruciatingly thin man is learning the ins and outs of weapon-making — and the destructive force of Pentar's policies. He's slowly coming to realize that Pentar's practices are too wild and destructive. Spragg's begun to build a subtle backlash against Pentar, and now more and more Sinkers — especially the once-silent majority — are complaining about the factol's guerilla tactics.

WHAT COULD BE BETTER
THAN PUTTING A TANAR'RI IN CHARGE
OF OUR WEAPONS?

— FAC+OL PEN+AR



◆ THE ARMORY ◆

Located at the edge of The Lady's Ward nearest the seedy Lower Ward, the Armory serves as the Doomguard's headquarters. The elegant, ominous structure has an opening at its top that's protected by metal fretwork. Billowing up from the center of the Armory at all hours of the day or night is a tremendous blast of heat and light from the huge weapons forge below. The Armory has few windows, and the only entrance to the building lies beneath a dominating bas relief of the Doomguard's faction symbol, the skull of a wild planar bull. Folks who enter the Armory tend to shudder as they pass beneath the monstrous sculpture.

The 24-story structure is covered with razorvine deliberately left to grow out of control — all the better to discourage any would-be thieves from climbing the walls and entering through the open roof. But the four square towers anchoring the corners of the building remain strangely free of the sharp vine, even though no Sinker or dabus seems to cut it back.

The Armory's first floor is the only one open to the public. The mighty weapons forge takes up the center of the floor, with the rest devoted to the buying and selling of all types of weapons. In each corner of the floor are guarded doors leading into the four square towers, which hold only a small forge on the first floor and Sinker quarters on all the rest. Only the Doomguard — or sneaky bashers — may use the towers to get into the higher floors of the Armory. Those remaining floors house treasuries, guard barracks, meeting rooms, practice halls, display cases that boast every type of armor known, and repositories for weapons not available to the public. The topmost floor features only the factol's quarters and chambers for visiting Doomlords.

BUYING AND SELLING WEAPONS

Just inside the building's only entrance is the area for buying and selling weapons, an exhibition hall that's open to the public 24 hours a day. A customer must first go through a harsh security check, and the entry hall's antimagic barrier is sure to pick up anything the searchers might miss. A berk more interested in a particular purchase is escorted into one of the weapon repositories, where, depending on his desire and his purse, he can purchase weapons both common and magical. A sod without much jink can poke through slightly damaged or defective weapons, all on sale for half price. If a cutter's got real brass, he can check out the engines of war repository for large-scale equipment — a siege machine, say, or a catapult or two. (*The Doomguard'll teleport any item anywhere in the multiverse, no matter what the size, for an appropriate delivery fee. — Ed.*)

Those looking to have a special-order weapon made can talk to Cromlich at the central forge. A weapon fired in the forge costs three times the standard price, but they're

exceptionally well made and worth every coin. Besides, it's said that any weapon forged in the Armory has a special enchantment – undetectable by *detect magic* – that lets it absorb the effects of a spell cast in combat. 'Course, Cromlich won't say if a particular weapon's got the power, not unless he gets a mighty fine fee for his "professional opinion."

THE CITADELS

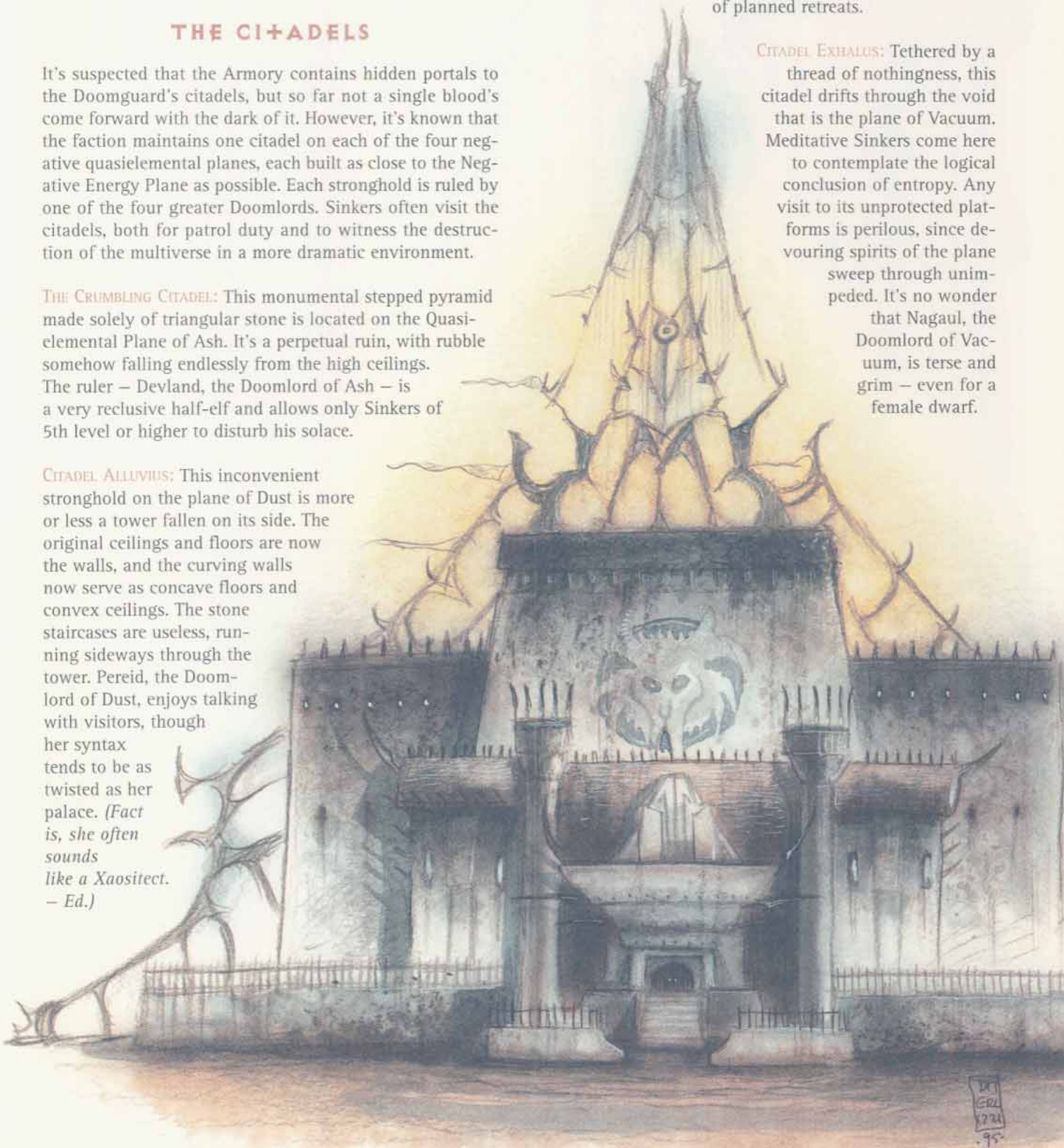
It's suspected that the Armory contains hidden portals to the Doomguard's citadels, but so far not a single blood's come forward with the dark of it. However, it's known that the faction maintains one citadel on each of the four negative quasidelemental planes, each built as close to the Negative Energy Plane as possible. Each stronghold is ruled by one of the four greater Doomlords. Sinkers often visit the citadels, both for patrol duty and to witness the destruction of the multiverse in a more dramatic environment.

THE CRUMBLING CITADEL: This monumental stepped pyramid made solely of triangular stone is located on the Quasielemental Plane of Ash. It's a perpetual ruin, with rubble somehow falling endlessly from the high ceilings. The ruler – Devland, the Doomlord of Ash – is a very reclusive half-elf and allows only Sinkers of 5th level or higher to disturb his solace.

CITADEL ALLUVIUS: This inconvenient stronghold on the plane of Dust is more or less a tower fallen on its side. The original ceilings and floors are now the walls, and the curving walls now serve as concave floors and convex ceilings. The stone staircases are useless, running sideways through the tower. Pereid, the Doomlord of Dust, enjoys talking with visitors, though her syntax tends to be as twisted as her palace. (*Fact is, she often sounds like a Xaositect.* – Ed.)

CITADEL SEALT: Where the plane of Salt meets the Great Void in a wall of crystalline mineral, the Doomguard excavated an echoing vault, miles in diameter. Here the salt eats away relentlessly at a berk, sucking dry every ounce of moisture. The citadel's often the site of festivities when the faction entertains visitors from the Lower Planes, and Roth, Doomlord of Salt, has recently doubled the number of planned retreats.

CITADEL EXHALUS: Tethered by a thread of nothingness, this citadel drifts through the void that is the plane of Vacuum. Meditative Sinkers come here to contemplate the logical conclusion of entropy. Any visit to its unprotected platforms is perilous, since devouring spirits of the plane sweep through unimpeded. It's no wonder that Nagaul, the Doomlord of Vacuum, is terse and grim – even for a female dwarf.



THE ARMORY

0 40 80 120
Feet

Flying Buttresses

Guards

Citadel Alluvius

Damaged or
Defective
Weapons

Guards

Citadel Seal

Magical
Weapons

Nonmagical
Weapons

The Forge
Open to Sky

Engines
of War

Guards

The Crumbling
Citadel

Buying
Offices

Selling
Offices

Citadel Exhalus

Exhibition Hall

Main Floor

Entrance

480 feet

580 feet

Armory Road

Newgate Road

The Armory

Doomguard Walk



◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

Naturally enough, the Doomguard's hierarchy is a loose one, despite its militaristic outlook. At the top are the factor and the Doomlords (the equivalent of factors), and below that is everyone else. But the faction's not going to appeal to everyone, especially not cutters who like to collect and hoard treasure, land, or trinkets. None of that matters to a Doomguard; all that's important is focusing on the end.

ROLE-PLAYING THE SINKERS

The Doomguard doesn't bother marking namers and factotums; the only distinctions it makes are among faction members who push hard for entropy, those who let nature take its course, and those who slow it all down. 'Course, as the first bunch of Sinkers is usually the most vocal (and violent), the latter two groups often find themselves viewed as agents — tools, really — to be manipulated by "right-thinking" faction members. This can often lead to blows when Sinkers of different leanings try to work together. But infighting's natural, they'd say — just another manifestation of decay.

The Doomguard's one of the factions most open to a body's personal interpretation of its tenets. Regardless of how a Sinker leans, he always responds to a direct threat to entropy. But the method of that response varies from one body to another, depending on alignment and faction leaning. Say a Hardhead moves to break up a brawl, or an Indep tries to quiet a stampeding herd. A Doomguard who believes in speeding up the decay of the multiverse would physically restrain the berk trying to restore order. Another Sinker might take a longer view: Perhaps letting the Harmonium basher make his arrest is the entropic thing to do, as it may engender more hatred for the Hardheads and eventually spark a mass uprising.

A Sinker's got to live with his own choices, and that extends to personal habits, as well. Some Sinkers use only the newest of gear, delighting in the erosion of virgin materials. Others use equipment that's passed through many hands, insistent that secondhand articles be shepherd to their demise. And some sport clothing and weapons so old as to be barely functional. 'Course, a Doomguard warrior who fights with a broken sword won't be much loved by his adventuring group — except, perhaps, by a rogue who follows the Sinker along, picking up gold coins that drop through the hole in his worn pocket.

ALIGNMENT. The Doomguard's open to bashers of all alignments. But a Sinker's world view tends to put him in one of the three competing cliques that've popped up in the faction.

Those of chaotic alignments usually fall in with the Sinkers who want to accelerate the pace of decay; those of neutral alignments generally agree that the multiverse should crumble at its own pace, with no help or hindrance; and lawful cutters try to hold entropy to a slow crawl. What's more, these three distinctions are further colored by whether a Sinker leans toward good or evil. Good Sinkers prefer inaction as a method of pushing their agenda — rather than tearing down a new kip, they'd merely stop others from shoring up a decrepit one. But evil Sinkers play a more active role, figuring that it's better to start a fire than sit around and wait for one.

CLASS. Priests with access to the spheres of creation or healing are banned from the Doomguard; their spells are a slap in the face to the forces of entropy. However, all other classes — including priests who can't use those constructive spheres — may join the faction.

Fact is, a Sinker's class often determines how fiercely he fights for entropy. Many fighters take a direct approach, using their strength and weapon skills to weaken bridges, upend merchants' carts, and so on. Wizards and priests tend to step back and more readily grasp the big picture, promoting decay in a subtle, long-range fashion. And rogues like to use their abilities to stir up chaos, rather than build their fortunes — a thief might plant stolen goods in the mayor's pocket, for example, or a sweet-tongued bard might incite oppressed masses to riot.

SINKER MEMBERSHIP

The Doomguard's open to most everyone, but it wants to make sure that an applicant's not some berk who'll run around destroying things just for the fun of it. A body looking to sign up must pass three tests to prove his understanding of and devotion to entropy.

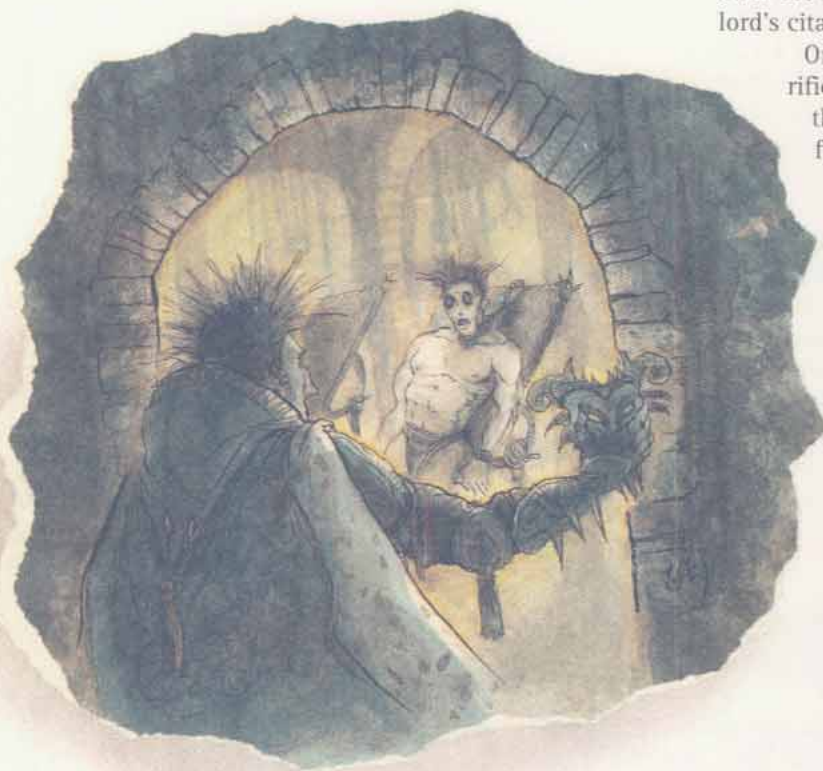
A candidate should talk to Ely Cromlich or Spragg at the Armory; whichever of them is less busy'll administer the tests. First, the basher must smash one of his weapons to pieces on an outer wall of the Armory, showing both decay and his willingness to surrender his past life. Second, he must take a sack containing no fewer than 500 gold pieces into the Hive Ward and scatter the coins in a public place — if a riot breaks out, all the better.



But it's the third test that usually gives a basher pause: He must prevent the dabus from trimming back the razorvine on any single overgrown building in the Cage for a full day. With communication difficult and combat most likely fatal (especially if the Lady of Pain takes offense at a berk messing with her agents), the applicant must find a more creative method of protecting the razorvine. Any cutter who passes all three tests is given a Doomguard-forged sword and henceforth considered a Sinker.

FACTION ABILITIES. First of all, all members of the Doomguard are trained to fight with a sword — perhaps because Sinkers seem to have a knack for bloodshed. Even those normally denied the use of a blade can wield one without penalty. By the time a Sinker hits 3rd level, his training grants him a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls with a sword.

But Sinkers of all levels can draw upon the forces of entropy to further increase their skill in combat with *any* weapon. If a Doomguard's engaged in melee with a foe of an opposite alignment (for example, evil as opposed to good, or chaos as opposed to law), he can call upon the might of his faction and try to deliver an *entropic blow*. If his attack roll is at least 5 points higher than the THACO needed to hit, the foe automatically loses half of its current hit points. A Sinker can try to invoke this power once per game week; the player just has to tell the DM that his character's going to attempt the entropic blow. Note that even if the Sinker's attack misses, it still counts as his weekly attempt at using the blow.



'Course, faction members find themselves with more than just fighting skills. Any Sinker can sift through destroyed material and gain a psychic impression of what caused the destruction. He just picks up some broken rubble, charred wood, ground dust, or whatever. He then lets the material filter through his fingers while he spends a round in quiet meditation. Sinkers of 1st through 5th level can read the cause of destruction only if it happened in the last 10 years. Sinkers of 6th through 10th level can go back 500 years. And Sinkers of 11th level or higher can read as far back as 1,000 years.

What's more, if the destruction occurred within the last century, higher-level Sinkers can actually experience parts of it. For every round spent in meditation and in contact with the rubble, Sinkers of 6th through 10th level can relive five minutes of the disaster through sight only. Sinkers of 11th level or higher can hear and smell as well as see. And the chant hints that Sinkers who are 30th level or higher can actually *enter* the scene of a disaster, though nothing's ever said of a basher *returning* from such a trip.

Doomguard priests of all levels can also *sift* through deceased organic material and learn the cause of death. The mental images received are particularly vivid if the death was a violent one, or if the destroyed being was of the same alignment as the priest.

Finally, if a Sinker's especially ruthless in his pursuit of entropy, he may find himself picked to become the entropy champion of a Doomlord. Only those of 5th level or higher who've served the faction well may be considered for this promotion. Once petitioned by a Doomlord — or even the factol — the Sinker must first travel to the Doomlord's citadel on the appropriate quasialemental plane.

Once there, the basher undergoes a fasting and purification ritual for one week. Then, he's brought to the stronghold's forge, where the steel to be used for his new *entropy blade* lies in a molten pool. The Doomlord chains the Sinker to a table and peels away a layer of his skin equal to the surface area of the weapon to be made. (*Which might account for why most entropy blades are short swords.* — Ed.) The Doomlord forges the skin directly into the new weapon, casting various binding spells in the process. Then the new champion's allowed 33 days to recover and sent on his mission.

WAI+, WAI+ —
I'M HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS
ABOUT THIS.
YOU CAN PUT AWAY THAT KNIFE.
NO, REALLY, HEY!

— A SINKER
ABOUT TO BECOME
AN ENTROPY CHAMPION

'Course, some berks who like their skin right where it is ain't tempted by the promise of being made an entropy champion. They no doubt see it as a hazard of joining the Doomguard, not a benefit. But it's all a matter of perspective, as is another setback to being a Sinker. Because of his antipathy for healing and mending, a Sinker must *fail* a saving throw vs. spell before he can accept any type of magical healing. That won't bother a true Sinker; the berk should be glad to give his life rather than violate the aims of entropy. Fact is, most Sinkers wouldn't insult their wounded or fallen comrades by offering them aid. But some of the less rabid bashers can rationalize such behavior. After all, patching up a Sinker means there's one more valuable soldier for the entropy war.

◆ THE CHAN ◆

Factol Pentar seems to be taking less and less interest in the workings and concerns of her faction, instead preferring to get ready for the next Great March. To that end, she's looking for loyal Sinkers who'll go to the gate-town of Automata, hook up with the Council of Anarchy, and get its help in smuggling a live modron or two out of the clockwork plane of Mechanus. Through intimidation — and maybe dissection — Pentar hopes to get the dark of the modrons and their mysterious march *before* it takes place.

Many Sinkers aren't happy that Pentar's wrapped up in her cause, but the Harmonium seems glad — anything to stay her calls for destruction and mayhem. Fact is, lately the Hardheads have been more cordial to the Doomguard than ever before. It might be that they want to avoid more hostilities, but only a leatherhead would put a single copper piece down on *that* bet. Many whisper that it's just a prelude to an attack on the Armory — the Hardheads are eager to get their hands on the incredible weapons therein.

A growing fad among Sinkers involves buying strong drinks and other intoxicating delights for naive Sensates, who think they've found generous new friends. But the Doomguard's plan is to steep the pleasure-seekers in constant revelry, hoping that roving bands of drunk Sensates'll bring fresh entropy to the Cage. It also might have something to do with the increased sightings of fiends — especially tanar'ri — in and around the Civic Festhall. Similar numbers of tanar'ri are paying calls on the Armory, and it's a cinch they're not dropping by just to see Ely Cromlich.

◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

The Armory holds more than a few secrets all its own. First of all, the four corner towers *are* the citadels found on the quasiaelemental planes. They exist simultaneously in Sigil and the Inner Planes; no razorvine grows on their walls because the plant can't exist on two planes at once. The northwest tower's really the Crumbling Citadel, the northeast is Citadel Alluvius, the southeast is Citadel Sealt, and the southwest is Citadel Exhalus. In Sigil, the towers radiate no detectable magic, nor can a body tell there's anything odd about them just by looking or touching. Indeed, a berk who enters a tower without the proper key simply finds himself inside an ordinary square structure. But a body who carries a Doomguard faction symbol palm up into a tower ends up in the respective citadel. Only Factol Pentar, the four greater Doomlords, and Ely Cromlich know of this method of travel; Sinkers who're chosen to become entropy champions must journey to the citadels the long way.

What's more, secret tunnels inside the Armory's main forge lead down to a bizarre chamber far below the surface. The room contains a ring of pillars that're made of skulls mortared together like bricks; the columns support a vaulted ceiling built of thighbones. Likewise, the walls're constructed with other skeletal parts. Sinker lore has it that this sanctuary was built slowly, over centuries, from the remains of revered Doomlords. Today, the chamber's used for secret meetings of the four greater Doomlords when they visit Sigil.

Topside, Ely Cromlich's forged weapons continue to sell like holy water, probably because folks believe they absorb spells. But only *some* of the weapons have this ability, and those that do absorb just one spell per month — at random. Thus, it's a gamble whether a berk's fine halberd'll absorb a dangerous *fireball* or a much-needed *cure serious wounds*.

Finally, the Sinkers are playing a most dangerous game with the fiends. In Citadel Sealt, the Doomguard is hosting *both* the tanar'ri and the baatezu, secretly providing each side with arms, troops, and information on the other. The Sinkers — Ely Cromlich included — want to prolong or even intensify the destructive Blood War. So far, the faction's stepped carefully enough to maintain its double-dealing, but it's a sure bet the fiends wouldn't like being peeled.

THE DUSTMEN

Good evening. So, you have decided to accept that "life" is a grand falsehood? That is well, for only now can you begin to move on, to explore this stage of your death and move toward the next. Yes, all stages of existence are levels of death.

You do not seem excited by your acceptance into our ranks; that also bodes well. To join us, you must work to forget your passions. Emotions reveal you as one who still clings to the illusion of "life." Remember this: Without passion, a body has no pain. Divest yourself of all passions, and you have achieved the final stage of death — you have become one of the True Dead. That is our goal, and not an easy one, at that. All the while, remember patience. Experience the stage in which you now exist.

Many of the Dead cannot take their existences one step at a time, unfortunately.

Instead, they long for a return to Life. They know,

as we do, that all the multiverse consists

of the places and planes where creatures

come *after* they have Lived.

Yes, this means that True Life occurs on planes unknown to us. The impatient among the Dustmen "hope" that achieving ultimate death will lead them back around to the mysterious multiverse of Life, our planes of origin. After reaching True Death, perhaps one *can* return to Life. I do not know. I do know that one cannot reach the ideal state, total acceptance of death, until one leaves hope behind — the very hope that fuels the desire for Life. Clearly, I still have yet to reach the ideal myself, for I appreciate the irony in this foolish presumption.

Primes seem the most ignorant of the ways of death. We call them the Clueless; after all, they still consider themselves alive. Planars understand some of the stages of death — though most still call them stages of "life." Look at the Sensates, who try to recapture bits of the multiverse of Life by foolishly clinging to the trappings. Were I capable of pity, I would offer it to them, for they certainly seem the most pathetic of creatures. And then there are the Believers of the Source, who try to inspire passion in members to improve themselves toward their grand goal. At least they see we must ascend to an ideal state, facing tests along the way. But Believers want to "ascend" in the wrong direction.

Petitioners have advanced to another stage of death entirely, but seem to have hit a dead end — so to speak. They desire to merge with their plane, when they should focus instead on moving on to become one of the True Dead. Proxies also appear unfortunate; they follow beings of power, working to further the goals of these powers without regard for their own stage of death. I find the powers the worst of all. They believe they have achieved the ultimate purpose of existence and, as a result, encourage others to believe in the sham of "life."

Why desire life . . .

when one can embrace death . . .

join the True Dead . . .

... yesssss ...

... Hmm? Oh, you are still here.

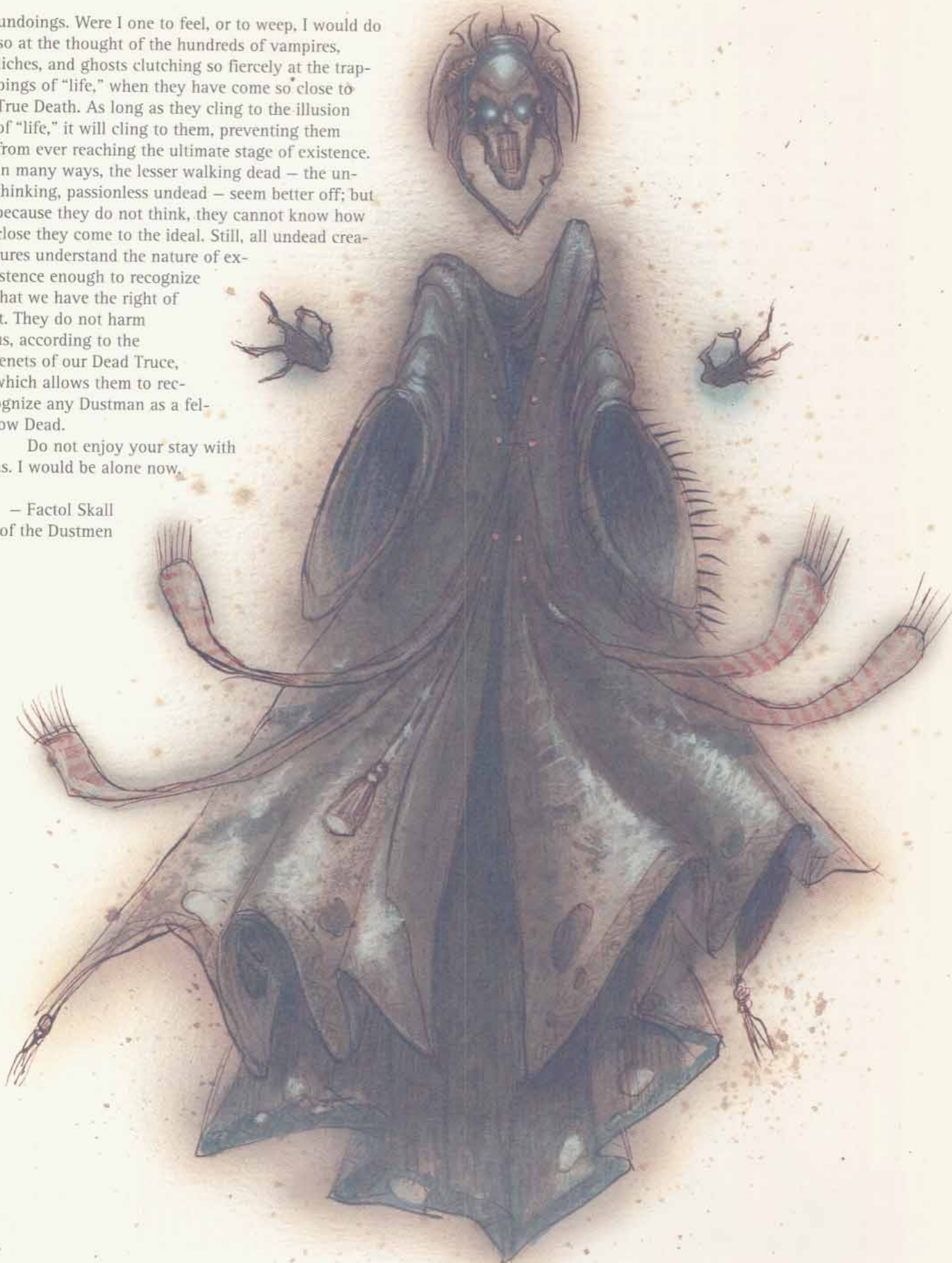
Ah, True Death. The walking dead approach this final stage. Obviously, the undead are more dead than most of us. But passions still can prove their

THEY + THINK
+ THEY'RE DEAD,
BUT + THEY'VE SURE GOT
+ THEIR FINGER
+ ON THE PULSE
OF THE CAGE.
— THE EDITOR

undoings. Were I one to feel, or to weep, I would do so at the thought of the hundreds of vampires, liches, and ghosts clutching so fiercely at the trappings of "life," when they have come so close to True Death. As long as they cling to the illusion of "life," it will cling to them, preventing them from ever reaching the ultimate stage of existence. In many ways, the lesser walking dead — the unthinking, passionless undead — seem better off; but because they do not think, they cannot know how close they come to the ideal. Still, all undead creatures understand the nature of existence enough to recognize that we have the right of it. They do not harm us, according to the tenets of our Dead Truce, which allows them to recognize any Dustman as a fellow Dead.

Do not enjoy your stay with us. I would be alone now.

— Factol Skull
of the Dustmen



A SHORT HISTORY ♦ OF DEATH ♦

The Dustmen are a very old faction, predating even the Bleakers. Fact is, many claim this was the first faction, old as death itself. One thing's sure: There's no factol older than Skall, nor one who's reigned longer. See, Skall's not only the factol of the Dead, he's the *founder*.

'Course, no Dustman would make such a claim himself. That'd resemble bragging, which a body might take as a sign of emotion. The Dead, known for their stoicism, can seem a boring lot. They seldom talk about anything except death, so they never bother to discuss the "birth" of their faction. It's not even fun to call one a "berk," because he won't bristle, won't take offense. A cutter gets depressed just thinking of this lot.

It's odd — the Dustmen never seem to get depressed themselves, at least most of 'em don't. While a body'd never call them "happy," the Dead appear kind of *satisfied* with things. Never cheery or sad, never angry or joyous, they exist in a weird equilibrium.

And that's the way it's always been, at least as far as scholars can tell from books about the faction's history. No one can recall when the Dustmen weren't around — though maybe the powers could, if a body'd care to ask 'em. The Dead have always gotten along pretty well with other folks and most other factions. It's hard for someone so boring to offend.

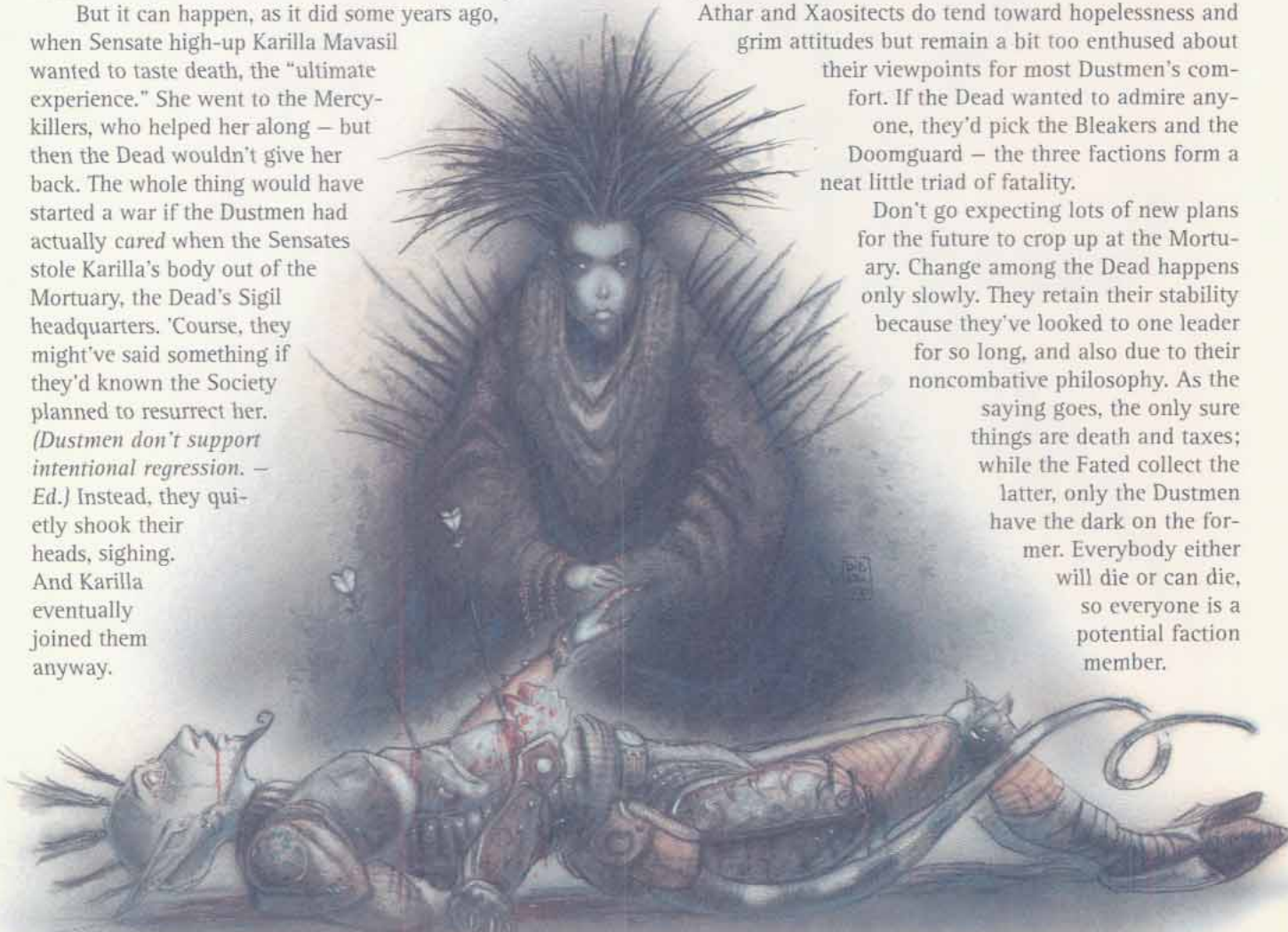
But it can happen, as it did some years ago, when Sensate high-up Karilla Mavasil wanted to taste death, the "ultimate experience." She went to the Mercykillers, who helped her along — but then the Dead wouldn't give her back. The whole thing would have started a war if the Dustmen had actually *cared* when the Sensates stole Karilla's body out of the Mortuary, the Dead's Sigil headquarters. 'Course, they might've said something if they'd known the Society planned to resurrect her. (*Dustmen don't support intentional regression.* — Ed.) Instead, they quietly shook their heads, sighing. And Karilla eventually joined them anyway.

Most factions besides the Sensates ignore the Dustmen, as the Dead make few waves. (*Lately, though, they seem interested in creating problems for the Godsmen in the Hall of Speakers.* — Ed.) A few factions even admire the morbid viewpoint of the Dead. The Bleakers and the Doomguard both like the Dustmen, for varied reasons. Members of the Doomguard also view death (though of a different sort) as the goal of the multiverse. The Bleakers — well, they like the hopelessness of the Dead's cause.

The Dustmen can't claim to *like* any other factions, nor do they really dislike any. 'Course, namers are more likely to have these emotions than high-ups. Still, even high-ranking faction members have been known to feel mild pity or amusement at the meaningless activities of other factions. If they *could* dislike other factions, their top choices would include the Sensates, Godsmen, and Signers, all of whom value the two great falsehoods of self and life. The Fated, Harmonium, and Anarchists also fail to find favor among the Dead, because they want too much, work too hard, and feel too strongly. Mercykillers prove less welcome as allies than a basher'd think: While they support death, they fail to acknowledge that they're already dead where they stand. High-up Dustmen disdain the Mercykillers' passion for justice and their penchant for speeding up the natural death process.

The Guvners, Indeps, and Ciphers all show potential, say the Dustmen, because they value learning. Eventually, they'll discover the truth and admit they're Dead too. The Athar and Xaositects do tend toward hopelessness and grim attitudes but remain a bit too enthused about their viewpoints for most Dustmen's comfort. If the Dead wanted to admire anyone, they'd pick the Bleakers and the Doomguard — the three factions form a neat little triad of fatality.

Don't go expecting lots of new plans for the future to crop up at the Mortuary. Change among the Dead happens only slowly. They retain their stability because they've looked to one leader for so long, and also due to their noncombative philosophy. As the saying goes, the only sure things are death and taxes; while the Fated collect the latter, only the Dustmen have the dark on the former. Everybody either will die or can die, so everyone is a potential faction member.



◆ FACTOL SKALL ◆

Male lich planar (former human?)
19th-level wizard, Dustman (factol)
Neutral evil

STR	12	INT	20	HP	87 (19 HD)
DEX	11	WIS	20	AC	0
CON	NA	CHA	10	THACO	5

EQUIPMENT: DMs should give Skall proper magical items for a situation, as he has had hundreds of years to collect items from almost every known plane.

SPELLS/LEVEL: 10/10/10/5/5/3/3/1.

SPECIAL: At his age, Skall knows a *lot* of spells. The DM should choose them to fit the occasion. The factol has more undead – and weird living – minions than most can imagine, including a familiar: a glabrezu tanar’ri. He has standard faction and lich abilities; guidelines for the latter follow below and on page 57. DMs can select other lich skills as needed. (See details in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™ accessory* and in the *RAVENLOFT® setting’s* Van Richten’s Guide to the Lich. – Ed.)

Not a lot of people know Skall is a lich. He usually spends more time at the faction’s headquarters on the Negative Energy Plane than in the Mortuary. Skall almost never attends factol meetings in person – he seldom visits Sigil at all. Instead, he uses an advanced form of *project image*; it has a longer duration than the normal spell and lets his image cross planar boundaries.

When Skall projects himself, and when he travels in person, he cloaks himself in illusion – usually several illusions, topped with disguises generated by spells like *alter self* or *polymorph self* to fool those who can see through illusions. Skall usually wears the guise of a human male, leading a body to believe that’s what he used to be. For factol meetings, he likes to appear as a simple black robe with the Dustmen’s symbol floating above. (Only a few high-ups have seen him undisguised.) All his forms speak in a dry, echoing monotone.

It’s no surprise that Skall can keep his true nature relatively quiet. See, the Dead don’t talk about him much. They just take for granted that he’s advanced along the road to True Death. And if folks do find out, so what? It’s not like Skall wants to hurt anyone. Sure, he’s evil, but only in the eyes of people who equate “goodness” with a respect for life. Though determined to have his own way, Skall’s in no hurry to accomplish his goals, so he seldom behaves in an evil fashion.

No player character or party should attempt combat with Skall; those who do should not win. Any creature with fewer than 5 HD (or below 5th level) who sees Skall’s true form must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or flee in terror for 5d4 rounds. (Skall can choose not to use this power, though. – Ed.) When the lich attacks successfully (once per round), the cold of his touch causes 1d10 points of damage; also, the victim must make a successful saving throw vs. paralysis or become unable to move until the paralysis is dispelled.

Because Skall’s a lich of advanced years and levels, he has three special abilities. *Augmented spellcasting* lets him cast double the normal number of 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-level spells for his experience level. He *animates dead* simply by touching a corpse, causing it to rise as a zombie or skeleton. Such creatures differ from normal specimens in that each has 2 HD and, when within 200 feet of Skall, PCs must turn them as liches.

Skall’s third lich power is most extraordinary. He can emit a flame of negative energy from his fingers, inflicting 3d10 points of freezing damage on anything it touches. As this *coldfire* manifests from the Negative Energy Plane, it harms creatures and objects normally immune to cold. The force also penetrates a magical item’s protection, if the item’s wielder fails a saving throw vs. death. Skall can produce *coldfire* as a bluish-green thrown flame (with a dagger’s range).

Alternately, he can place *coldfire* inside any

skull or skull half. Anyone touching the skull suffers 3d10 points of damage.

The effect lasts 30 days within a skull. (‘Course, a permanency spell could extend it indefinitely. – Ed.) *Dispel magic* extinguishes *coldfire*.

In addition to the special defenses of all liches, Skall regenerates 5 hit points per round – even if he’s been burned up and his ashes scattered. (For each 10-foot-square area of the scatter, he takes a month to regenerate himself. – Ed.) Destroying Skall’s phylactery neutralizes this defense, but that threat seems unlikely: He hides it in the Dead’s Negative Energy Plane citadel.

Most Dustmen know Skall’s walking the road to becoming one of the True Dead, but that he stays around out of a sense of duty. He feels compelled to enlighten as many berks as possible about the way of death, so they eventually might reach True Death. Meanwhile, he keeps striving to know everything but feel nothing. Those who harm or offend the factol tend to disappear – sometimes right away, sometimes a year or more after the fact. Did Skall arrange their advancement to the next stage of death, or was it simply their time? And who can predict what’ll offend a being virtually without emotion?

EVERYBODY REALLY BELONGS TO THE DUSTMEN —
BUT NOT EVERYONE KNOWS IT.
— FACTOL SKALL



◆ THE MORTUARY ◆

The streets around the Mortuary, home to Sigil's unclean, seem crowded with cheap taverns and boarding houses. Many of the area's poor earn a little extra jink by bringing corpses to the Dustmen. These Collectors, as they're called, get paid a pittance for each body they bring back; several small groups regularly patrol the Hive and Ditch, where people die in droves every day.

The Mortuary sits between Blackshade Lane and Ragpickers Square in a dismal part of the Hive. The whole area immediately around it feels somber and shadowy: perfect for the colorless Dustmen. The foreboding structure resembles a low, menacing dome, with cluster of windowless vaults jumbled around it. Spiky black buttresses radiate from its center. Though nearly 250 Dustmen can live there in reasonable comfort, the Mortuary normally houses only 50 to 200, making it one of the most sparsely populated faction headquarters offering housing at all. Many areas stand empty for hours at a time; however, the faction offices in a tower remain very busy during the day, and the sleeping Dead fill the dormitories at night.

The Mortuary holds quite a few portals – an important feature, since the Dustmen prepare corpses (through mummification, embalming, etc.) and dispatch them to cemeteries on other planes or send them to the Elemental Plane of Fire for cremation. Without the Dead, there'd be no room for the living in Sigil!

Bashers approaching the Mortuary for a funeral first spy an open-air monument or public memorial. For a fee, the Dustmen'll add the names of lost cutters to this Roll of the Dead. Folks have been filling the memorial with tiny carved names for centuries.

Passing through the front gate and climbing the main steps leads visitors to the Great Hall. Important guests or funeral parties are received here. *(The bodies themselves are delivered through the lesser gate at the back of the building. – Ed.)* This spotless hall's reserved for ceremonial use only. Five Dustmen stand guard here all day (only two at night) and also act as guides for any visitors with business elsewhere in the building.

A basher won't get far without noticing the hordes of undead roaming the Mortuary. Free-willed undead such as wights, wraiths, and more powerful specimens usually avoid public areas. Lesser undead like skeletons and zombies serve the faction as laborers. Blame them for the antiseptic smell of the place – seems the Dead like things surprisingly clean. Yet no amount of scrubbing can remove the dusty smell age has lent the Mortuary, nor its underlying odor of decay.

Funeral groups pass from the Great Hall through a central chamber (reserved for Dustman gatherings) to view the departed in Memorial Hall or an antechamber. The party then moves into one of the half-dozen or so inter-

ment chambers ringing the perimeter of the main floor. A chill rises from the black flagstones of these dim, quiet rooms. Portals here lead to prominent prime worlds and to sites in the neutral Outer Planes: Arcadia, Mechanus, Acheron, Limbo, Ysgard, and Pandemonium.

In addition to the guards in the Great Hall, six Dustmen stand duty in a guard room near a Dustmen-only area on the main floor. A records room here stores information on interments and faction membership. It opens onto a library, whose hundreds of books and scrolls concern undead, philosophies of death, burial practices, lists of grave sites, and necromantic magic. At the far end of the Mortuary (also accessible only to faction members) lie the kitchen, refectory, a common room, and Dustman dormitories (each with 1d20 Dead). Right upstairs are more dormitories and common rooms.

The Dead perform most of their work in the central portion of the upper floor. In one room they receive, inventory, and sort corpses before sending them to the adjacent

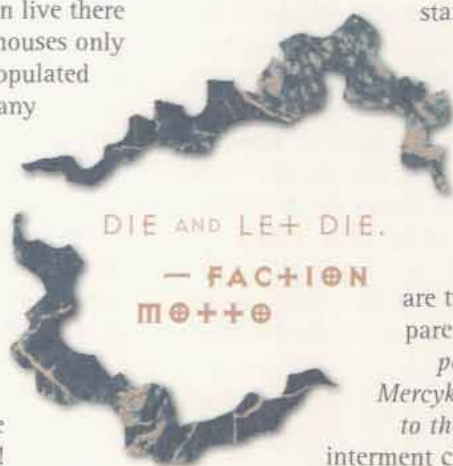
embalmer's chamber. Also nearby are two chambers where the Dead prepare bodies for burial. *(One contains a portal from the Prison; the efficient Mercykillers send dead prisoners straight to the Mortuary. – Ed.)* Several special interment chambers on this level hold portals to the Upper and Lower Planes.

In one wing lies a council chamber, where the faction's secretary conducts meetings. Dark paneling covers its walls, interrupted by a massive copper Dustman symbol. The table of deep mahogany dominating the chamber has a secret lever that opens a trap door to the faction records room below.

Also in this wing waits the faction armory, which can equip some 100 Dead. *(The faction can also equip members from its main armories in the Mortuary's catacombs, heavily guarded by undead. From there, a body can wander clear to the necropoli and crypts the Dead maintain beneath the Cage. The Mortuary's catacombs also are said to hide countless portals, especially to the realms of the powers of death. – Ed.)*

Adjoining the armory is Secretary Trevant's office. This lavishly appointed chamber brings to mind a coffin – its polished wood is accented by brass fixtures and soft fabric drapes. During the day, Komosahl Trevant – Skall's appointment secretary and second-in-command – works here with two high-level bodyguards. Trevant handles daily business and Sigil matters, allowing Skall time for long-range planning and faction meetings.

* The PLANESCAPE adventure *The Eternal Boundary* details the Mortuary more fully. – Ed.



KOMOSAH TREVANT

Male human planar

12th-level mage, Dustmen (factor)

Neutral evil

STR	11	INT	18	HP	39
DEX	15	WIS	17	AC	2
CON	14	CHA	16	THACO	17

EQUIPMENT: Bracers of defense (AC 2), ring of spell turning, wand of magic missiles, 10 beads of force.

SPELLS/LEVEL: 4/4/4/4/1.

SPECIAL: Trevant's spellbook holds most necromantic and divination spells, plus enchantments and alterations. He avoids illusions and evocations and has standard mage and faction abilities.

Trevant is a serious and scholarly mage of middle age who typically wears robes of rich black velvet and deep purple silk. While many Dustmen act cold and distant, Trevant seems relatively charismatic — at least on the surface. Underneath, he is hard and manipulative.

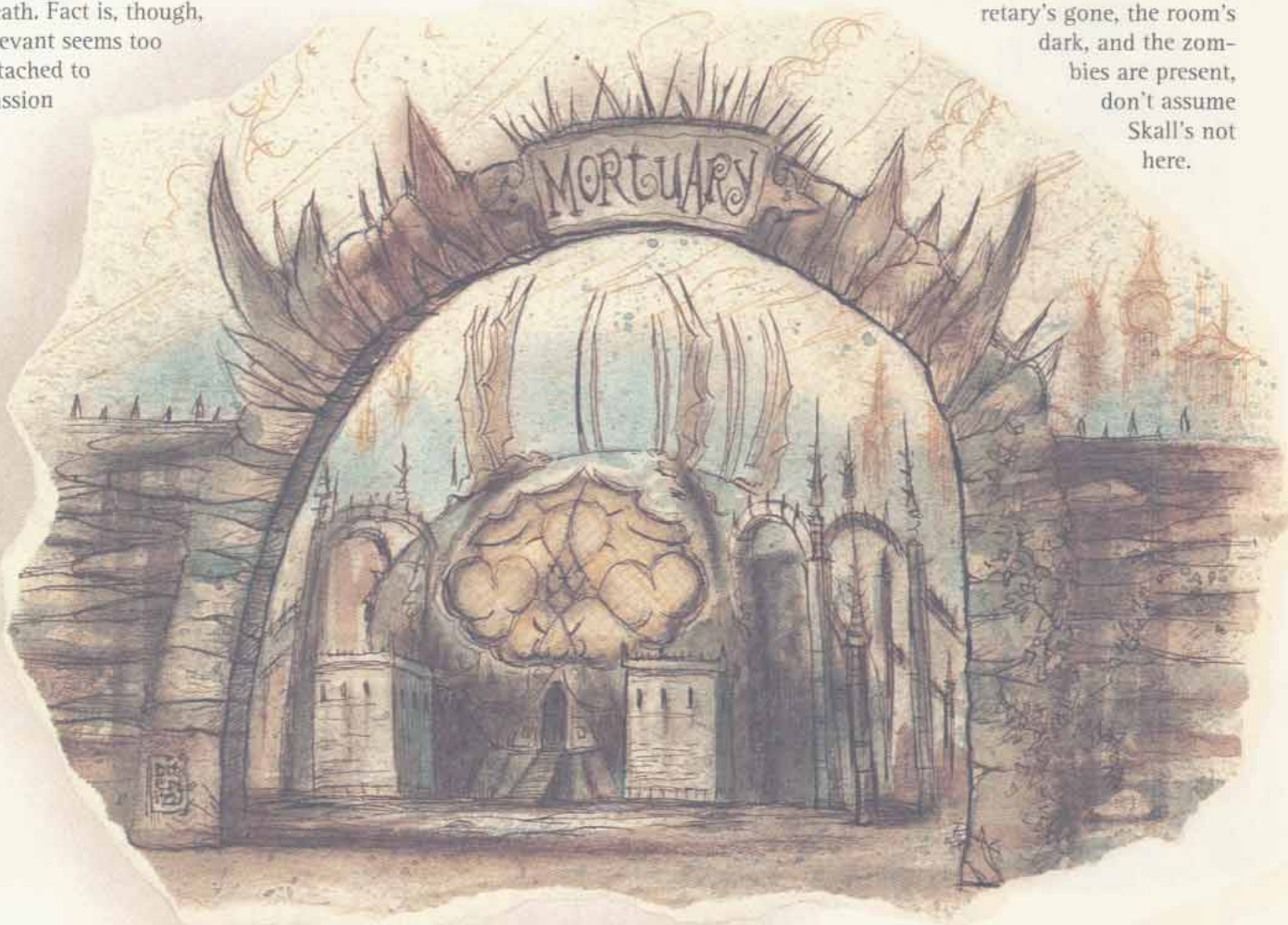
Skall hasn't had such a good second-in-command for centuries. Trevant knows Skall's a lich, and he can't quite keep himself from looking forward to the day the factol will initiate him into the next stage of death. Fact is, though, Trevant seems too attached to passion

to achieve this goal. Skall uses him for his administrative skills; letting the secretary handle details gives the factol time to contemplate his current stage of death.

Trevant doesn't mind his position; he takes things as they occur. Though he wants to achieve True Death eventually, he considers leading the faction a destined part of this stage of his existence. This Initiate of the First Circle (see "Dustman Membership," page 57) is favored to become factol if Skall steps down (not likely). He's always fair to Dustmen — and harsh to the faction's foes. *(Trevant considers crossing the Dead a sign that a sod's reached the end of his current stage of death, so he'll help an antagonist along to the next one. — Ed.)*

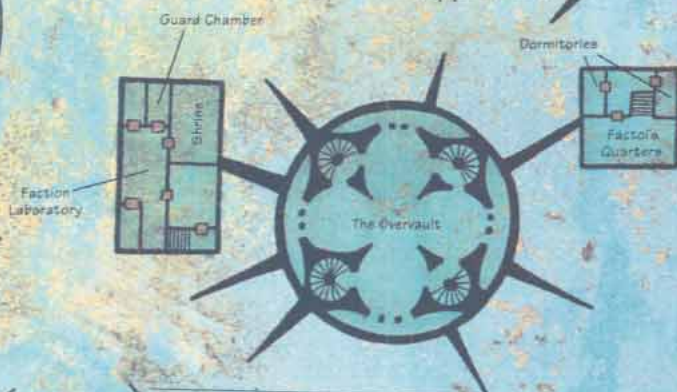
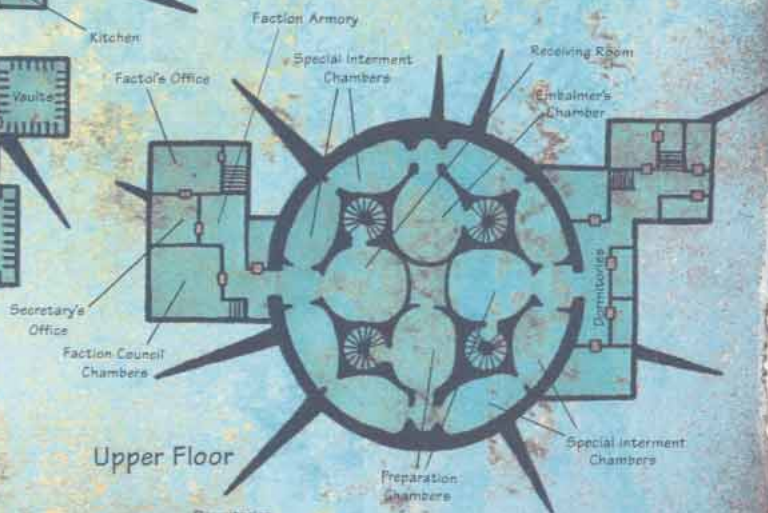
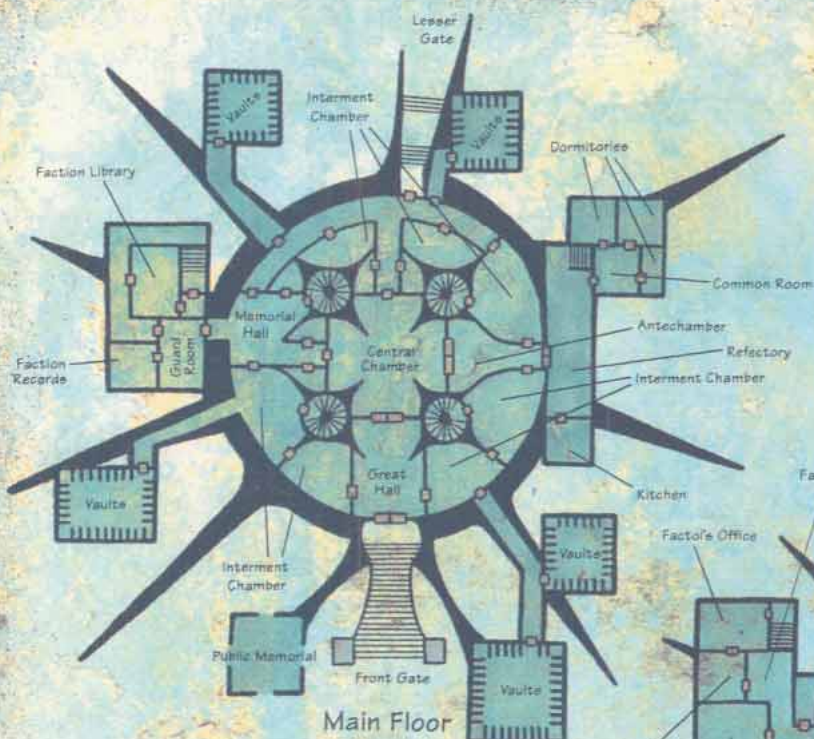
Next to Trevant's office sits the factol's office. A desk dominates the room: a block of what looks like marble, with red veins running through it. They seem to pulse, as if blood were pumping through them. Shelves lining the walls hold rare art, potions, and scrolls, and conceal secret safes that hide rare treasures. A body can find Factol Skall here about 25% of the time. He spends much of the rest of his hours at the Dustmen's citadel on the Negative Energy Plane; a portal leads there from the eastern closet here. While the factol's absent, six ju-ju zombies guard the room. At night, after Trevant leaves, *symbols of fear* guard all the office's entrances.

However, just because the secretary's gone, the room's dark, and the zombies are present, don't assume Skall's not here.



THE MORTUARY •

0 80 160
Feet



300 feet

150 feet

The top level of the Mortuary, the Overvault, features a huge chamber just beneath the structure's dome. From the narrow galleries along its perimeter, portals lead to the Elemental Planes. The factol's austere quarters on this level hold some of his personal goods. While the factol doesn't need to sleep, he keeps a bed here for appearances. The room seems impervious to unwanted visitors, with its *wizard locked* door graced with a *symbol of fear*, its windows barred by *walls of force* and warded with *symbols of hopelessness*, and its walls and floors constructed with special mortar to prevent the passage of phased or ethereal creatures. Further, the factol's glabrezu familiar (Pl/♂ tanar'ri/10 HD/Dustmen/CE) usually stays in Skall's quarters.

A laboratory across the Overvault is reserved for Dead wizards. The Dustmen store normal alchemical equipment here, as well as spell components and potion ingredients. Curious bashers also will find a few wizards and a handful of ju-ju zombie guards in the lab. A glowing doorway graces one stone wall of an Overvault guard room: a permanent portal to the Outlands town of Xaos. (*On occasion, the Dustmen use this portal to smuggle people out of the city at the behest of the factol.* — Ed.) Six Dead on guard here make sure only faction members use the portal. Priests of the Dead visit a shrine next to this guard chamber for their devotions to gods of death and related subjects. An altar of black stone stands in the shrine's center, purple and black tapestries decorate the walls, and braziers smolder in the corners. Priests conduct rites regularly, day and night. The High Priestess of the Dustmen, Oridi Malefin, lingers here when not busy with various interments.

ORIDI MALEFIN

Female tiefling planar
18th-level cleric of Death, Dustmen (faction)
Neutral

STR	15	INT	16	HP	72
DEX	11	WIS	18	AC	5
CON	16	CHA	13	THACO	10

EQUIPMENT: *Ring of chameleon power, pearl of wisdom, staff of the serpent, phylactery of long years, girdle of fire giant strength, chain mail armor.*

SPELLS/LEVEL: 10/10/9/9/6/4/2

SPECIAL: Oridi accesses priest spells from all spheres and has standard tiefling, cleric, and faction abilities.

Dusky-skinned Oridi has an extra eye in the center of her forehead and a long, scaled tail. Her gaunt face looks fairly old, but comes nowhere near reflecting her two centuries of life. Once, Oridi may have worshiped one of the death deities. However, long ago she became a channel for the force those powers represent. Of all the Dustmen a basher

might meet outside the Negative Energy Plane, she stands closest to True Death.

Faction members see the high priestess performing regular rituals for the Dustmen and wandering the halls. She appears more dead than many of the undead around her. If a body can get her attention — only a Dustman has a chance — Oridi might share her thoughts on necromancy, burial procedures, and the nature of death. She's spent many decades at this particular stage, thanks to her *phylactery of long years*, because she felt it should be her last before True Death. She accepts that she'll reach this final goal in another decade or two.

A Dustman experiencing a crisis of belief usually seeks Oridi's counsel. 'Course, she may ignore the sod. Then again, she might turn and explain things, in a slow voice that resembles a cold, moaning wind. Talking to Oridi helps a Dustman understand the way of the Dead — though it sends chills up his spine at the same time.

SAFE HOUSES. Dustmen consider graveyards, catacombs, and mausoleums places of refuge. The Dead enter such sites without fear of their undead guardians, who will attack any pursuers. (*See "Dustman Membership," page 57.* — Ed.) Many faction members gather at taverns like the White Casket in the Lower Ward and the Speckled Rat, where they sign "the Contract" with sods desperate for jink: The Dustman pays a gold or two for ownership of the poor Cager's body — after the sod dies, of course.



◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

Life among the Dead — interesting phrase, ain't it? Though Dustman characters hear a lot of cracks about their faction's name, they really don't care one way or the other about nicknames. After all, they've supposedly shucked off all emotion. So they don't mind being called the Dead, or Dusters or even Dusties (the last not used often, and never within earshot). One story going around the Cage, though, tells of an odd prime who thought herself funny calling them the "Dustbunnies." She stopped the morning she woke up next to a zombie. (*Folks say the zombie had on rabbit ears, but it's tough to credit the Dead with such a sense of humor.* — Ed.)

ROLE-PLAYING THE DUSTMEN

What's a body to do among the Dead? Depends on a few things, like race, profession, and ethical inclination. Yet despite the differences among the faction's various alignments, classes, and races, Dustmen hang together. They all respect death and seek knowledge. Disputes in the faction seldom last long — 'cept for one.

See, some Dustmen hope for a return to Life. These so-called Hopeful agree with the Dead's primary philosophy: Everyone exists in a multiverse of death. The celebration of Life occurs only in a universe that bashers on this side of the fence can't find. The Hopeful, stuck on the wrong side, reach for the passionless state of True Death because just beyond it lies the reward: Life. Other Dead consider the Hopeful view foolish and see the group as just a quiet splinter sect. A return to Life might come in time. If not, who cares?

RACE: Most Dead are humans. Some factions say that's because only humans are gullible enough to follow Dustman beliefs, but that doesn't explain the minority of nonhuman faction members from other short-lived species. Seems folks with short life spans tend to sympathize with the Dustman philosophy; they see death more than others do, so they feel closer to it.

Most other prime races seem too connected to life to consider the Dead philosophy. For instance, it's a rare thing to see a Dustman elf, since elves're a long-lived and generally life-loving bunch. A prime elf who joins

men. However, bariaur prove too carefree, outgoing, and happy for this faction. A bariaur has to get awfully depressed to even consider joining the Dead, and usually that depression keeps him out, as such an emotional tendency would make him unsuitable.

CLASS: Many wizards, as scholarly, intellectual types, favor the introspection of the Dustmen. This quality also attracts clerics, though the ones who actually join have devoted themselves mainly to gods of death. Dustmen clerics all eventually hit the blinds, however: Religious devotion requires some amount of passion, yet progressing among the Dead means letting go of that passion. Clerics (like Oridi) slowly become less devoted to specific gods and more devout to Death as a force.

The Dead attract few rogues or warriors, since these professions encourage flamboyance and emotion. The infrequent Dustman warrior, a guardian rather than a crusader, becomes a strong, implacable foe. Though the Dead thief loses the passion for stealing, he still can skulk with the best of 'em. The unusual Dustman bard — in demand at funerals — devotes himself to odes and dirges that honor death rather than celebrate life, and he analyzes music and lyric, instead of enjoying it.

Now, some claim druids don't "belong" in the Dustmen any more than bards, yet a surprising number of them do join. See, druids revere nature and see death as a natural progression from life. All life ends in death, right? Once a druid looks at things this way, he's ready to accept all "life" as merely a stage of death.

ALIGNMENT: Druids also lean toward Dustman views 'cause they don't get distracted working toward good or evil, law or chaos. This neutral position proves common among the Dustmen. Fact is, the longer a body stays in the Dead, the more

his alignment shifts toward true neutral, and only neutral characters can achieve True Death. Chaotics may try to play Dead for a while, but any group whose philosophy centers on "we" (as in "we are all dead") can't attract chaotic folks long. Revering death ain't popular with good people, for that matter.

Still, a few Dustmen remain chaotic, or good, or both. A chaotic Dead believes that each person must find a separate path to True Death. And, as thinking everyone is dead doesn't exactly conflict with good, a good Dustman guides himself and others patiently along the path to the next stage of existence. The Dead's belief in an orderly pattern to the multiverse attracts many who favor law, but the group's apparent lack of respect for "life" attracts the evil. Well-intentioned Dustmen want their neighbors to advance in death — but most folks believe it evil to hope for someone's demise. Go figure.



I D@N@+ S+RIVE F@R +HE IDEAL S+@+E,
F@R +@ S+RIVE IS +@ FAIL AU+@M@+ICALLY.
S+ILL, I WILL N@+ S@@N ADVANCE
+@ TRUE DE@+H.
F@R MY SENSE @F DU+Y KEEPS ME
@+ +HIS LEVEL.

— F@C+@L SK@LL



the Dead has come to embrace death and considers his connection with nature and life a disadvantage, one that hinders him from moving forward to the next stage of existence.

The severe githzerai might seem naturals for the Dustmen, but they have a lot of passions to overcome, like their hatred for the githyanki. Tieflings and planar half-elves, both "misplaced people," often accept the way of the Dust-

◆ DUSTMAN MEMBERSHIP ◆

Most Dustmen are just namers, folks who join the Dead by promising before witnesses to serve the faction and declaring their knowledge that they, like all in the multiverse, have left Life behind. They try to leave their passions behind as well, and succeed in varying degrees. However, the majority of 'em never approach True Death. Namers work as Collectors and Mortuary aides.

Those with promise (and of at least 4th level) become factotums, whom fellow Dustmen call *Initiates*. The lowest-ranking factotums are Initiates of the Fifth Circle. They serve guard duty, perform missions on assignment, and escort visitors and funeral parties. For induction into the Fifth Circle, prospective factotums attend their own funerals, detaching themselves from worldly possessions and making peace with family and friends. Factotums who perform well go through a new initiation to gain the Fourth Circle, then presumably another to proceed straight from Fourth to First. The chant has little to say about these secret ceremonies.

The First Circle holds the factol and his factors, and cutters like Trevant advanced there directly from the Fourth Circle. So what about the Third and Second Circles? No one knows, not even other Initiates. (*Except, presumably, those of the First Circle. – Ed.*) The chant around the Mortuary says the Third Circle consists of lesser free-willed undead, like ghastrs, wights, and wraiths; liches, spectres, and vampires supposedly make up the Second. One thing's sure: No living basher can see through this dark.

FACTION ABILITIES: Even namers reap the benefits of the Dead Truce, which prevents walking dead from harming Dustmen. All faction members also have only a 50% chance of resurrection survival. (*A benefit or a drawback, depending on one's point of view. – Ed.*) Factotums who advance to the Fourth Circle learn a dangerous dark: The Dead Truce lets Dustmen command undead as neutral priests can. Initiates of the Fourth Circle gain the power of 1st-level priests for purposes of commanding undead and improve whenever they gain a level. Priests of this circle enjoy +4 bonuses on all attempts to command undead.

When on a faction mission, an Initiate from the Fourth or First Circles can request help from a group of undead (whose total Hit Dice equal no more than twice his own level). 'Course, the Initiate first must convince his superiors he needs the help, then successfully command undead and reward them for their service. The DM determines undead availability and pay scale, but characters can't attempt to muster undead allies from the faction more than once per adventure. Clever Dustmen don't abuse this pact of service or let it hit the chant – a lot of bashers would inflict their anger on the faction as a whole if they saw droves of undead marching the streets. Dustmen guilty of such abuse might find they've suddenly joined the walking dead themselves.

◆ THE CHANT ◆

The Dead don't have a lot of plans these days. Never did. A body can bet they'll continue their Mortuary duties and work to reach True Death. And they will exist. Their only real concern surrounds a brand-new Dead chant.

Now, maybe folks're just rattling their bone-boxes 'cause they like the noise, but rumors in the ranks whisper of "Skall's Master Plan." Story goes, Skall wants to convert everyone, everywhere, to his way of thinking. Seems he's discovered that for anyone to reach True Death, *everyone* has to reach True Death – not a simple matter for bashers who consider themselves alive.

What's the easiest way to get a body to accept that he's dead? Kill him. So Skall says, and he's reportedly collecting bodies out in the Dustman citadel on the Negative Energy Plane: hundreds of free-willed undead, as well as thousands of lesser undead and a like number of corpses waiting to come back to serve their faction. Supposedly, the body of *every Dustman ever* ('cept those that got disintegrated or were already made undead) waits out at the black citadel for Skall's call.

◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

The Dead face an affliction called the Apathy. Sure, they try to lose their passions, but some sods succeed *too* well. They eliminate their passions to the point where they no longer care about even the most basic of tasks, like eating. Some Dustmen call this state False Death, as its emptiness resembles later stages of death, and a sod does stop advancing. Thing is, he's reached a dead end – pardon the phrase – so he'll never find True Death.

A few of the Apathetic do come around again, after a talk with High Priestess Oridi, for example, but others fall into despair and join the Bleakers. A lot just wither away and die, too. That's not exactly advancing toward True Death, but at least it's a change of scenery.

Another corner of the dark concerns Factol Skall. 'Course, Initiates already know he can raise corpses as zombies and skeletons with just a touch. But, he also can create free-willed undead, like wights, through a ceremony only he knows. The factol uses this secret lich ability to create the members of the Third Circle. He invites promising Fourth Circle Initiates to private conferences to "discuss their advancement." After the ceremony, members of the Third Circle continue to grow more powerful, just like a normal cutter gains experience and power. Skall tells 'em to hide their natures and their true rank. So, what looks like a normal Dustman (though that might stretch the use of the term) of the Fourth Circle could be one of the walking dead! Outside the First Circle, no one knows the dark of it.

THE FATED

I turned 57 this past week, though I'll admit I look older than my years. After all, I've done enough to fill two lifetimes. But I'm happy to say my sword arm's as strong as ever – well, perhaps just a shade slower. And my back's still strong and straight, despite some prime sod's sketches of me. He got the beard and mustache, but he sure didn't get the hair right – missed my silver tail *and* the cornugon hide I wrap it in.

But it ain't my looks I want to talk about. I've got plans for the City of Doors. So don't go spreading the dark I'm about to tell you, and I won't come looking for you. Fair enough?

I've been in Sigil just a year now. But I'm good at figuring the ins and outs of things, and it wasn't long after I arrived that I saw the Fated was in need of a new factol. Oh, they had one, all right. Emma

Oakwright was her name – a dwarf getting a little long in the tooth. I wrangled an interview with her, told her a few

things I thought she ought to know, and

mentioned that she should appoint

me to be her replacement when she stepped down

the next week. Naturally, she did just that.

So now I'm a factol. But my background as a noble still makes berks call me "the Duke," and I don't mind it one bit – it reminds me of my roots on Toril. 'Course, a few Takers objected to my reciting the oath of office just minutes after I'd recited the oath of initiation. But they couldn't stop me; nobody has yet. I *always* get my way. I've yet to meet the berk who could stand up to me. Though I will admit, some short time ago, I did meet one blood – Alisohn Nilesia, the young factol of the Mercykillers. I'm not sure what to make of that one.

Erin Darkflame Montgomery interests me, too. She's a beauty, all right, though she leaves me cold. A force to be reckoned with – and a wealthy one at that. Her Sensates own sodding near all the Cage, but I've got a plan for that. See, the Fated's in charge of collecting taxes, and I think it's high time we raised the rates to something a little more . . . *fair*. And the best part is it's as easy as getting fleeced in the Bazaar. Sifting through our records provides all the dirt I need; one missed loan installment, one mislaid tax statement, and I've got 'em.

That's not just me rattling my bone-box, either – the Fated has a tradition of getting what it wants via all sorts of tidy little loopholes. It's no dark that the faction foreclosed on a college for being a week late with its mortgage – that's how the Hall of Records became our headquarters. Oh, the whining sods at the school blamed us for moving up the due date a bit, but whether we did or not ain't the issue.

They call members of the Fated "the Takers" and "the Heartless." Well, I took, and my faction applauded. The few that sniveled got a stiff talking to – and a hefty fine. I don't tolerate groaners, and I'll be hanged if I mollycoddle anyone in *my* faction. It's only because I know *exactly* what I want that makes everything I do seem magnified to the wishy-washy masses. I tell you, knowing what you want – and then going after it – is the secret to winning the multiverse.

I know it, and now you do, too. So go ahead and take it; it's all there for the asking . . . or the demanding.

– Factol Rowan Darkwood

IF TAKERS
ARE SO KEEN
ON PAYING THEIR
DUES IN LIFE,
WHY DO THEY HAGGLE
ON THE PRICE?
— THE EDITOR



YOU LUCKY BERKS —
I WISH I COULD SIT
AND LISTEN TO ME
ALL DAY.

— DUKE DARKWOOD.
ADDRESSING THE HALL OF SPEAKERS

THE HEARTLESS ◆ OF SIGIL ◆

Ask a body in Sigil which he'd rather do, arm-wrestle a marilith or suffer a visit from one of the Fated. Nine berks out of ten'll pick the fiend. That's what folks in the Cage think of the Fated — they exhibit a strange combination of hatred, fear, and respect. And, keeping up with the multiverse's Rule of Threes, there're three reasons for this attitude.

TAX ME ALL YΘU LIKE, TAKER —
I'VE S+ILL GΘ+ MY DIGNITY!

— SURLIBΘN

+THE WEAVER



First and foremost, folks are peery about the faction's philosophy: Take what you can, and to the pits with the rest. The Fated believe that a body can stake a claim to the multiverse by simply knowing what he wants, figuring out how to get it, and being strong enough to hold onto it. Faction members know how to take care of themselves. Most folks can't help but respect such self-sufficiency, but they also can't help being afraid of it. After all, a berk's never sure just what dangerous knowledge and powerful abilities a Taker's got under his hat.

The second and third reasons stem from the Fated's responsibilities in the smooth running of the Cage. The faction controls the Hall of Records, the administrative center of Sigil where folks go to register and look up deeds, births, deaths, and all business transactions — for a pretty fee, of course. And the Fated collect all taxes for the City of Doors, often with a bit too much gusto for the average berk. Naturally, there's a tax on everything: real estate, income, goods, establishments, intangibles, eyesores (plenty of fights break out in the Hall of Speakers over just what constitutes an eyesore in Sigil), and even crowds (especially the poor masses in the Hive, who can't pay — go figure). These jobs earn the faction a modicum of respect, tainted by fear — a berk doesn't dare treat a Taker badly or he might find himself owing 50,000 gp in "back taxes" — but it also generates a good deal of hatred.

The Takers've been around Sigil for a while; there's always been a need for record keepers and tax collectors in the City of Doors. But before Duke Darkwood stepped in and turned everything on its head, the faction'd settled into a behind-the-scenes approach to life and politics in Sigil. They kept to themselves, manipulating others with information and taxation to get what they needed. And re-

gardless of the rise and fall of other factions, the numbers of the Fated remain relatively stable — currently, at about 34,000 members.

There isn't much else known about the history of the Heartless, though more's said to be scrawled in *The Secret History of Sigil*. Kept and maintained by each factol since the Fated's inception, these mysterious volumes record, in minute detail, all the secrets and sensitive information gleaned by the Takers throughout Sigil. Many times, the dark makes little sense to the average namer, but to the faction's *diggers* (high-ups who carefully analyze the data and piece together secrets), there's no such thing as useless information — just information that might take a while to become useful.

Duke Darkwood's been factol for less than a year, but his arrogant, demanding attitude already has infected quite a number of Takers. He's set up offices in each of Sigil's six wards as tax-collecting bases and now sends his Takers out to pull in city taxes twice a month instead of just once. Although the taxes collected are half the usual amount, the collection fee is the same, which, of course, doubles the Fated's jink. 'Course, other factions keep a close eye on the tax rates, and major increases in taxes have to be put to the vote in the Hall of Speakers. Still, this past year's seen more than its share of one group or another standing before the Guvners to lodge complaints about the Fated.

Darkwood makes a point of finding out all he can about the complainers. The Duke's got about two dozen high-ups known as diggers operating as his factors, his right-hand bloods. Most are known only to the Duke, which tends to make a sod in the Cage nervous — the berk he's sharing the dark with in a pub might be a digger. And diggers are known to scour the streets of the Cage and the vaults of the Hall for information to help Darkwood bully or bribe his opponents.

One digger's far too flamboyant to fit the secretive mold, though — the astral deva Ziporath (Pl/δ deva/HD 12/Fated/NG). He fell from celestial goodness nearly a century ago, and he's devoted himself to the Fated ever since. He's a colorful character, often found roaming Sigil, probing cutters for information but revealing none himself. His roguish charm and extremely high Charisma (19) often ensure success, particularly among females.

Darkwood's aware

of who's likely to be in his corner. The Fated get along well with the Free League, for the Indeps' philosophy of "Leave me alone" is similar to the Takers' own "Every berk for

DIGNITY? HMMMM...

— +THE TAKER.
GETTING AN IDEA FOR
A NEW +AX



himself" attitude. Fact is, the Free League and the Fated often work together, though on a strictly monetary basis — one namer might hire on as a mercenary for the other faction, for example. The Duke's recently learned that a few Hardheads're taking it upon themselves to harass the Indeps, and he's trying to devise a way of helping the Free League — provided the Indeps can offer something in return. And if it ever came down to war, the Mercykillers'd be sure to side with the Harmonium. The Red Death like the Fated's policy of a body being responsible for his own actions — with no whining about being wronged — but they just can't overlook the Takers' lack of faith in law or justice.

The Takers have a number of pubs and kips throughout Sigil that serve as safe havens for faction members, including the Tear of the Barghest, the Iron Heart, and Heshter's Arms, all found in the orderly Clerk's Ward. Each spot's got a guarded basement reserved for the Fated's sole use; non-Takers aren't admitted without approval from at least three faction members.

◆ FAC+ΘL ◆ ROWAN DARKWOOD ◆

Male human prime

Dual-class 19th-level ranger/20th-level priest of Heimdall,
Fated (factol)

Chaotic good

STR	20	INT	17	HP	104
DEX	17	WIS	20	AC	-3
CON	20	CHA	18	THACO	2

EQUIPMENT: *Sword +2, giant slayer; ring of protection +5 (not effective with armor); ring of teleportation; splint mail +3; portable hole; red ioun stone (water breathing); brooch of shielding; potions of hill giant control and growth.*

SPELLS/LEVEL: 11/11/10/11/7/5/2.

SPECIAL: Darkwood's immune to the following spells: *cause fear, charm person, command, forget, friends, hold person, hypnotism, ray of enfeeblement, and scare*. He has access to the spell spheres of all, combat, divination, guardian, protection, summoning, and sun. His power grants him the ability to see up to 100 yards, day or night, and hear any sound within 500 yards. In addition to standard ranger abilities, he has animal empathy with -6 to the saving throw and can hide in shadows and move silently at 95% (in studded leather or less, halved in nonwoodlands). Darkwood's species enemy is giants. Finally, he has standard faction abilities.

Most who meet the Duke in the flesh come away more impressed than they might've expected. The Duke's 6-foot-4-inch frame is lean but muscular — he looks as quick as a

hellcat and just as tough to boot. His tanned, craggy face, hands, and arms are marked with permanent scars, a life-long reminder of his run-in with a lieutenant of Baator's Lords of the Nine. Fact is, one of the facial scars went a bit too deep, leaving him blind in his right eye.

The third son of a trivial noble on Oerth (*the Duke likes to claim Toril as his homeworld — Ed.*), Darkwood had dim prospects for succession and took to adventuring. He became a ranger and wandered his homeworld for quite a number of years, doing well enough to set up a small fiefdom. He took a wife named Merilyn, who bore him two sons, Rory and Reuel. The pattern of his life seemed set — were it not for a minstrel who left a deck of battered cards at Darkwood's manor. Not knowing they were magical, the Duke let his children play with the cards. Unfortunately, the boys summoned a fiend — a cornugon named Amaggel — who tried to claim them as slaves. Darkwood struck a bargain with Amaggel, who agreed to play a single game of cards. If Darkwood won, the children would go free; if Amaggel won, Darkwood would willingly return to Baator as a slave. 'Course, the fiend cheated, but Darkwood somehow bested him at his own trick, winning the game by a single point.

Amaggel knew he'd been peeled. Furious but bound by his word, he freed Rory and Reuel, but teleported Darkwood to Baator for a lifetime of unimaginable punishments. The Duke spent the next decade there with nothing but a desire to live that not even the cornugon's barbed whips could quell. Over time, Amaggel developed a grudging respect for the human whose spirit he couldn't break, and he freed the Duke. Battered and nearly broken, Darkwood eventually found his way out of Baator and back to Oerth. There he found that Merilyn had remarried and his sons were grown; with no life left for him there, the Duke returned to the planes. He became a priest of Heimdall, eventually healing body and spirit, though he still bears the scars of his captivity.

About a year ago he decided to make the City of Doors his home; since then, he's not only joined the ranks of the Fated but vaulted into the position of factol. (*And not without a bit of cross-trading, some say. — Ed.*) But Duke Darkwood's the very image of a self-made man, from his homespun clothes to his brusque, no-nonsense attitude in the Hall of Speakers. He hasn't the charm and persuasive abilities of his nemesis, Factol Erin Montgomery of the Sensates, but he's as stubborn as a goristro with prey in its mouth. When the Duke takes the floor at the Hall of Speakers, a weary groan usually flutters across the room. But he's no fool; Darkwood *knows* just how his personality grates on the nerves. He prides himself on being ruthlessly efficient, and he doesn't have time for the social niceties and political courtships other factols engage in. He gets what he wants, when he wants it, and the *way* he wants it. And what he wants now is to conquer the Cage.



◆ THE HALL OF RECORDS ◆

Foreclosed upon for a debt exactly one week late in payment, Bigby's College of Academic Arts was converted into the Hall of Records, a campus of six buildings, many centuries ago. A seventh building — a library — was sold off by the Takers at a hefty profit, which more than paid for the renovation of the remaining six. 'Course, being as sharp as they were, the Takers sold only the *building*, not the books, scrolls, and other academic treasures. Those materials were secreted in underground archives, to be used as the basis of a new research project: *The Secret History of Sigil*. Over the centuries, subsequent factols've continued to hide rare and valuable tomes in the secret vaults. Today, the underground complex takes up as large an area as the structures above; several buildings may even collapse, due to faulty excavation and poor shoring over the years.

The remaining six buildings were formerly used as a food hall, two student dormitories, a faculty dormitory, a huge academic hall, and a recreational hall. For the most part, a number of these buildings still retain their original functions. For instance, in the food hall, now just called the Faction Hall, the Fated and their comrades can get a good meal — and even a small room — at a reasonable price. Berks without jink can work for their supper or board, provided they make their arrangements in advance.

One of the student dormitories houses members of the Fated's "army." Duke Darkwood has gradually increased the number of faction members stationed inside the Faction Dormitory; it now holds 2,500 Takers. Ostensibly, the troops are needed to help maintain the grounds and move the bulk of the archives, but some folks remain suspicious.

The second student dormitory and the faculty dormitory were converted into smaller records halls. One's the Hall of Property Records, where a body can learn who owns what in all of Sigil — if he cares to look. 'Course, *finding* the right record is a tricky thing, and the Fated charge a good fee for the task (as well as note who *wanted* the information). And the Hall of Census Records tries to keep up with the fluctuating population of the Cage. The Fated do a decent job of recording births, but deaths are another thing — mostly because the Dustmen don't always bother to report the names of the deaders they collect. Fact is, the two factions often find themselves nearly coming to blows over the issue.

The five-story recreational hall, renamed the Rowan Academy of Training, is the site of challenges for position among the Takers. Twice a week, in the first-floor auditorium, contests of combat, magic, wit, or some other skill take place. If a low-ranked namer wants to move up, he finds a factotum who's got the job he wants and issues a challenge. (*Some namers prefer to "convince" the factotum to retire or encourage him to go after someone else's position; some stubborn factotums disappear entirely.* — Ed.) As this is a major source of entertainment in Sigil, the Fated naturally charge admission to all onlookers — and

contestants as well. The higher the position desired, the greater the fee.

When it isn't being used for challenges, the hall's devoted to recreation of a sort far more like drill instruction. Per the factol's orders and under the guidance of Rayl Whitespoon (PI/♀ githzerai/F4,W6/Fated/CN), faction members learn the niceties of warfare, via both magic and weaponry. Whitespoon, though devoted to herself, respects Duke Darkwood's prowess and is willing to follow him — at least, until a better prospect turns up. Some 3,000 faction members are currently in training in the Academy.

Also found inside the Academy is a permanent portal to Himinborg — a burg in the first layer of Ysgard where the Duke's power, Heimdall, is sometimes found. There's a fair amount of back-and-forth passage between Himinborg and Sigil, for not only do the Fated often go to Ysgard for recreation, but many of the inhabitants of that plane like to watch (and sometimes partake in) the Academy's challenges and training sessions.

The final building, for which the whole campus is named, is the Hall of Records — a monstrous tower thirty stories high. Here are found all the moneylending records, tax rolls, debtors' defaults, foreign bills of credit, and the like — *anything* dealing with jink. Duke Darkwood has close to 3,000 faction members working in the Hall, all devoted to finding still more tidbits of information usable in his quest to take over Sigil.

When the diggers uncover a secret worthy of reporting, they bring it to the first floor, where it's sent up through magical tubes to the next floor and sorted. Depending on the nature of the information, it might get sent up to higher floors, until the most sensitive dark of all finally reaches the top floor. (*Plenty of other folks in the Cage have learned to bring bits of useful information to the Hall, where they usually get a gold piece or two in exchange.* — Ed.) Since privileged information makes its way through the Hall, guards are posted prominently throughout the building; likewise, crystal balls for scrying are located in key positions, making guard duty less obvious and more effective.

Underneath the Hall of Records lies the main part of the archives (though they've sprawled out over the years beneath nearly all of the buildings). A staff of 4,000 tries to glean knowledge from the ancient scrolls or put together lists of cross-referenced information on possible threats to Darkwood. The only visitors allowed in the archives are other faction members with written permission from the Duke himself. During his year as factol, Darkwood's admitted only 37 guests.

One of the more noted historians at the Hall of Records is a frost giant named Brigitte Gunnarsmoon (PI/♀ frost giant/HD 14/Fated/CN); she's usually too busy to meet with every cutter off the street, but sometimes she takes an interest in an intriguing request and personally attends to a visitor's needs. The blood to go to when all else fails, though, is Aram Oakwright, known to be the Duke's right hand at the Hall.

ARAM OAKWRIGHT

Male dwarf planar

4th-level fighter, Fated (factotum)

Chaotic neutral

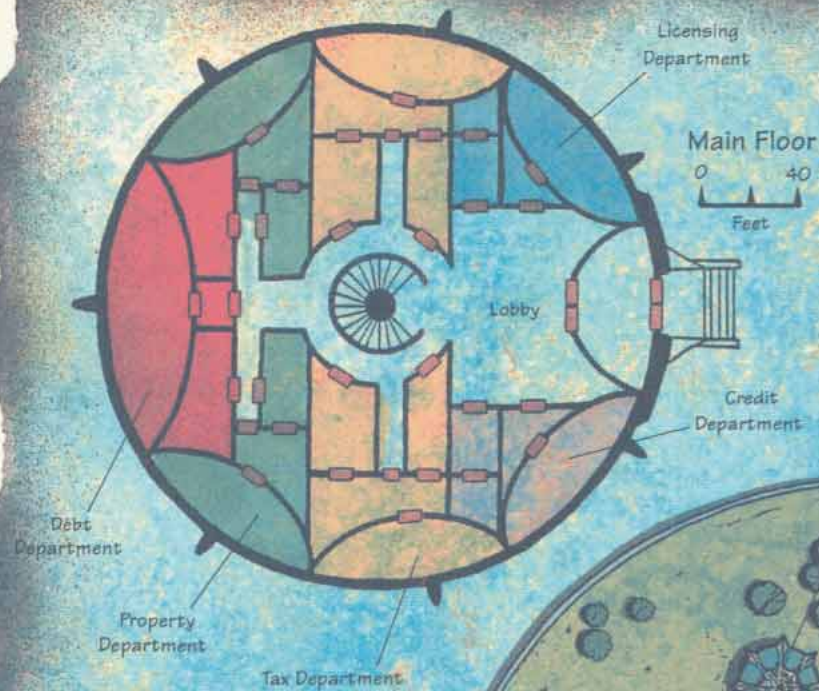
STR	15	INT	10	HP	32
DEX	12	WIS	9	AC	7
CON	14	CHA	8	THACO	17

EQUIPMENT: Studded leather armor, arbalest (heavy cross-bow) with 20 specialty quarrels (1d4+4 damage against creatures S-M, 1d6+4 against L or larger), early-model arquebus (backfires on 1-4, inflicts 1d10 points of damage [if a 10 is rolled, roll again for additional damage; continue rolling and adding if more 10s are rolled]).

SPECIAL: Oakwright has standard fighter, dwarf, and faction abilities. His Constitution grants him a +4 bonus to saving throws against magical attacks and poison.



THE HALL OF RECORDS



As the chief steward of the Hall of Records, Oakwright's always somewhere in the building, striding hastily with several clerks trailing after him. He's responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Hall. But he also happily accepts any offers for a drink after hours at a nearby pub called the Iron Spittle. Staffed by berks who owe him a favor or two, it's one of the few places in Sigil that Oakwright feels safe from peery eyes.

The dwarf's got reason to worry — and carry heavy weaponry. He supplements his income by acting as a "consultant" to sods troubled by certain sensitive information. For 5,000 gold pieces, he'll arrange to have a particular record found, lost, or altered. But he doesn't do it just for the jink. Oakwright's a poor relation of the former factol, Emma Oakwright, and he expected to fill her shoes when she stepped down. Now, the dwarf's biding his time with Darkwood, watching him closely, and secretly doing whatever he can to foster the faction's suspicions and distrust of the Duke.

◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

Many folks in Sigil think the Fated's just a bunch of cross-trading berks looking to cheat a sod out of his last copper piece. But the Fated's actually an ideal faction for primes new to the Cage, many of whom have spent their lives on the Prime Material Plane amassing jink and power. It's also a good choice for experienced cutters, those who've had a chance to explore a bit of the multiverse and develop a sense of how they'd like to shape their destinies.

ROLE-PLAYING THE TAKERS

Most adventurers find it easy to translate their possessive attitudes about treasure toward the multiverse as a whole. But as a Taker gains knowledge and experience, he should want to set his goals higher than a coin in his palm and a crown on his head. Some of the more important things in life *can't* be taken at the point of a sword — for example, happiness, respect, and friendship.

All that matters is that a Taker goes after whatever it is he seeks with unwavering determination. Dealt a bad hand by fate? Don't waste time crying in your ale about how unfair the multiverse is — on the contrary, it's as fair as could be. Absolutely *everything's* out there, just waiting to be claimed by those with the strength to take it and the will to hold it. That might sound ruthless, but it doesn't mean that a Taker automatically grabs everything he can get his hands on. There's no law that says he must claim the pit fiend's share of treasure or peel his companions out of their valuables. 'Course, if that's what he *wants* from life, fine — though a greedy berk might get himself killed.

In party disputes, a Taker throws in with whichever side's likely to reap him the most benefits, though he gen-

erally supports Free Leaguers and opposes Hardheads. And there's no such thing as professional courtesy among Takers, not even those in the same group; if one's too weak to defend his *long sword* +4, another's happy to step in and claim it.

Because of their great skills at survival and knowledge of the planes, Takers often find themselves acting as guides for adventuring parties. Naturally, the peery wonder how far to trust a guide whose only motivation is his own betterment; generous compensation usually ensures a Taker's reliability. 'Course, a guide who leans toward evil might maroon a party in the five-hundredth layer of the Abyss if a better offer came along.

The Fated also believes in keeping its nose out of other folks' business. For instance, if a Taker sees a high-up in a rival faction beaten senseless in a back alley, he won't rush to help the poor sod — not unless he can get something out of the deal for himself. Similarly, a Taker's careful to stay out of debt, buying items and property outright. And he only pays up *after* service — whatever it is — has been rendered.

ALIGNMENT. Sods of lawful good alignment can't join the Fated, but those of chaotic or neutral tendencies might find the group particularly attractive. The very nature of the Heartless leans toward a selfish, mercenary outlook, but it's not without focus or purpose. Alignment often outlines just how ruthless a Taker'll be to get what he wants.

A few chaotic evil berks might run around bashing and bobbing other folks, but most're sharp enough to realize it's safer to simply take *advantage* of their prey. Chaotics of other bents would twist the laws to their favor as long as such action wouldn't result in evil — and might even contribute to the greater good, as in the case of a Taker who forecloses on a tavern known for its murderous clientele. Even those who tend toward goodness still push their way through the multiverse, but they take pains to avoid bringing harm to others.

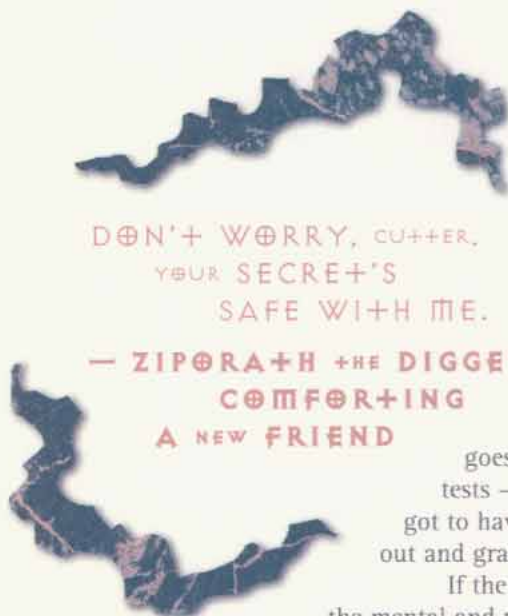
CLASS. Paladins, being lawful good, are naturally excluded from the Fated. Likewise, priests whose powers advocate the disposal of all worldly possessions can't join unless they surrender their faith. Rogues, of course, are naturals.

This isn't to say that other classes don't fit in; indeed, any cutter with a love of jink or the desire to control others usually finds the faction tempting. It all depends what a body wants out of the multiverse. A brutish warrior whose only goal is to rack up piles of treasure and magical items might find himself in league with a genius-level wizard looking to earn respect as the greatest spell-caster of his plane. Both know what they want and both go after it.

TAKER MEMBERSHIP

All beings — save those who're lawful good — are allowed to join the Fated. Initiation takes place weekly at the Rowan Academy of Training; potential recruits are culled

from the faction's exhaustive records of past applicants and brought in for interviews and testing. The first set of tests resemble university entrance exams, designed to measure a berk's intelligence. If the recruit passes, he goes on to the physical tests — after all, a Taker's got to have the muscle to go out and grab his due.



DON'T WORRY, CUTTER,
YOUR SECRET'S
SAFE WITH ME.

— ZIPORATH THE DIGGER,
COMFORTING
A NEW FRIEND

If the recruit passes both the mental and physical exams, the faction arranges a final test to see if the basher's really Taker material. At some point in the near future, the recruit stumbles into a situation where he has a chance to make off with a special prize: a bag of jink, a magical item, etc. However, the trap's set up such that the recruit realizes that he doesn't have to do a *thing* to claim the prize — it's just there for the asking. If the recruit takes the bait, he's denied entrance into the faction. Members of the Fated claim only what they've rightfully earned; they don't give or take anything for free.

FACTION ABILITIES. The Heartless are a self-sufficient bunch, and an independent one, too. They don't pass out magical items or spells to every namer in the faction; each berk's got to earn his way. However, as stated in *A Player's Guide to the Planes* in the *PLANESCAPE Campaign Setting*, all Takers start off with twice the number of nonweapon proficiency slots as typical characters. Furthermore, all non-weapon proficiency categories are available to all character classes at no penalties or additional costs — warriors can learn proficiencies typically reserved for wizards (and vice versa) without expending extra slots.

A body who spends his life looking out for himself tends to pick up other tricks, as well. Any member of the Fated looking to make a purchase can haggle to get the price reduced by 5% (for cheaper items) or even as much as 10% (for higher-priced goods). Rogues in the Fated also get a boost to their pickpocket skill: A rogue of 1st through 5th level receives a 5% bonus; a rogue of 6th through 10th

level receives a 10% bonus; and a rogue 11th level or higher receives a 15% bonus (which could virtually guarantee a successful attempt). Interestingly, Takers who *aren't* rogues get a base 10% chance to pick pockets, perhaps due to rubbing shoulders with thieves. (The DM may increase the chance for a Taker with a high Dexterity.)

The Fated realize that a body's got to know the dark of his environment if he wants to stay out of the dead-book. To that end, every Taker factotum of 3rd level or higher can select a nonweapon proficiency unique to the faction called *plane knowledge*.

PLANE KNOWLEDGE

General, 1 slot; Int -2

The plane knowledge proficiency lets a body get familiar with all the dangers, denizens, and refuges of a specific plane. He knows what the gates to neighboring planes look like, how to find them, and when to use them. He's familiar with the folks and creatures of the plane and knows how to talk to each. He's got a good idea of the plane's powers, where they're located, and how to deal with them, if need be. And with a successful proficiency check, the Taker can: determine which way to go to find any portal or destination he's heard of; recognize rare or uncommon residents of the plane; determine the purpose of any native he meets; or survive without food, water, or special equipment.

Once a Taker uses a proficiency slot on a plane, he can then spend another nonweapon slot to specialize in a specific *layer* of that plane. Layer specialization creates several contacts or acquaintances for the Taker on the layer. With a successful proficiency check, he can apply a +3 reaction adjustment to any encounters with natives on that layer. What's more, the Taker has the direction sense, weather sense, and survival proficiencies while on that layer.

'Course, just because a Taker chooses a plane or a layer doesn't mean the information just pops into his head. He's got to spend time there learning the ins and outs of the place. About a month of travel and study gives a Taker general plane knowledge, but becoming an expert on a specific layer requires four to eight months of travel to develop the necessary contacts and skills for survival. Note that a Taker's got to spend a slot and a month of study for general plane knowledge *before* he can specialize in a layer.

The Fated have the wherewithal to learn and grab what they need, but a Taker's fierce independence is also one of his greatest weaknesses. No member of the Fated can give or receive any kind of charity. It's an easy thing to refuse to drop a few coins in a beggar's hat, but it's another story if a Taker's dying and a comrade wants to give him a healing potion. Hard as it seems to believe, the Taker simply won't accept the potion — it must be earned, not given freely.

◆ THE CHANT ◆

Much of Duke Darkwood's attentions are currently occupied with renovating the vaults of the archives under the faction's campus headquarters. The underground rooms were hurriedly built when the Fated took over the campus, and the haphazard expansions have weakened the structures above so much that they might collapse. The Duke's temporarily supported the buildings with spells and magical items, and has Aram Oakwright out seeking skilled architects, engineers, and miners to begin the massive repairs.

The faction needs other help, too. The chief steward at the Hall of Property Records — a yugoloth named Ik'phus (Pl/♂ nycaloth/HD 11+22/Fated/NE) who tired of being run ragged as a scout in the Blood War — needs bodyguards to accompany Takers on missions to settle sticky property disputes in the Hive. The jink's good, but plenty of berks've stayed away, warning that the job's somehow connected to all the complaints to Guvner judges about the Fated's heavy taxes.

It's said that Duke Darkwood has suspicions about certain high-up members of his faction — Ziporath the fallen deva, for one. The digger's been assigned to investigate the Sensates, and despite the fact that Ziporath's been handing over some mighty interesting bits of the chant, Darkwood still suspects he might turn stag. And speaking of betrayal, a server at Heshter's Arms named Larillian (Pr/♀ human/0-level/Fated/CN) swears she heard Rayl Whitespoon talking with a seedy berk about delivering embarrassing information on the Duke. It's well known that Whitespoon and the Duke'd had an affair; some even say that's how she got her position at the Rowan Academy of Training.

Fact is, Darkwood threw over Whitespoon not long after meeting Alisohn Nilesia, factol of the Mercykillers. Now, he and Nilesia've entered an unusual courtship — one that makes Mercykillers and Takers treat each other with a bit more civility — though it's debatable whether he truly loves the girl or is simply using her for some greater plan. It's no dark that the Duke hopes to take over all of Sigil, though how he intends to take control of the Hall of Speakers, get the city's ruling class behind him, and avoid being trapped in one of the Lady of Pain's Mazes is any basher's guess.

◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

When a faction like the Fated relies so heavily on garnish, intimidation, and subterfuge to achieve its ends, it's no surprise that some of the schemes collapse back in on themselves. Take Ziporath, for example. Duke Darkwood's suspicions are sound, for no one less than Factol Erin Montgomery of the Sensates is trying to steal the digger away. But Ziporath's given his price to Montgomery, and it's a tall order: The return of his celestial status as deva.

Factol Montgomery's launched more than one assault against the Fated. One of the engineering teams hired by Aram Oakwright to rebuild the underground archives contains a Sensate spy (Pl/♂ tiefling/W15/Sensates/CG), sent to lift important records and plant false ones. The spy uses a secret tunnel to go back and forth to the Sanctum Sanctorum in the Civic Festhall, but the tunnel's hidden opening in the archives is in one of the sections most vulnerable to collapse.

All such back-and-forth games are really just little skirmishes in Duke

Darkwood's war for the heart of Sigil. Now that he's been made factol, his next goal is to seize Montgomery's clout in the Hall of Speakers; he's counting on his diggers to uncover enough dirty darks about the Sensates' factol to bring her down. And he can always try to tax the Sensates out of existence.

What's more, Alisohn Nilesia's promised to give him inmates from the Prison to use as troops when the time for subtlety finally comes to an end. Finally, the 2,500 Takers stationed at the dormitory at the Hall of Records aren't really there to maintain the grounds or the archives. When Darkwood goes head to head with the Lady of Pain, he plans to spread those troops throughout the Cage to hold the city together and keep the part containing *him* from spinning off into the Mazes. The Duke's even got his sharpest bloods researching *The Secret History of Sigil* and all of the most ancient tomes in the archives for any references to the Lady and her Mazes. Somewhere, he's sure, is information he can use against the being that he's come to consider his greatest enemy.



THE FRATERNITY OF ORDER

Congratulations. You have passed the preliminary tests, so you can now join the Fraternity of Order.

The following points some find difficult to grasp, so allow me to brief you in the clearest possible fashion.

Section (1): Our Goal. As you obviously know, we dedicate ourselves to law and knowledge.

Subsection (A): Laws are representations of power.

Point (1): Laws govern the lives of every being.

Point (2): Laws order the actions of every *thing*.

Subsection (B): Knowledge is power.

Point (1): With knowledge comes understanding.

Point (2): With understanding we gain the ability to manipulate things around us.

Conclusion: Knowledge of law, then, is the ultimate power.

Point (1): Everything is governed by laws. (See Subsection [A], Points [1] and [2].)

Point (2): Knowledge of all law is the power to *manipulate all things*.

Now that we have established the importance of learning all laws, let us continue by examining the different *types* of laws. First, consider the minor or "man-made" laws, often called Rules. Rules govern how living beings should act. Various people or organizations have discovered and continue to discover them. Most people think they *create* Rules, but that point is subject to debate; strong evidence supports the theory that all laws exist at all times, and that some simply have not yet been discovered or properly understood. Establishing a Rule means that another law, or part of one, has been discovered. Each new Rule imposes a little more order upon the multiverse. The more laws we uncover, the more Rules we cause to be written, the more *we* control the multiverse. (Ahem.) I digress.

After Rules come the true Laws, sometimes called laws of nature, often considered laws the powers make. Again, whether they create such Laws or merely uncover them remains open to debate (one in which I will happily engage). For the most part, Laws remain immutable, except by the powers. However, once we understand them, we can use forces such as magic to manipulate them. Some of these Laws seem simple enough, such as the Law stating that every action has a reaction; under certain circumstances, this reaction is both equal and opposite. By extension, the Law of action and reaction applies to all *things*, not simply to physical forces. For example, in humanoid interactions, an action has a reaction, but it need not be equal or opposite. Instead, a reaction can perturb the entire mass of action into another direction, until a conglomerate is reached. Indeed . . . (*Remainder of section deleted for brevity. — Ed.*)

Finally, above the multitude of important Laws rise the Great Axioms of the Multiverse, sometimes thought of as ultimate truths. Axioms are verily immutable; no one can even manipulate them. They simply exist, and they can be learned. Every person, every power, every animal, every object, every place — they all fall subject to Axioms. One cannot avoid Axioms, neither known nor unknown. While we have many theories about the Axioms, we truly *know* very little of them. I believe I know one Axiom, perhaps two. I will discuss one of them at a lecture in two weeks; one cannot describe an Axiom in the short time now available to us. One may need knowledge of an Axiom to become a power, and one who understands all the Axioms will rule the multiverse.

WHEN YΘU KNOW
ALL THE RULES,
THE MULTIVERSE
IS YOURS TO COMMAND.

— THE EDITOR

LAWS ARE POWER.

— FACTOL HASHKAR

Rules, Laws, and Axioms. In keeping with the Rule of Threes (inappropriately named, you will notice) these are the three types of laws you will learn within the Fraternity of Order. The more you know, the more power you wield, and the higher you will rise within our proud organization.

One other item I would like to make perfectly clear. Some detractors claim we learn the laws simply so we can understand how to break them. This allegation is untrue. Members of the Fraternity of Order do not break laws, ever. However, we can, by understanding laws, comprehend their limits. In other words, we learn how to avoid them while staying within them.

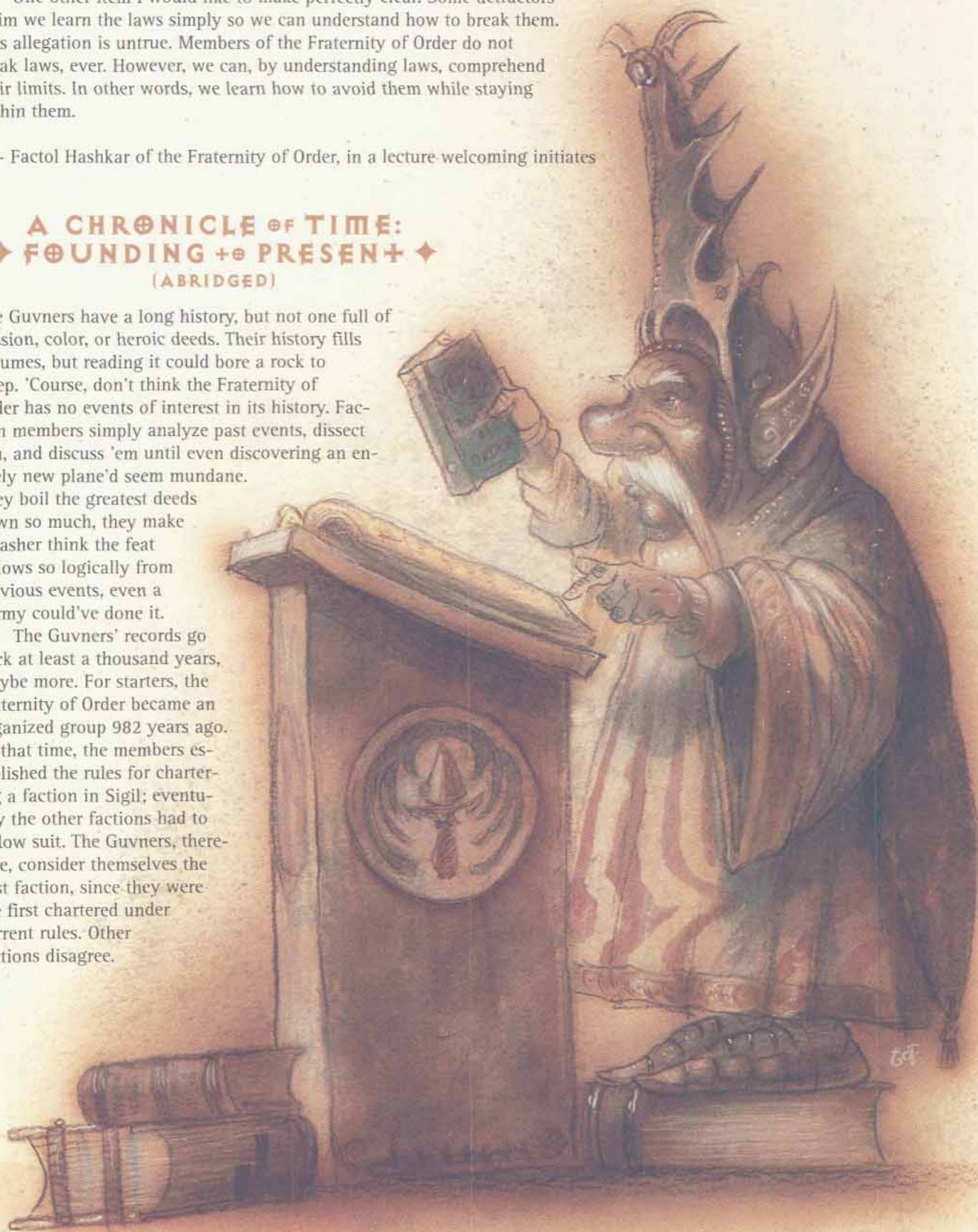
— Factol Hashkar of the Fraternity of Order, in a lecture welcoming initiates

◆ A CHRONICLE OF TIME: ◆ FOUNDED + PRESENT ◆ (ABRIDGED)

The Guvners have a long history, but not one full of passion, color, or heroic deeds. Their history fills volumes, but reading it could bore a rock to sleep. 'Course, don't think the Fraternity of Order has no events of interest in its history. Faction members simply analyze past events, dissect 'em, and discuss 'em until even discovering an entirely new plane'd seem mundane.

They boil the greatest deeds down so much, they make a basher think the feat follows so logically from previous events, even a barmy could've done it.

The Guvners' records go back at least a thousand years, maybe more. For starters, the Fraternity of Order became an organized group 982 years ago. At that time, the members established the rules for chartering a faction in Sigil; eventually the other factions had to follow suit. The Guvners, therefore, consider themselves the first faction, since they were the first chartered under current rules. Other factions disagree.



Anyway, the Guvners easily survived the Great Upheaval. They record everything that happens to them, have regular meetings, and naturally take minutes at every one. Fact is, minutes from a meeting held 900 years ago yesterday are still moldering in a vault somewhere on Mechanus.

The Guvners also keep a lot of other reference material; by conducting research in any field, they believe they can uncover previously unknown (or unrealized) laws. They've been right more than a few times, they say; some Guvner studying weather, monster biology, and, say, mining processes might come up with a realization that uncovers a pertinent discovery.

The Guvners record all such findings in one of their vast legal tomes. 'Course, they consider these their most important records, so they sort and classify and organize and duplicate them. These volumes of Rules, Laws, and Axioms become their history of the discovery of law and illustrate the overall history of the faction.

Though a body'd be hard-pressed to tell from their records, the Guvners have done a lot of great things — for themselves, for the Cage, and for all who revere law and order. While they make a lot of rules to govern themselves, they do not make laws to govern others. After all, the other factions would rebel if they didn't get their say, and the Lady of Pain wouldn't like that. It's ironic that one of the Fraternity of Order's highest Rules forbids them from creating laws for Sigil on their own.

Still, the Guvners keep track of all the laws that are made (or discovered), in Sigil and on other planes. They also keep track of all sorts of legal precedents and interpretations of the laws. This duty makes them great legal advisers, advocates, attorneys, and judges. Though they can't make city laws, they do keep the mechanism of law well oiled and moving. See, the Guvners are the ones pushing the other factions to codify procedures and adhere to existing rules. This behavior renders the faction very valuable to Sigil and the Lady. Many times, a Guvner's memory and interpretation of the law have kept the peace or aided others in great feats.

As any blood knows, though, simply knowing a law or announcing it won't make other cutters obey. For example, the Anarchists and Xaositects are notorious for ignoring laws. These groups consider the Guvners repressive, as do the Bleakers and the Doomguard. The Sinkers find themselves in the difficult position of disliking the Guvners while getting on well with the Mercykillers — who work closely with the Guvners.

At one time, the Fraternity of Order saw to law enforcement themselves, but they didn't seem forceful

enough for the job. Now, they work with the Harmonium and the Mercykillers to form the wheel of justice in Sigil. The Guvners know the laws and tell them to other cutters, like the Harmonium. The Hardheads, in turn, look for law-breakers and arrest them (as well as other sods whom they *think* broke the law). The Fraternity of Order holds trials for alleged criminals, with a Guvner as judge. (*Often they also serve as prosecutor and defender, in addition to providing the legal staffs of both sides, the court recorders, and so forth.* — Ed.) Anyone convicted of breaking a law the Guvners hand over to the Mercykillers for punishment.

This system proves self-governing, because the members of each faction in the wheel must obey the laws or find themselves arrested and subject to trial just like anyone else. 'Course, most Guvners find loopholes to avoid conviction. . . .

The Fraternity of Order's position in the judiciary process makes faction members pretty powerful.

Though they'll never consciously commit a crime, any berk can see that a group with a convenient law or precedent to suit every occasion can get 'most anything it wants. If the Guvners' philosophy of control through knowing the law really reflects the dark of things, they'll one day run Sigil — the entire multiverse, given time. And faction members never try to hide that goal, either. That's one of the things that makes folks so peery of 'em.

Some Guvners'll even tell a body they've *already* run things — a few times! They say that whenever a couple of faction members recognize one of the Great Axioms, they make changes that alter the multiverse on such a fundamental level, it becomes something else. 'Course, nobody realizes there's been a change, because they've been altered as well. Poor berks see the new state of the multiverse as absolutely normal. Naturally, the fundamental nature of the alteration prevents anyone from actually *proving* it ever happened.

JOIN THE FRATERNITY OF ORDER.
AND YOU'LL ALWAYS KNOW
EXACTLY WHERE YOU STAND.
— PROPOSED
RECRUITMENT SLOGAN



◆ FAC+OL HASHKAR ◆

Male dwarf planar(?)

0-level sage, Fraternity of Order (factol)

Lawful neutral

STR	9	INT	24	HP	6
DEX	10	WIS	22	AC	10
CON	18	CHA	8	THACO	20

EQUIPMENT: Hundreds of manuals and tomes.

SPECIAL: Hashkar can comprehend languages for any tongue, modern or ancient. His reading has given him knowledge equivalent to every nonweapon and weapon proficiency. *(Though knowing how a sword works and hitting something with it are two different matters entirely. — Ed.)*

Hashkar is a sage (see *The DUNGEON MASTER Guide*, Chapter 12: NPCs), with knowledge of architecture (several races), botany, cartography, cryptography, engineering, heraldry, history (many races and regions), law (of course), mathematics, metaphysics (all known planes and a few unknown to most), physics, sociology, theology, and zoology. He knows a little about a multitude of other subjects, too. Besides his dwarf abilities, Hashkar has faction abilities as described below and in “Within the Ranks, page 74.

For a factol, Hashkar doesn’t appear too impressive. He’s short and dumpy, with a big red nose and a long white mustache. His eyes constantly look bloodshot from reading, and he always carries one or more books or scrolls. When not reading, he’s usually lecturing. Faction members get used to seeing him shuffling down the halls of the City Court (his faction’s headquarters in Sigil) mumbling to himself, barely aware of his surroundings.

A basher finds it extremely difficult to carry on a conversation with the boring old Guvner. Any berk fool enough to ask him a question had better brace himself for the *Answer*. Hashkar lectures at the drop of a hat—or the drop of ‘most anything — launching into a discourse to answer the basher’s question, including:

- (1) The history of the answer;
- (2) A comparison of that answer with what the answer would’ve been under previous versions of the Rules; and
- (3) An analysis of the answer, the question, the reasons for asking the question, and why the answer is vitally important.

Should the questioner try to leave before Hashkar has finished answering, the factol will follow along, oblivious to any hint that the unlucky berk has anything better to do than to listen. This pattern applies to all sorts of questions, too, from “What’s the meaning of existence?” to “Which way’s the door?” See, there’s no such thing as a simple answer to someone who understands everything.

Hashkar, factol of the Guvners for 127 years, had an impressive rise through the ranks of the Fraternity. Though the blood learned all he knows from books, personal lessons, or the tales of others, he understands much that normally only adventurers can learn. Fortunately for Hashkar, in the Fraternity of Order, knowledge is power. The dwarf’s vast ability to learn impressed his one-time superiors so much that Hashkar practically flew into the factol position. He governs with a firm hand, delegating authority through his factors.

His faction abilities allow the factol to tinker with the laws of probability (see “Within the Ranks”) to alter a roll by +5 or –5 (or +25 or –25 percentage points). Also, Hashkar wields five spell-like special powers, due to loopholes he has discovered in the laws of the multiverse. These abilities include:

- ◆ Instantly finding a gate to the Negative Energy Plane within 60 feet (used twice);
- ◆ Traveling forward in time, “skipping” as much as 10 minutes (used once); and
- ◆ Summoning up to 10 monodrone modrons to his aid instantly (used three times).

He’s never used his other two loophole abilities, so they remain mysteries to all but himself (and the DM, who should determine the powers according to the situation). Hashkar usually taps his abilities only in self-defense. The blood’s faced several attempts on his life over the last century, and, despite his weakness, he’s survived them through the unconscious use of these powers. *(However, he can employ them deliberately as well. —Ed.)*

The factol seems nice enough and inoffensive, so long as a body doesn’t try to talk to him. He’ll go out of his way to give a cutter more details than he can stand. Though a few other Guvners have factol ambitions, none would usurp the post — it’s against the Rules, see?



◆ THE CITY COURT ◆

Most cutters in the Cage hope they never have reason to go to the City Court. See, a body seldom has a reason to visit ‘cept if he’s got to pay a municipal fine or if the Harmonium’s nabbed him for a crime too severe for even a high-jink penalty. ‘Course, for the Guvners, it’s a different story. The Fraternity of Order uses the City Court as its headquarters, and faction members think there’s no better place in Sigil.

The imposing Court building stands in the heart of The Lady’s Ward. *(The Guvners consider this location a sure sign that the Lady’s pleased with them. — Ed.)* This foreboding structure rises only two stories above its huge granite foundation, but its tower climbs three stories higher. Within, the Guvners manage Sigil’s judiciary system and maintain the faction’s bureaucracy.

The Harmonium keeps the neighborhood around the City Court orderly. Taverns serve bashers just killing time before their court appearances, and nearby scribes await court-related duties. Although the Guvners will provide each accused sod with an advocate from the faction, free-lance advocates from other groups hawk their skills outside the building. All day long, people flow steadily into the City Court as fast as others exit.

Once up the Great Stairs and past the proud marble pillars flanking the outside of the entry, a basher crosses a Promenade packed shoulder-to-shoulder with accused criminals, Harmonium agents, and Clueless. Pushing through the throng, a cutter can make it to a reception area to pay fines for minor infractions. 'Course, he has to shout to make himself heard above the din of the masses clamoring in the Promenade, which encircles the building on this, its main floor.

And that's the lucky basher. More serious offenses go to trial, most of which take place in Ward Court, held in one of the lesser court rooms on every floor of the building and tower. Lesser court defendants who fail to arrive promptly pick up a fine for tardiness. But, sods destined to appear in the Grand Court *never* arrive late – the Harmonium bailiffs escorting them from the City Jail see to that. The Grand Court – with its shiny wood, gilt fixtures, and mosaics celebrating justice – houses more spectacular cases and all appeals.

Sure, appeals are *possible*, though the Guvners deny most of 'em – they know all the laws, so once a judge from the Fraternity of Order makes a ruling, it's the right one, see? Counsel can appeal a case up the chain from the initial Ward Court hearing to High Court (held in the Grand Court chamber), then to the Bureau Chief of the Ad Hoc Bureau of Courts, and finally, to Factol Hashkar. The factol hasn't had to deal with an appeal for a decade now because the Bureau Chief, Jamis, stops any that reach her.

Attached to each courtroom is a private chamber: a meeting and study room for the judges and counsels of the cases on trial nearby. Bureau Chiefs (factors), serve as judges, and Administrators (factotums) provide legal representation. The factol likes to sit in chambers adjacent to the Grand Court, reading. Bureau Chief Jamis spends much of her time in this area, too, researching or consulting.

JAMIS

Female human planar
10th-level priest of Oghma, Fraternity of Order (factor)
Lawful good

STR	11	INT	18	HP	4
DEX	10	WIS	18	AC	8
CON	9	CHA	15	THACO	14

EQUIPMENT: Staff.

SPELLS/LEVEL: 6/6/4/2.

SPECIAL: Jamis casts spells from these spheres: all, charm, divination, guardian, and sun. She has other standard priest and faction abilities.

Jamis, Bureau Chief of the Ad Hoc Bureau of Courts (B2 rating), has spent most of her 40 years studying law and legal precedents. (See "Within the Ranks," page 74, for details on the Order's rating system. – Ed.) An excellent judge of character, she asks probing questions that get directly to the heart of a matter – usually, a decision regarding assignments for court functionaries. This fair and impartial judge, so well versed in the law and able to make sound decisions fast, usually handles the few appeals that reach her in record time.

Dark-complected Jamis has a handsome face, a plump figure, and a dazzling smile. The priesthood of a god of knowledge prepared her well for a career with the Guvners. In fact, Jamis appears likely to ascend to a B1 rating within the faction at the next opening, and folks consider her a probable eventual choice for factol – if she outlives

Hashkar, that is. Her main competition, Nancias Garabutos (Planar/♀ human/W11/Fraternity of Order/LN), rules the Fortress of Disciplined Enlightenment, the faction's headquarters on Mechanus.

In addition to his hours consulting with Bureau Chief Jamis in chambers, Factol Hashkar spends quite a bit of time in his private quarters on the main floor. This orderly set of rooms, connected to the Grand Court's chambers by a short hallway, also leads down

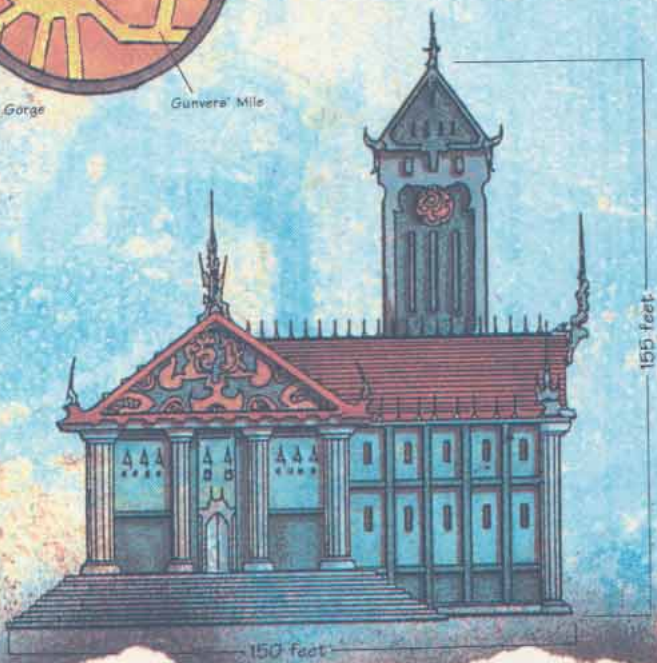
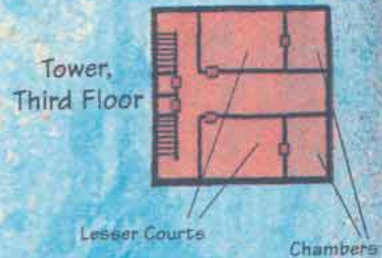
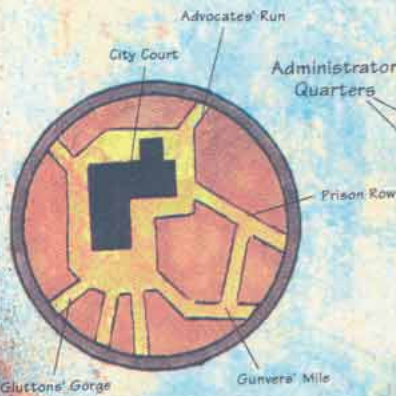
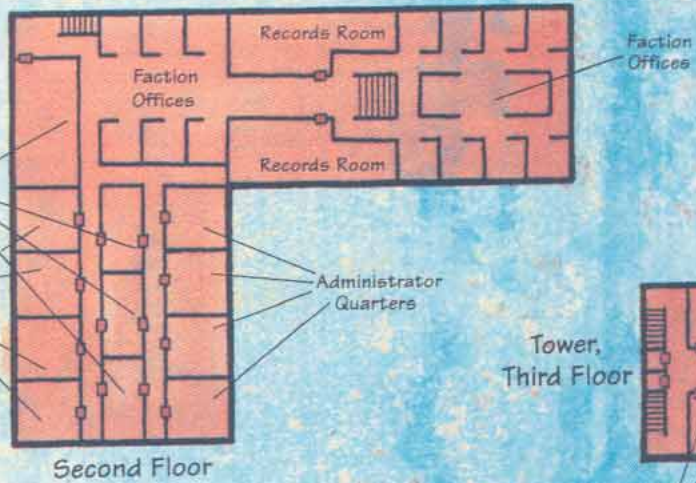
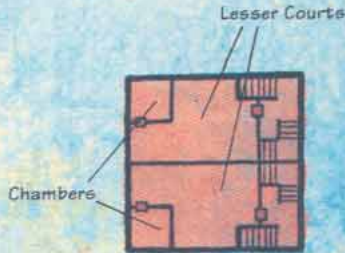
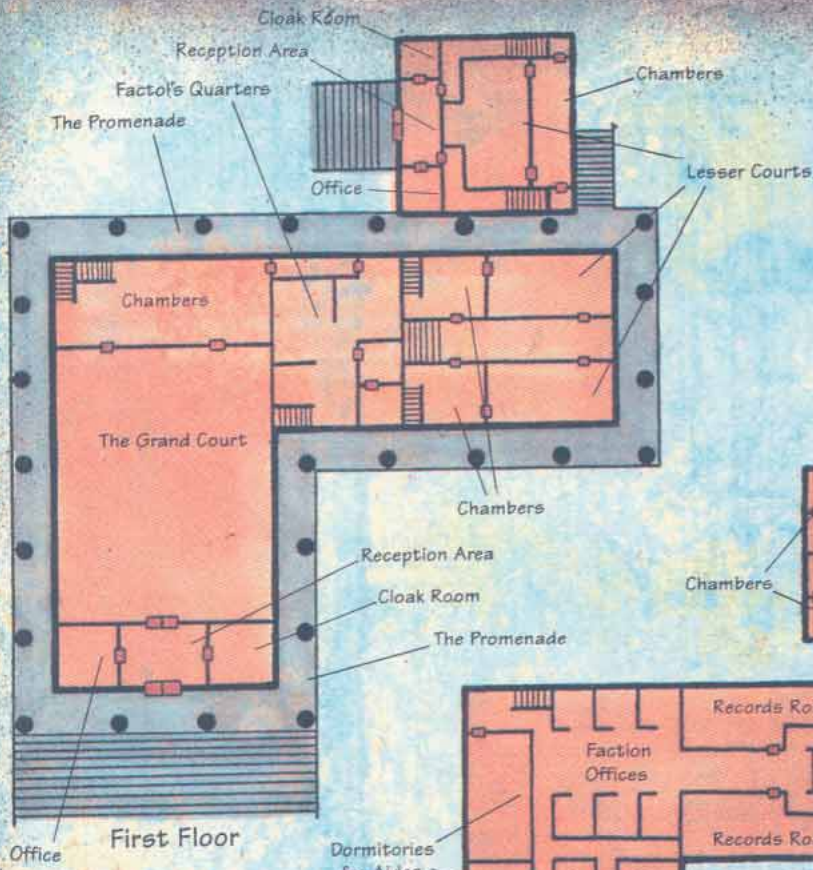
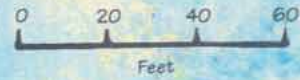
stairs into the faction's library. Hashkar does conduct faction business in his quarters, though he prefers to spend his time researching one of the hundreds of volumes he keeps there.

Down a short staircase from the factol's quarters (and from several other first-floor locations) begins the library of the Guvners, called the Vault of Knowledge. It consists of the first three sublevels beneath the Court, all 20 to 30 feet from floor to ceiling and packed with books and scrolls, neatly arranged and catalogued for easy access. Only a Guvner may enter; others can't be trusted to touch the valuable books of law, spells, and other myriad knowledge found here.

Faction high-ups have their offices on the second floor of the main building as well as the top floor of the tower. Also on the second level are dormitories for Aides (namers), quarters for Administrators (factotums), and twin chambers containing all the city's court records. 'Course, any leatherhead can see that these records rooms couldn't even hold Sigil's judicial annals from the last year, let alone materials dating back centuries. Only officials of at least factor level can access hidden portals in these rooms that open into pocket demiplanes where the Fraternity of Order stores the bulk of court records.

IN THESE HALLOWED HALLS,
THE WHEEL OF LAW
BRINGS JUSTICE
TO THE WRONGDOER,
VINDICATION
TO THE WRONGED, AND
ORDER
TO THE DISORDERLY.
— INSCRIBED AROUND
THE MOLDING
OF THE GRAND COURT —

THE COURT



◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

Most Guvners strike a cutter as bookish types, those willing to study and adhere to hundreds of rules and laws. To prove they've learned the laws, faction members must pass tests, which earns them the admiration of their peers and the opportunity to rise through the ranks.

ROLE-PLAYING THE GUVNERS

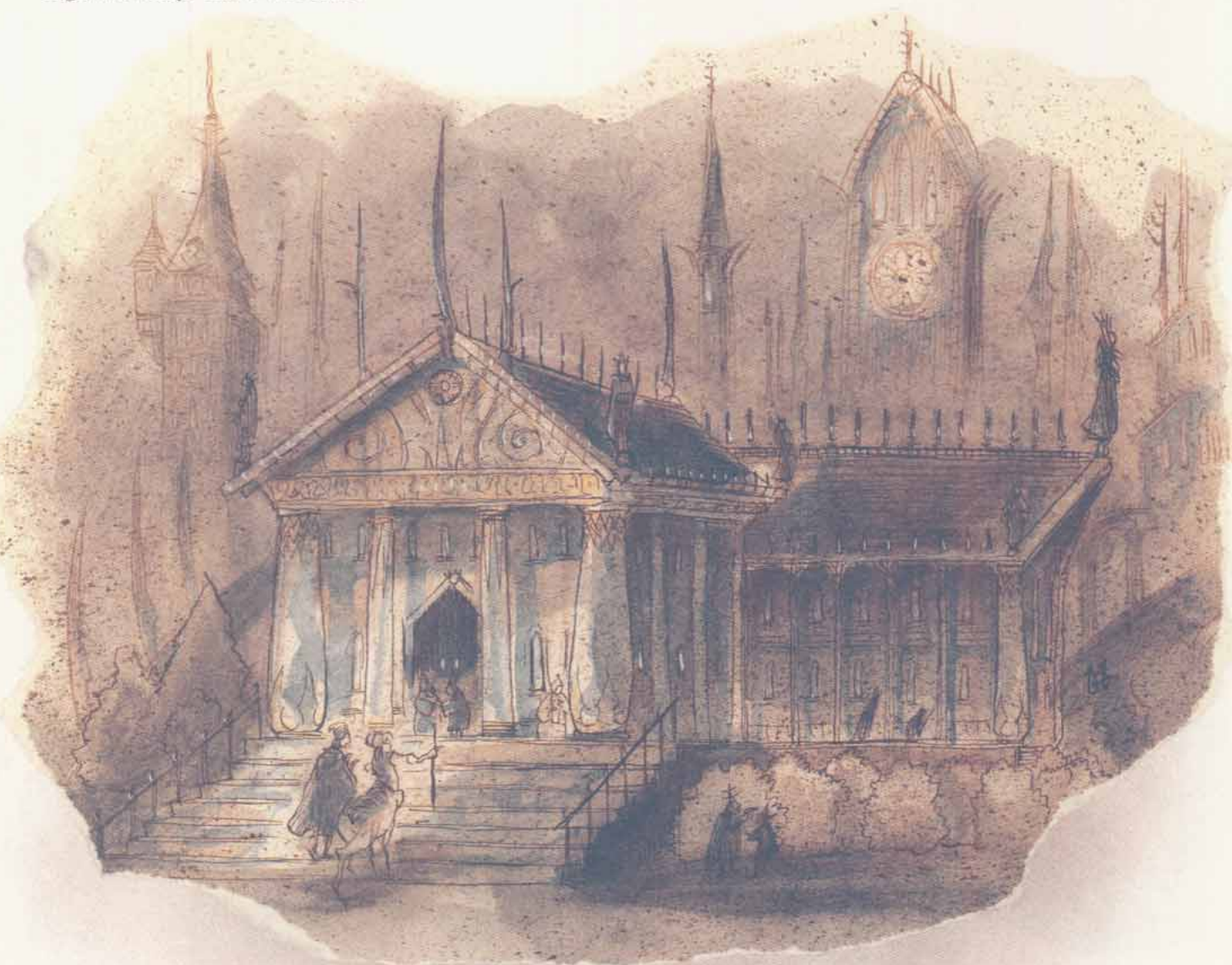
Two basic types of bashers join the Guvners: those looking for knowledge and those looking for power. To most of 'em, the two quests amount to exactly the same thing — remember, knowledge is power, berk.

Some faction members enjoy delusions of power beyond reason, but they fail to get far. See, such megalomaniacs have lost their sense of order in their fanatic ambition. While many Guvners seek knowledge with fervor, the ones that rise through the ranks are those governed by a sense of order. They don't *hunger* for the power of knowledge, but accept that it will come.

ALIGNMENT. A cutter's got to be lawful to join the Guvners — and pass the right tests, of course. Good characters respect the laws as they are, while evil ones thrill in twisting them legally whenever they can.

CLASS. Most members of the Fraternity of Order are wizards, since that profession encourages research; all specialties appear in the faction's roll, though Guvner wild mages seem less wild than most and concern themselves with learning the laws and patterns of chaos (such as they are). A lot of the remaining Guvners are priests, usually of a power representing law and order, justice, or a related topic. Warriors seem somewhat common, and the rare Guvner rogue might be a bard or a thief who lawfully tries to thwart other thieves.

RACE. Though a character's race makes little difference to the Guvners, many humans and dwarves join. Half-elves and tieflings seem uncommon (they don't take well to strict rules), bariaur rare, and githzerai almost unknown — they like rules even less.



FRATERNITY OF ORDER MEMBERSHIP

The Guvners have their share of namers: berks who pass the initial tests (covering laws and general knowledge) but don't strive to learn after their acceptance. They join just to belong to a faction. These namers, or *Aides*, are the smallest cogs in the Fraternity machine and perform the faction's mundane, day-to-day tasks. Their superiors assign them duties, but they may request assignments as well. Often, high-ups encourage Aides to go on adventures to gain first-hand knowledge, as long as they write full reports on their return.

'Course, factioneers can't always go haring off on adventures. The Fraternity of Order also requires at least a few hours of regular duty from each and every Guvner every week. Aides serve as assistants to factotums, or if they're lucky, to higher-placed Guvners. *(No namer has direct regular contact with the factol himself, though. — Ed.)* Most namers work their hours as file clerks, research assistants, and court recorders. Some have more menial tasks, like cleaning or guarding the City Court. Aides all must follow the orders of any factotum, unless these orders conflict with a current, ongoing task.

It's a cinch that being at everyone else's beck and call encourages Aides to become factotums or, to use the Guvners' term, *Administrators*. To earn this promotion, an Aide must pass a series of tests, offered every 100 days. *(An Aide can fill out a form requesting to take the tests early, though. — Ed.)* Passing the tests makes a basher an Administrator of A10 rank. (A1 is the highest.)

Low-ranking Administrators feel like little more than glorified Aides, as they merely assist faction high-ups. Some of these Administrators do have managerial tasks, like supervising the Shifter's Logs, accounts of how Sigil's various shifting portals are used and by whom. *(Only factotums and higher can see these secret logbooks, and sometimes they send namers to stake out more important portals, to gather logbook data. — Ed.)*

Factotums of higher ranks, A5 to A1, might serve as assistants, too, but usually they have their own Aides to supervise as well. These high-ups spend most of their time at faction headquarters (either in Sigil or on Mechanus). Some conduct research missions, provided they first make the proper requests with the correct forms through appropriate channels. Within the court system, Administrators of all ranks serve as attorneys, both prosecutors and defenders, as well as legal advisers.

Factotums each have a superior. Sometimes a higher-ranked Administrator serves as supervisor, but often it's a *Bureau Chief*: a factor in the Fraternity. Though some factotums might serve as assistants to the factol, they do so

under orders from a Bureau Chief and must respond to both the orders of the factol and of the Bureau Chief. Administrators advance by taking tests once every 100 days. An exceptional score can get a body promoted two ranks instead of one.

Advancement to Bureau Chief naturally requires a test. However, bashers get promoted only when a Bureau Chief position is vacant. Only occasionally does the factol create a new bureau that needs a chief; most A1s have to wait for a Bureau Chief to retire or die. The faction's got way too many middle managers, especially ranks A3 to A1, 'cause they have no place to advance.

The factol assigns an A1 both knowledgeable and lucky to become chief of a Bureau. The ranks of Bureau Chiefs start with B5 and work up to B1. B5s supervise lesser bureaus, many of which form parts of bigger bureaus. B1-level Bureau Chiefs run the Star Bureaus: Record-Keeping, Research, Internal Affairs, Planar Affairs, and Prime Affairs. These five bureaus have existed for hundreds of years. 'Course, a few other major bureaus, the Ad Hoc Bureaus, have B2s or B3s in charge. Though technically these bureaus are temporary, some have been

around a century or more; one, the Bureau of Courts, assigns faction members court duties. Some Bureau Chiefs, usually level B5s or B4s, do not have bureaus of their own.

They serve as judges or functionaries of the Bureau of Courts.

To become factol of the Fraternity of Order, a cutter first must serve as a B1 Bureau Chief. When the position of factol opens, the B1s vote one of their number into the position. Should a tie arise, Guvners extend the voting to Bureau Chiefs of all ranks. The vote counters eliminate the candidates with the lowest vote totals until a clear winner emerges by plurality vote.

The position of factol seems unlikely to open in the near future. See, Hashkar has held the job for 127 years and shows little sign of slowing down. However, not all factols leave the position by dying. A few have retired, stepping down to honorary B1 status. *(A retiree serves as chief of a bureau with no functions and no functionaries besides himself, allowing the former factol to dodder off into senility. — Ed.)* Some factols, including Hashkar's predecessor, disappeared without a trace, despite efforts of the faction's best investigators.

FACTION ABILITIES. Since Guvners tend to understand patterns easily, they can use *comprehend languages* once per

ALL OUR HISTORY
HAS BEEN BUILDING + THE DAY
WHEN WE WILL KNOW AND CONTROL
ALL THERE IS.
— FROM THE INTRODUCTION + THE
FRATERNITY OF ORDER HANDBOOK
AND PHILOSOPHICAL MANUAL



day. A Guvner of any rank, namer through factol, can use *item* once per day, too, with a maximum duration of 24 hours upon reaching 7th level.

Course, Guvner high-ups enjoy additional special abilities. Administrators of at least 5th level gain a limited power to manipulate probability. Once per day, the Guvner can tinker with the laws of chance to gain an advantage. The character can give himself a +1 bonus to an attack roll, damage roll, or saving throw. He also can allow himself a -1 bonus to a roll against a proficiency score or ability score (or adjust a percentage roll by 5 percentage points). At 5th level, the Administrator can change probability for a foe, too, inflicting a -1 point or -5 percentage point penalty to an opponent's roll. This modifier improves a point (or 5 percentage points) per three levels. So, 8th-level characters can adjust a roll by +/-2 points (+/-10 percentage points). Guvners of 11th level or higher can adjust a roll by +/-3 points (+/-15 percentage points).

To become an Administrator, a Guvner has to show he understands a loophole in the laws of the multiverse. In fact, the test to ascend to factotum rank requires a Guvner to demonstrate a special ability based on the understanding of such a loophole. This ability comes only after months of adventuring or research.

Loophole abilities vary widely according to a character's personality. A warrior might learn how to draw on elemental fire to temporarily turn his sword into a *flame blade*; a thief, by learning how shadows all meet on the Demiplane of Shadow, might learn to step into one and *teleport* to another shadow. DMs decide the powers' parameters by following a few guidelines.

First, the ability should be no greater than that of a spell a character of the Guvner's experience level could cast. For instance, the fire power mentioned previously resembles the 2nd-level priest spell *flame blade*, which a priest of 3rd level or higher can cast. So, the warrior in the example must be at least 3rd level to gain such a power. In addition, a Guvner must conduct the same amount of study and spend the same amount of money to gain a loophole ability as a spellcaster expends researching a spell of that level. (That's explained in Chapter 7: Magic of the DUNGEON MASTER Guide. — Ed.) After spending the needed time and money, the Guvner has a percentage chance equal to his Intelligence plus his experience level to get the ability to work. Sound tough? Well, gaining a loophole power *should* be hard — DMs might require extraordinary feats (such as adventuring well) before granting a power.

Ex-factol Lariset
transcends.



Second, the ability won't work forever. The character can use it up to once per round, as many times per day as desired. But, every time the Guvner uses it, he risks a 10% cumulative chance that the loophole in the laws of the multiverse closes. For example, the first time a thief uses the ability to *teleport* between shadows, it works fine, but he has a 10% chance of losing that power permanently thereafter. If the thief has not lost the ability, he can apply it a second time, then afterward has a 20% chance of losing it. The DM should make the check while the ability's in use; though a loss won't prevent the current use of the power, a roll of 01 to 05 causes the loophole to close catastrophically. *(DMs, be creatively malevolent. — Ed.)* A character can thus use a single loophole ability up to 10 times — after that, the chance of the loophole closing is 100%. However, clever Guvners use their power to manipulate probability to adjust the percentage roll for loophole closure, possibly gaining a few more uses. Even with the probability adjustment, however, a roll of 01 to 05 fails.

Finally, a Guvner can gain only a limited number of the powers. Typically, a character has one power per five levels. *(The few exceptions include the factol himself, who has never gained a single level. PCs should never become exceptions, though. — Ed.)* Once a power is lost, the character might gain a replacement one day, at the DM's discretion, but only with extreme dedication.

A loophole ability's not a spell and does not affect how many spells a priest or wizard can cast.

◆ THE CHANT ◆

Hashkar's predecessor, Lariset the Inescapable, spent the last few months of her reign mostly sequestered in research, occasionally explaining that she was on the verge of a major discovery. When she disappeared from her quarters leaving no evidence, arcane or otherwise, to her whereabouts, others assumed she had made her discovery — presumably of one of the Great Axioms — and ascended to a higher level of power. Some think she now watches over the Guvners and all other seekers of power and knowledge. A minority even suggest that Lariset's Axiom allowed her to replace the Lady of Pain. *(They say she became the latest to fill that "office," but only a barmy'd believe such a thing. — Ed.)*

Another minority in the Fraternity of Order, the Mathematicians, feel strongly drawn to the gears of Mechanus, even more so than other faction members. They believe that anything imaginable exists somewhere on Mechanus, perhaps on a far-off cog, and they want to find it through use of logic, symbolism, and mathematics more complicated than mere calculus. *(Page 12 of the book detailing Mechanus in the Planes of Law boxed set has more on this sect. — Ed.)*

Lots of high-ups of other factions seem to think the

Guvners are close to finding the ultimate loophole of the plane of Mechanus — any day now, they could take over the plane on a technicality. Not only that, but if they have the dark about the nature of the plane, they'll understand all the cogs of the multiverse and wind up controlling the whole show. Sure, folks've heard this chant for centuries, but it seems louder lately. Lots of cutters feel a little worried about the Guvners.

◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

The Revolutionary League's about to leak a startling rumor: Hashkar's a petitioner. Faction bloods would twitch at the very thought, but here's the dark as the Anarchists have it: A long time ago, Hashkar, a planar dwarf, joined the Guvners. Studying the law as required, he came to some conclusions. First, since the Cage is the center of the multiverse, if a body learns all the laws of Sigil, he learns the laws of the multiverse. Second, the Lady of Pain is the law in Sigil. So Hashkar began to revere the Lady of Pain, the Cage itself (her "plane"), and the storehouse of knowledge the Guvners kept in Sigil.

But one day he died, as all mortals do.

Story goes, Hashkar found himself a petitioner in Sigil, drawn there by his devotion to the Lady of Pain, the plane, and the Guvners' headquarters. Now, as a petitioner, he's had unlimited time to learn laws and, with a vast accumulation of such knowledge, he naturally ascended to the leadership of the faction.

The Anarchists even have evidence to support the claim. First, Factol Hashkar, like all petitioners, is boring as all get-out, stuck on the one subject that defines his existence. Most berks talking to a petitioner get the feeling that the one-dimensional sod's devoted to only a single thought. Hashkar gives a body that feeling, too.

Second, a petitioner can't leave the plane to which he's devoted unless on a mission for his power. Well, Hashkar has never been known to leave Sigil, not even for the faction's Mechanus headquarters — he says he's happy to let Lady Nancias govern the Fortress. When he does intervene in its rule, he sends a subordinate.

But some counter-evidence exists as well. Mainly, Sigil just doesn't get petitioners. The Cage holds no deities or powers a body'd devote himself to, nothing to hold a basher so strongly it pulls him here as a petitioner. For Hashkar to come back to Sigil as a petitioner, he'd have to have *worshipped* the Lady of Pain! Even the Clueless know that's a barmy thing to do, 'cause bloods who worship the Lady always end up dead — or worse. 'Course, Hashkar might have a special deal with the Lady: She allows his quiet devotion, and his faction continues providing Sigil with its judicial service. If Hashkar's supposed worship of the Lady really hits the chant, she might have to destroy him as an example.

The dark of the matter's still dark.

THE FREE LEAGUE

"Sod off, mates! I don't want any trouble!" The Indep's voice rose. "I ain't done anything wrong!" Quadi backed away from the three Harmonium patrolmen, his hooves clicking nervously against the cobblestones of the alley behind the tavern. The bariaur lowered his head slightly, and the muscles around his neck and shoulders tensed.

The lead Hardhead hooted, pointing at the bariaur and tapping a comrade's arm. "The goat-boy thinks he's going to charge! Can you believe it?"

One of the other Hardheads moved forward. "You're under arrest, goat-boy. Come with us peaceably or—"

"Why am I under arrest?" Quadi cried, taking another step backward. One hoof hit the alley wall, and he knew that the Hardheads had maneuvered him into a dead-end.

One of the bashers retreated slightly off into the shadows, his sword glinting in the dark. Quadi's shoulder muscles tensed further. "After all," he stalled for time, "you don't even know my name. How can I be under arrest? Where's your warrant?"

The Hardhead's lips tightened. "You're a Free Leaguer, aren't you? Or is that just a 'scar' on your scrawny butt?" The leader pointed toward Quadi's left flank; in the wan street-light the image of a dragon devouring itself was clearly visible, shaved into his coat.

Quadi backed up still further, his hocks and rump scraping against the sharp razorzine climbing the wall behind him. "I'm an Indep, yes. But why—"

The Harmonium leader suddenly struck Quadi's face, and the bariaur instinctively reared onto his hind legs. "Because you're an Indep, that's why," the man screamed as the bariaur came back to ground. "Your kind's got no business here in Sigil!"

One of Quadi's eyes was fast swelling shut, while blood trickled from his nose. His fists clenched as he braced for another blow. One of the other Hardheads closed in on him, but the man merely spoke, his voice a whisper. "We're getting rid of you weaklings — *all* of you. We're tired of you letting every cross-trading berk and his brother into the Bazaar. You're under arrest, goat-boy." Then the basher looked over at the other patrolmen. "Chain him."

Quadi charged. He hadn't room for any kind of speed, but he butted his head up against the Hardhead's chest. He was a young ram, and his horns'd barely begun to curl under. Only a week ago, though, he'd been at the armorer's, getting



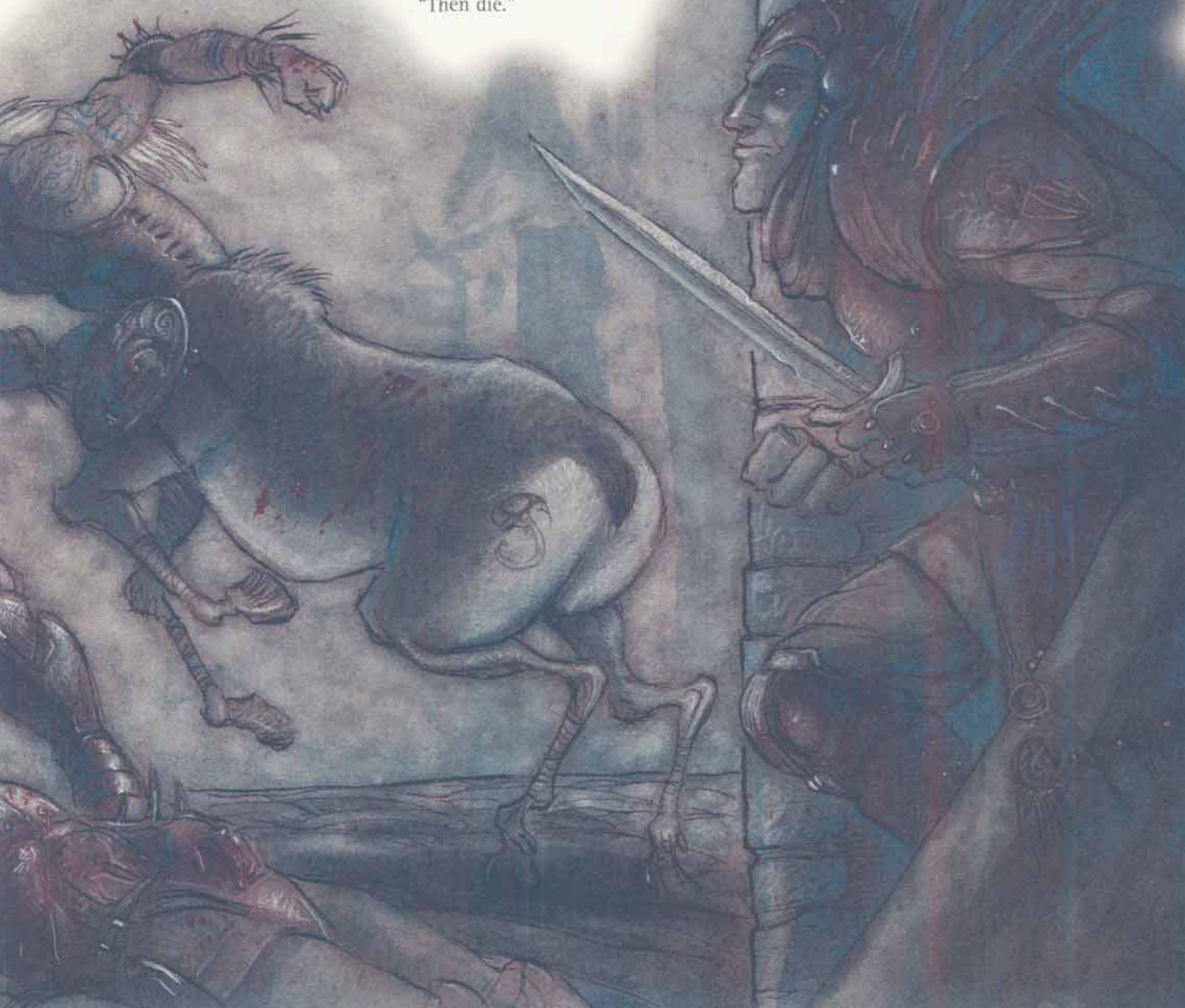
silver tips applied to his horns. Now the hardened edges acted as wicked pikes, and one tip cut through the man's breastplate and punctured a lung. The Hardhead cried out in pain and collapsed, frothy blood curdling from his lips.

The basher who'd struck Quadi lurched forward, pulling his sword out of its sheath. But Quadi was faster and leapt forward. He swung his head down and upward, and both metal-tipped horns found the human's soft belly. The Hardhead staggered backward, his hands grasping Quadi's throat. The pair fell heavily to the ground.

The third Hardhead raced forward, drawing his sword. Just as the young bariaur freed himself from the dying man's clutches, he felt the searing pain of cold metal bite into his backbone. The bariaur tried to stumble to his feet, but his hooves failed him. He lay crumpled in a heap, his spine severed. Quadi stared up at the remaining Hardhead and tried to focus his fast-dimming eyes.

"You'll never break us," Quadi choked, his body trembling. "Scum . . . we'd rather die. . . ." The bariaur's voice faded to nothing, his eyes staring unblinkingly up at his killer.

The Hardhead spit.
"Then die."



◆ LIVE FREE OR DIE ◆

Being an Indep, a member of the Free League faction, has its advantages and disadvantages. For the most part, all the other factions – save the Harmonium – cast a peery eye on the Indeps but generally leave them alone. Often, the only interaction between the Free League and the other factions is bartering for hired services, for the Indeps willingly hire out for the right price. Indeps frequently take jobs as mercenaries, spies, couriers, and guards; as such, they're often in demand for key positions throughout Sigil and the Outlands. Furthermore, a number of factols view Free Leaguers as potential recruits for their own factions, including the Sensates, the Fated, and the Revolutionary League. Some of them have begun to wage quite a campaign to get the Indeps to give up their independence and join the ranks of a "true" faction, though, if pressed, most'd admit it's a futile effort.

Indeps in Sigil're having an especially tough time as of late. The Harmonium – no friend of the Free League to begin with – has been stepping up efforts lately in an apparent attempt to rid the city of Indeps. Granted, Free Leaguers don't always follow laws as the judges of the Fraternity of Order might like, but, as a rule, Indeps try not to cause trouble. The Hardheads have always been, well, *hardheaded* about free-spirited attitudes and viewpoints, but now they've taken things a step further, practically trying to arrest the Free League out of existence. And the Hardhead bashers embrace their task with what can only be described as malicious glee.

The nature of the Free League – which isn't even a true faction, more or less just a collection of like-thinking bodies – has made them vulnerable to the Harmonium's plan. The Free League's got no factol, which in turn means they have no voice in the governing of Sigil and no seat on the Council. Their free, independent dispositions are such that they cannot even bear to have someone lead their group. But a factol would nevertheless spare them some of their current troubles.

As it is, members of the Free League are only now becoming aware of the Harmonium's tactics. There've been too many disappearances of friends and acquaintances to put down to leaving town in search of greener freedoms. But with no faction hierarchy, they've no recourse via the normal channels. What's more, the Indeps are far too self-sufficient to report the problem to any other faction, even the Fraternity of Order. Fact is, the Indeps suspect the

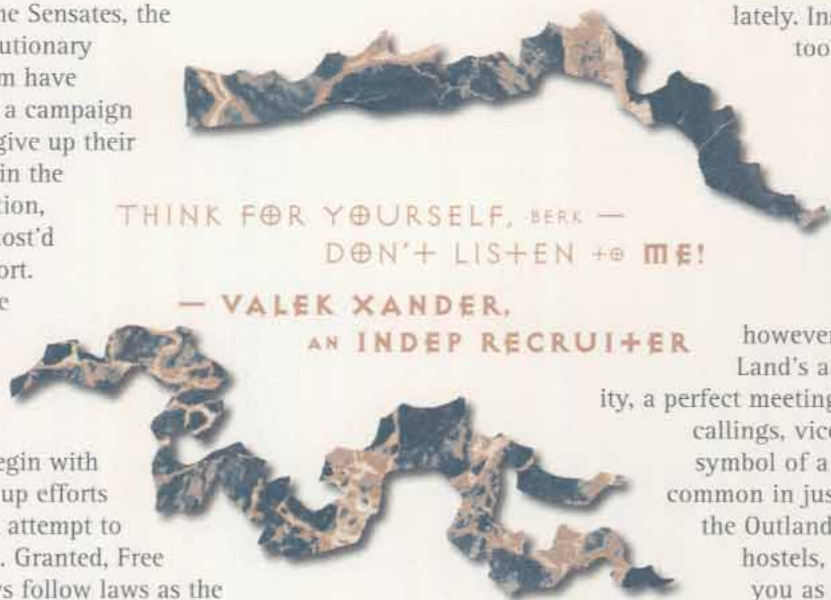
Guvners and the Mercykillers of being in on the Harmonium's plan. After all, the three factions often work hand in hand: The Harmonium makes the arrest; the Guvners conduct the trial; and the Mercykillers carry out the punishment. The Indeps have taken to avoiding all three factions, watching their members with wary eyes. And then there's the matter of what the Harmonium is *doing* with those Free Leaguers they've "arrested." Plenty of Indeps aren't even scragged at all, but beaten or killed – and some vanish without a trace.

Pure fact is, Free Leaguers're far more at home on the Outlands than they are in the Cage, and not just because the city's been rough to them lately. Inside the Cage there are just too many conflicting passions and philosophies, with too many people warring over power and might. The Indeps, with their love of neutrality, often seem a frail throwaway in the fight for power.

On the Outlands, however, it's a different story. The Land's a place of supreme neutrality, a perfect meeting ground for bashers of all callings, vices, and creeds. The Indeps' symbol of a dragon devouring itself is common in just about every town across the Outlands, marking taverns, shops, hostels, milliners, and what-have-you as being friendly toward this faction.

See, the Outlands are a balancing point for all the planes. Parts of it are sucked away by the overwhelming philosophies of the surrounding Outer Planes, but the struggle for neutrality – and identity – continues on. This is largely due to the Free League. The faction spreads its clear-sighted philosophy throughout the Outlands, imbuing the inhabitants and even the very land itself with the ideal of *freedom*. And that means freedom from the passions and machinations of all those who would control a land, who would warp a portion of the land into the heady philosophies of another plane.

Tradegate, near the neutral plane of Bytopia, is a popular town with the Indeps. Several portals lead from the town to points within the Bazaar in Sigil. Tradegate's a place where any Indep can find a ready, helping hand. For a generously low price, local bashers are willing to join an Indep's party to explore Baator, Acheron, or wherever; Free Leaguers looking for such assistance know to go to a blood called Swider (Pr/♂ human/T3/Free League/CN). 'Course, cutters who *aren't* Free Leaguers might find all the independent thinkers a bit much for an extended journey, but the Indeps are good about not trying to convert others to their philosophy.



RISE AND FALL

Perhaps the best way to understand the Indeps' current troubles is to learn how the League developed. Unfortunately, asking any Indep about himself or his history is as useless as asking a balor the point of the Blood War. A Free Leaguer lives for the here and now, and he doesn't see himself as part of a tight group, at least not any group that can be pinned down by mere words. *(An interviewer sent to question an Indep centaur in the Great Bazaar was chased away, receiving a cracked collarbone and three sprained ankles – all in the name of honest research! – Ed.)*

The frost giant Brigitte Gunnarsmoon (Pl/♀ giant/HD 14/Fated/CN), a historian at the Hall of Records, was more prepared to talk – for the right amount of jink. An excerpt of that discussion appears below, followed by notes from the interviewer.

BRIGITTE GUNNARSMOON:
The Free League? Some say it's as old as the Cage itself. Back when the city were splintering—

ERLON MYBROWSE:
You're referring to the Great Upheaval?

BG: Aye, miss, close to 630 years ago, now. We had 49 different factions each claiming their own chunks of the Cage back then. Chaos, it were. Then the Lady – *the* Lady, herself – visited each factol. She'd point at a dabus, and the creature spit out a string of pictures that meant – let's see – it meant: *By order of the Lady of Pain, there will be but 15 factions in Sigil. Organize thy colors by a fortnight hence – or die.*

EM: And hundreds *did* die, if I'm not mistaken.

BG: Well, the 49 factions had to work fast, and they did, for the most part. Inside two weeks, 34 of them dissolved or died. Most members deserted, publicly denouncing their involvement or joining other factions. All told, only 17,734 folks died in the purge.

EM: What? Seventeen thousand—

BG: Actually, of all the factions, the Free League fared the best. A lot of folks who saw their factions go under turned to the League, figuring they'd join the Indeps for a while until all the mess was over. After all, the Indeps didn't even claim to *be* a faction, so folks thought they'd be safe there. Fact is, the Lady's shakeup gave the League the highest membership of any faction *ever* – 'round

about a million registered members, give or take. Today, of course, there's talk about starting up more factions, that the Lady didn't mean folks had to stay at 15 factions *forever*. But—

EM: What's the League's membership today?

BG: Here in Sigil it's dropped to just under 20,000 – and those are just the ones who advertise their membership. Lots of berks call themselves Indeps and don't flaunt it.

EM: Why'd the membership drop so drastically?

BG: Well, miss, they're a rare group, ain't they? Most folks can't handle the freedom of it all – they need focus, direction, *rules*. It's not—

EM: Wait. You're saying that, from more than a *million* members, the Free League dropped to less than 20,000 in – what? – 600 years?

BG: [*uncomfortably*]
Actually, it happened a lot quicker than that – during the first 50 years after the Lady's shakeup.

EM: But . . . but *how* could the numbers drop so fast? Did that many people desert . . . ?

BG: No. They just – they died.

EM: Died?

BG: [*stands up*] Pardon, miss, I've got other duties. I bid yer good day.

EM: But—

BG: Please leave, miss, or the guards in the Hall will be happy to escort you *elsewhere*.

Gunnarsmoon refused all further contact. Public documents from the period in question were spotty at best, but one tome on medicine featured a curious side note on a short-lived plague that swept Sigil some 600-odd years ago – a plague that seemed to strike at the heart of the Free League.

This cryptic reference was all I could find. Could it have been another faction's war on the Indeps – an attempt to rid the city of free-thinkers? Or perhaps something larger – maybe the wrong fiends got peeled in the Great Bazaar and decided to wipe out every Indep they could find. 'Course, only one being truly governs Sigil – the Lady of Pain.

How much saner – and safer – to believe the dead were the victims of a sudden, wretched plague.



BRIA TOMAY

Female human planar
14th-level bard, Free League (leader)
Chaotic neutral

STR	11	INT	15	HP	57
DEX	16	WIS	12	AC	6
CON	9	CHA	17	THACO	12

EQUIPMENT: Padded armor, zither (family heirloom), *bag of tricks*, *luckstone*, *quarterstaff* +2, *ring of protection* +2.

SPELLS/LEVEL: 3/3/3/1.

SPECIAL: Bria has standard bard and faction abilities.

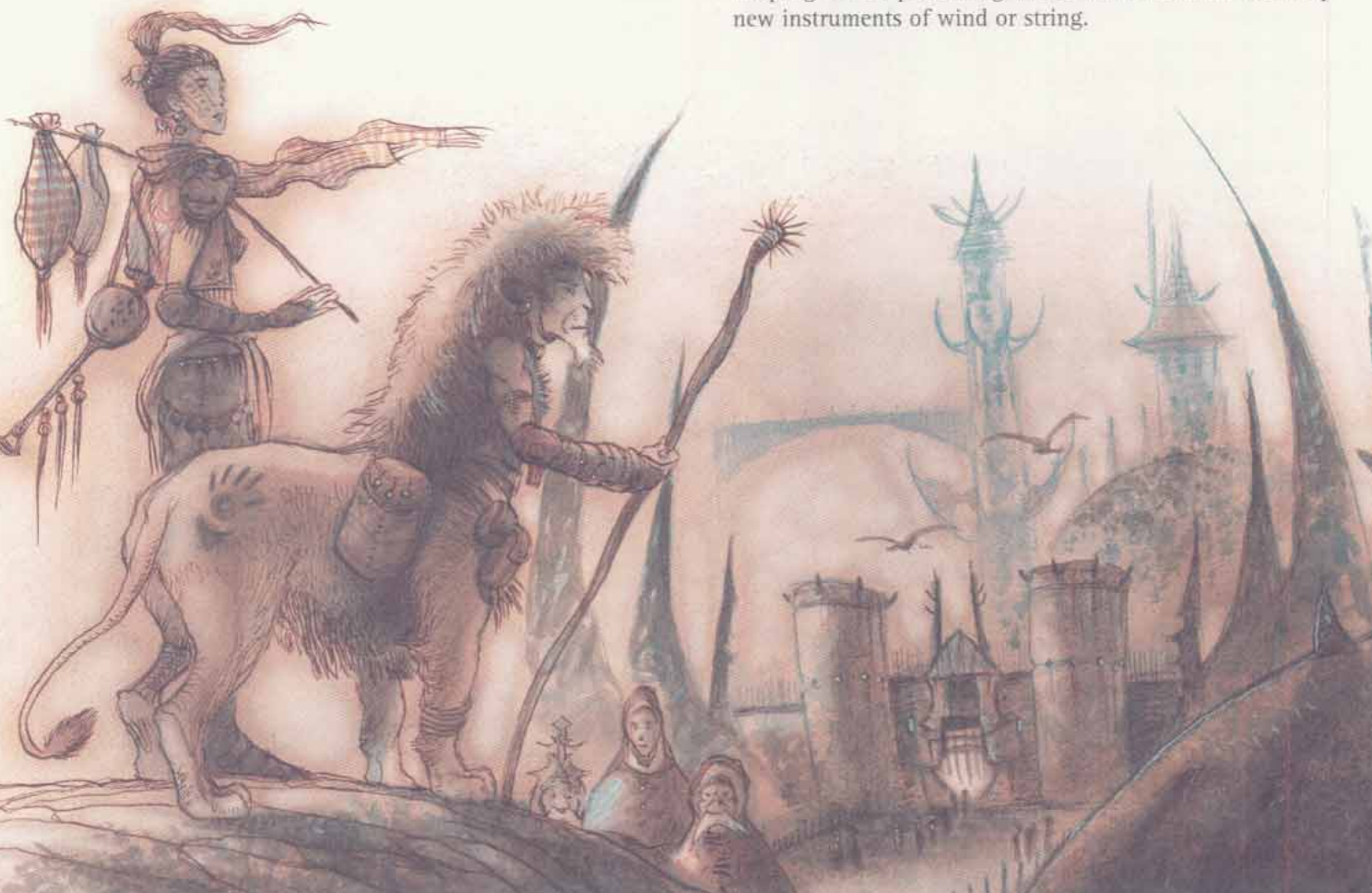
Bria, a bard in her mid-thirties, is from a long line of Sigil silversmiths, many of whom have dabbled in music over the years. Despite her independent nature, she's never left the City of Doors, preferring instead to spin the exploits of others into music. A normally quiet woman, when she speaks or sings before the Indeps a spark of brilliance shines through her ordinary demeanor. She often roams the entirety of Sigil, keeping in touch with Indeps in other wards.

Much of the time, though, Bria's found at Warbling Blades, her father's silversmithy. (*It's found on Redwind Road in the Great Bazaar. — Ed.*) She helps her father and much younger brother with the shop; the three are the last of the Tomays of Sigil. Bria's resisted learning the art of shaping silver, preferring instead to create and develop new instruments of wind or string.

◆ LEADERS OF THE LEAGUE ◆

In the City of Doors, the Free League's power is waning, mostly because its members have no voice. But although the group has no official factol, three people are emerging from the ranks as leaders: Bria Tomay, a human female, and Lethea and Lesander, twin wemics.

The pair of wemics and the human make for a strange trio, but they may be the only chance the faction has. The three have learned of the Harmonium's threat to the faction and have banded together, holding secret meetings with other members of the League in the Bazaar. At first, many Free Leaguers objected — they don't take direction well. But Bria, Lethea, and Lesander know how to handle their fellows. The indisputable fact that more and more Indeps are disappearing from parts of the city has driven their point home.



LE+HEA & LESANDER

Female and male wemics
6th-level fighters, Free League (leaders)
Lawful neutral

STR	16	INT	12	HP	54
DEX	9	WIS	10	AC	4
CON	17	CHA	14	THACO	15

EQUIPMENT: Two javelins each. As they're quite superstitious, they shy from magic; however, Bria's given them silver "bracelets" as presents (these are really *bracers of defense* AC 4).

SPECIAL: The wemics are rarely surprised, and they enjoy a sort of telepathy with each other. Beyond that, they have standard wemic and faction abilities.

The wemics, brother and sister, are immediately recognizable by their intensely russet manes of hair. They're virtually identical in appearance, saving only their gender:

Lethea is female, Lesander male. Captured as cubs on their home-world of Rublia,

they were brought to Sigil by the noted biologist Gorad Drummerhaven — and promptly escaped.

The twins grew up evading capture, learning how to survive on the harsh streets of the Cage. Adversity honed their spirits into ones of fierce independence — as a pair. They're *never* far apart, and they guard each other with savage devotion. So tense are they that they can only be surprised by magical means, such as by someone *teleporting* immediately in front of them. Their bond is unbreakable, and they operate as if they were a single, highly efficient entity, even sharing thoughts through telepathy. (*A band of clever primes once managed to separate the wemics and capture Lesander. Lethea promised to give them anything they desired in ransom, but the berks slipped up and were killed before they could collect. I'm surprised that — powers forbid — more cross-traders haven't tried to succeed where they failed. — Ed.*)

Lethea and Lesander seldom leave the Bazaar, but they roam the trading grounds every day, laying claim to the area as *their* territory (an instinct they've been unable to curb). They know all of the Indeps who frequent the Bazaar, picking up bits of the chant from merchants and customers who pass through daily.

◆ THE GREAT BAZAAR ◆

It's fitting that the Free League doesn't have an actual building for a headquarters, for that'd rather defeat the purpose of "freedom." Throughout Sigil, a number of places offer safe haven to Indeps — usually in exchange for their hiring on as guards for some future caravan run.

Primarily, though, Free Leaguers gather in the plaza holding the tents, caravans, and wagons of the Bazaar (sometimes called the Great or Grand Bazaar). Located in the Market Ward, the Bazaar covers a number of avenues and adjoining side streets, spreading out like the legs of a monstrous spider. Inside the Bazaar a berk can find literally *anything* he might happen to want. Or rather, he can find a merchant *selling* the item; whether the item's actually present is another matter entirely. The plaza's covered with peddlers' stands and tents; anything that can't be carried or hauled in is kept in *bags of holding* or other multidimensional devices. 'Course, anybody who buys something that's not physically present right then and there and doesn't confirm it actually exists is just asking to be peeled. And that's not to mention the pickpockets, fleecers, and other knights of the cross-trade that'll mark a soft target in an instant. A body's got to be careful in the packed aisles of the Bazaar. It's not a place for the naive or sympathetic, for fast-talkers and beggars'll get a sod every time.

But the Bazaar does offer one thing of genuine value: freedom. The Indeps see to that. A merchant's free to ply his trade and get an honest wage for it; he doesn't need to gild the hand of some high-up like he might in one of the other wards. Even the smallest peddler can take his wares to the Bazaar, and the Indeps make sure he gets booth space that won't cost him his first-born.

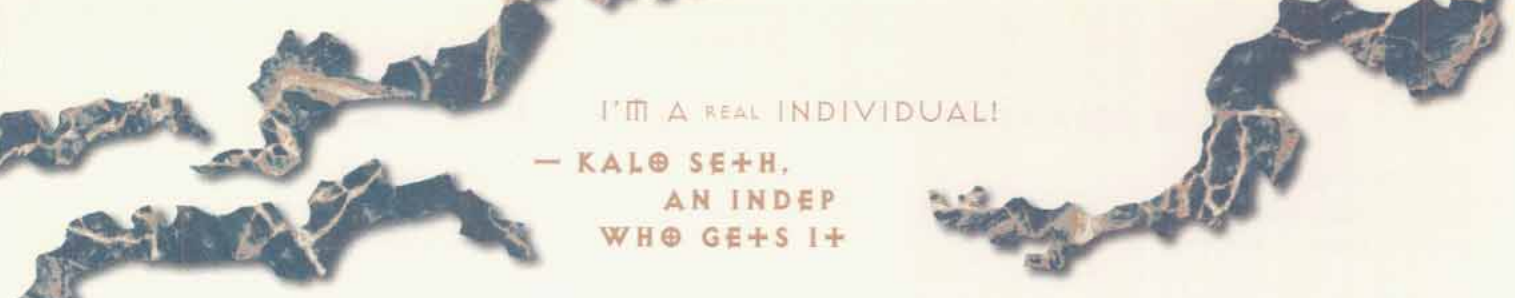
The Bazaar changes constantly, never the same mix of sellers from one week to the next — part of the reason it's taken so long for the Indeps to realize their ranks are vanishing. But the taverns, inns, stables, cafes, and other permanent establishments that line the plaza provide a network of safe houses for the Free League. One of them's the Red Lion Inn.

ONLY +HE WEAK
BELIEVE IN NOTHING.

AN+ON LEVELSKULL.
FAC+OR OF
+HE HARMONIUM

ONLY +HE STRONG
BELIEVE IN +HEMSELVES.

— BRIA TOMAY'S
RESPONSE



I'M A REAL INDIVIDUAL!

— KALΘ SE+H,
AN INDEP
WHΘ GE+S I+

THE RED LION INN

Bria Tomay and Lethea and Lesander frequent this inn, a large hostelry at the edge of the Bazaar. (*The Red Lion's at the corner of Saints Boulevard and Revel Road, a block from Duskgate Road — the main thoroughfare through the Market Ward. — Ed.*) The building's quite a sight, more than 450 feet long, with jagged pillars rising 200 feet into Sigil's sky. Its flat roof serves as a landing field for airborne travelers, as well as aerial quarters for hippogriffs, griffons, and other flyers.

Fact is, the Lion caters mostly to hybrid beings — that is, wemics, centaurs, bariaur, satyrs, and the like. The inside of the inn's on a scale comfortable to such creatures outside the humanoid norm: no chairs, and tables that're either waist-level (for those who prefer to stand on all fours) or knee-level (for those who want to lie down in the soft rushes covering the floor). Spacious stalls provide sleeping quarters for centaurs or bariaur, while wemics and other carnivores can rent cozy dens with exactly one small opening. Apart from Bria Tomay, humans and demihumans are a rare sight at the inn. Unless accompanied by a hybrid companion, humanoid visitors are given the once over and then almost certainly the brush off.

The inn's pillars once supported a multistory structure, but the current owner, Jadex (Pl/♂ centaur/R10/Free League/CN), gutted the building. He left the pillars standing as guideposts to airborne guests. Jadex also left in place the main entrance's portcullis, but added more at all the other entrances to the building, ostensibly as "decor." However, all the portcullises are fully functional, and the Red Lion Inn can effectively close its gates and defend itself quite well in case of siege.

Lethea and Lesander are especially pleased with the Red Lion as a fortress. They feel secure enough to relax; here, the twins actually sleep at the same time. (They have a private den reserved solely for them, one with an additional den hidden behind a secret door.) And Bria frequents the place so often now that Jadex bought her a chair. The trio has begun holding weekly meetings at antipeak (*what some primes call 'midnight' — Ed.*) closing the inn off to all but Indeps.

◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

While the Free League's a loosely based faction, it is a faction nonetheless. Indeps who choose to wear their badge proudly do so not to identify themselves, but to promote the ideas associated with the symbol — namely, acceptance, balance, and individuality. It's also a signal to other Indeps that a potential ally's nearby; Free Leaguers aren't a close-knit group, but they do like to toss the chant around and look out for one another. The Free League's likely to appeal to player characters of independent natures and those who are shy about espousing a particular philosophy.

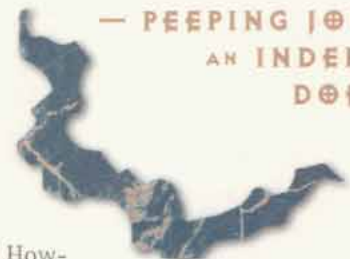
ROLE-PLAYING THE INDEPS

It's hard to be an Indep. Truly independent Free Leaguers have no preconceptions, attitudes, or viewpoints that might cloud the truth of a matter. It's not easy playing a character who has no biases, no prejudices, no leanings one way or another. An Indep might be suspicious, but not judgmental. He doesn't believe that any one philosophy is the be-all and end-all of the multiverse. To embrace one ideology denies independent thought, evaluation, and existence.

Most Indeps, tolerant and open-minded, know how to get along with other factions. They make excellent party members, even though some other factions usually look on them with a skeptical eye, feeling that an Indep's pure neutrality makes him somewhat untrustworthy. But the Indeps' simple attitude and forthright outlook can often act as buffers between less neutral

faction members. After all, a genuinely neutral party member shouldn't take sides in any conflicts that arise between comrades, leaving him free to play the unbiased arbiter in disputes. Furthermore, he's not likely to be swayed by the pleas or machinations of fellow PCs; the true Indep makes up his own mind on any given situation.

Fact is, in parties made up of members from different factions, it's the Indep who often holds the group together. With members of the Fated, he's quite cordial; Takers believe in looking out for themselves first and foremost, and Free Leaguers admire that independence. With all other factions save the Harmonium, an Indep's absolutely neutral, the one who advocates a more standoffish approach in party disputes. 'Course, when a group contains both an Indep and a Hardhead, blows may result, but that makes for exciting role-playing.



ME. +ΘΘ!

— PEEPING IΘMA++.
AN INDEP WHΘ
DOESN'+

THE RED LION INN

0 40 80
Feet

Quarters for Centaurs and Other Herbivores

Innkeep's Private Quarters

Private Stock

Service Entrance

Food Storage and Preparation

Reserved Den

Quarters for Wemics and Other Carnivores

Guest Entrance

Main Floor

Rustling Arena

Registration

Common Room

Bar

Guest Entrance

Herd Meeting Room

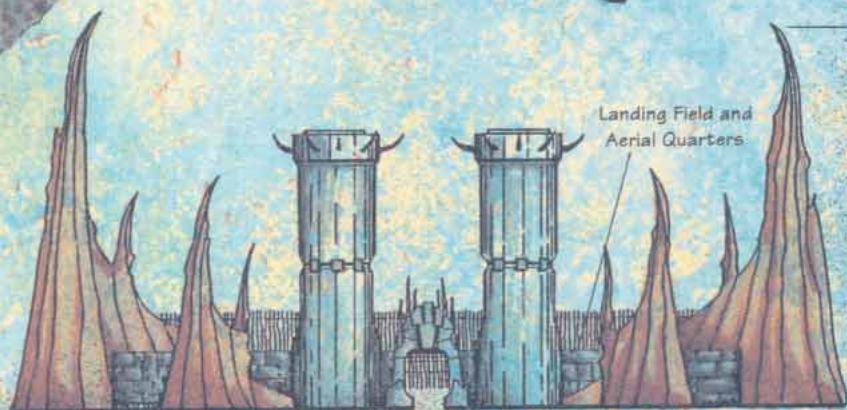
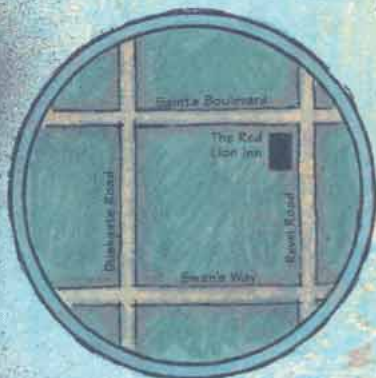
Herd Quarters

Up To Landing Field

Main Entrance

Courtyard

Up To Landing Field



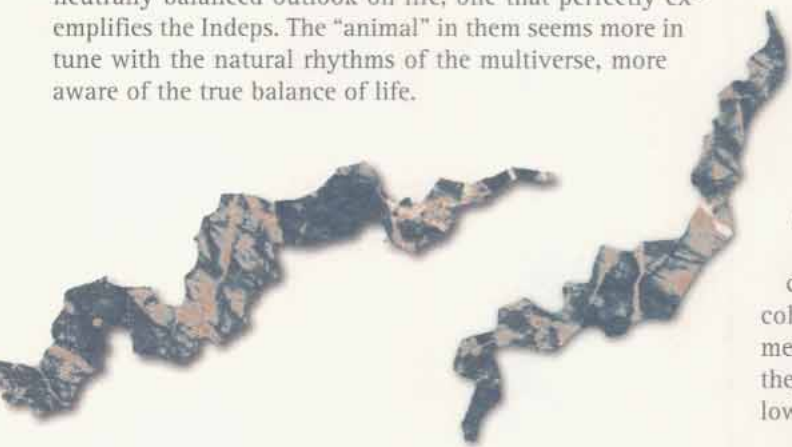
Landing Field and Aerial Quarters

400 feet

200 feet

ALIGNMENT. Most Indeps are neutral, though members of this faction can be of any alignment. But what if a player opts for a Free Leaguer who isn't neutral? Should a lawful good Indep help the world around him, while a chaotic evil Indep fosters the seeds of vile treachery everywhere? Not necessarily. Of all the factions, the Free League's least swayed by the ideals of the multiverse – or the alignment of its members. And those with strong tendencies toward good and evil tend to shun this faction, finding its unbiased premise disconcerting. Indeed, an Indep PC of any good or evil alignment won't be as trusted by other Free Leaguers; he won't have access to the faction's underground network of information (see "Indep Membership," below).

RACE. The Free League's open to any race, of course, but it's worth noting that hybrid beings seem to prefer the League over other factions. Perhaps because of their dual nature, bariaur, satyrs, wemics, centaurs, and the like have a more neutrally balanced outlook on life, one that perfectly exemplifies the Indeps. The "animal" in them seems more in tune with the natural rhythms of the multiverse, more aware of the true balance of life.



INDEP MEMBERSHIP

Free Leaguers accept others for what they are, imposing no restrictions on members in terms of race, sex, alignment, or class. Anyone with an independent spirit and a questioning mind can join – just ask any Indep for admittance. He'll throw out a few questions, like: *What do you believe in?* (The answer'd better not be something concrete; if it is, the Free Leaguer steers the berk toward the appropriate faction.) *What would you give up your independence for?* (The answer'd better be a resounding "Nothing!") Then the candidate's warned that, with no factol, the Free League has no representation – and few rights – in Sigil. If the berk's still willing to sign up, all that remains is buying a round of hot drinks for his new fellow Indeps.

FACTION ABILITIES. As noted in *A Player's Guide to the Planes* in the *PLANESCAPE Campaign Setting*, Free Leaguers have a natural resistance to charms, be they from spells, creatures, or magical items. Indeps save vs. charm with +2

bonuses to their rolls. Against charms that don't normally allow saving throws, they still make a throw (though without the bonus).

But an Indep's resistance goes beyond that of direct attempts to charm. So strong is a Free Leaguer's will that he can save with a +2 bonus against all *other* attempts to affect his mind, no matter what the source (again, being granted a saving throw – though without the bonus – even against attempts that normally don't allow one). This includes psionic powers (such as domination), magical items (such as a *ring of delusion*), and special creature attacks (such as a beholder's gaze). And if a berk simply tries to sweet-talk a Free Leaguer into lending him a hand or a bit of jink, well, he doesn't stand a chance. Indeps won't fall for an impassioned cry for help or buy a "miracle cure" from a snake-oil salesman on the basis of his hawking abilities.

The Indeps aren't a tight group, but they do look out for their own. Free Leaguers who buy wares in the Bazaar of Sigil get a 20% discount on all items purchased. What's more, an Indep PC of 3rd level or above has access to the faction's underground network of information; such contacts make him twice as likely to pick up important bits of the chant. And in public scuffles, a Free Leaguer who makes his faction known is twice as likely to get help from other Indeps passing by.

In general, though, the Indeps don't hand out special powers and equipment to every berk wearing the colors. But they know that other factions *do* outfit their members, and Indeps always like to know the dark of who they're dealing with. One way they do that is with the following spell:

KNOW FACTION (Divination)
1st-level priest or wizard spell

Range: 20 yards
Duration: 1 round/XP level
Area of Effect: Special

Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1
Saving Throw: Neg.

The *know faction* spell enables the caster to determine a body's faction just by looking at him. It lasts one round per level of the caster; each round, the caster can determine the faction of one creature within range. If a target is trying to conceal his faction, the DM can roll a saving throw vs. spell for the target, with success meaning that the spell fails. (*The DM must make the roll secretly so the target won't know if his true faction's been detected or not.* – Ed.) Note that an Anarchist spy automatically makes the saving throw, as members of the Revolutionary League can pose as members of other factions.

On occasion, the *know faction* spell reveals a creature's deep-rooted philosophical beliefs instead of its faction. For example, a priest who worships a power of death may be mistaken for a Dustman.

◆ THE CHANT ◆

Word's spreading through the Great Bazaar that the Harmonium seems to be stepping up its efforts to collar Free Leaguers. A potter named Austick (Pl/♂ gnome/0-level/Free League/LN) even swears he overheard two Hardheads passing by his stall joke about supplying the Mercykillers with slaves and troops for wars on Acheron. Indeed, the Hardheads're arresting quite a number of Indeps throughout Sigil, but so far the "incidents" have all taken place beyond the confines of the Bazaar. As such, Bria Tomay and Lethea and Lesander have been recommending that the Indeps retreat from the rest of the Cage to the Bazaar, there to make a stand if the Harmonium should authorize an all-out affront. All but the most stubborn Indeps have moved to the marketplace or nearby.

The Bazaar is large enough to hold the influx – barely. But nearly all of the sleeping establishments are full up, and quite a few merchants from out of town have been refused lodging. No one's yet come to blows over the problem, but there's plenty of grumbling.

Bria and the twins are said to be discussing various lines of defense against the Hardheads: sending spies to infiltrate the Harmonium, getting Indeps to act as bait to ambush roaming Hardheads, even making a strong counterstrike to stave off what might turn into a full-scale war. Any Free Leaguers interested in helping the cause should inquire after Bria at the Red Lion Inn.

It's also worth noting that the chant says the Red Lion's got secret portals to the Outlands, which are used to bring in supplies. Sister Zil (Pl/♀ tiefling/P4/Free League/NE), a minister to beggars in the Bazaar, sat in on a recent faction meeting at the inn. She says talk centered around the possibility of using the portals to bring more Indep troops into Sigil.

Unfortunately, the Hardheads aren't the only problem facing the Free League right now. A number of Indeps in the Cage've come down with a strange illness that makes them lapse into a sweaty, babbling fever. So far, every sod that's contracted the disease has died (some within an hour, some lasting as long as three weeks). No known cure seems to help; no one even knows what's causing the sickness, though some Indeps blame the Hardheads for this, too. But a few Free League wizards in Tradegate have been working on the problem since the first victim fell ill, and word now is they just might have found something.

◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

Despite the numerous rumors swirling around the Harmonium's apparent push to rid the Cage of Indeps, the matter's simpler – but no less dangerous – than most

Free Leaguers think. An underground splinter group (consisting mostly of evil berks) has formed within the Harmonium, dedicated to getting rid of the free-thinking Indeps. They'll beat or even kill an Indep if they think they can get away with it, secretly letting the Dustmen's Collectors dispose of the bodies in the Mortuary. Otherwise, they'll just scrag the sod, often on a trumped-up charge, and then use garnish or blackmail to see that he lands in a prison cell. *(The harsh sentencing guidelines recently instituted by the new factot of the Mercykillers is a boon to the Hardheads' plan. – Ed.)* No other factions are directly involved in the rogue Hardheads' assaults, and Free Leaguers aren't being rounded up to be sold as slaves or for any other reason – it's just hatred and intolerance, pure and simple.

The Harmonium ain't to blame for the dramatic culling of the Free League's ranks in the years following the Great Upheaval, though – that falls on the Lady of Pain. When she issued her mandate on the factions, she had no idea how many sods would flock to the banner of independence when their own factions died. The Lady's always been able to manipulate the more rabid factions, keeping the lawfuls and the chaotics too busy jumping through one hoop after another to cause any real trouble. But she couldn't find the right carrot to dangle in front of a million neutral free-thinkers, and that may have made her uneasy. So she just slashed the faction down to a more manageable size.

Even today, she monitors the Free League more carefully than she does any other faction. And, amused by historians' attempts to attribute the massive Indep deaths to some sudden plague, she's created a *real* plague that's striking the League today. Every time an Indep PC enters Sigil, the DM must secretly roll percentile dice for the character. A roll of 98 or higher indicates the PC has caught the fever and will die in either 1d10 days (if the percentile roll was 98 or 99) or 1d20 hours (if the percentile roll was 00). During that time, the PC remains in a feverish state, unable to fight, speak, or even think coherently. No cure or resurrection attempts will succeed outside of Tradegate; only in that Indep gate-town do they know the dark of curing the plague. *(The DM's free to invent the specifics of the cure. – Ed.)*

Finally, despite Indep rumors to the contrary, the Red Lion Inn contains only a single portal. Located just off one of the rooms in Jadex's private quarters, the archway seems to be an ordinary entry to extra storage. But any person carrying through a polished shard of a baku's tusk will be transported to Tradegate (the DM may choose the entry point). The gate key for the return trip is one of the thousands of gold and purple tiles that cover the sprawling plaza of Tradegate's bazaar, though it's hard to rip one up without being noticed.

THE HARMONIUM

All right, you berks, listen up.

You've just made the best choice of your lives. By joining the Harmonium, you're on your way from berk to blood. Universal harmony's the goal. It may not be the goal of the multiverse — though the powers know it should be — but it is *our* goal, and it is the correct goal. Things get accomplished better in an atmosphere of peace and harmony. Got it? Now, some berks resist

peace. But members of the Harmonium believe in peace so much, we're willing to fight for it. Accept peace, or consider yourself at war with the Harmonium. Our might will make right.

That work for all of you? If not, leave this minute. We have the right of it, see? To make sure you'll have the right of it too, you'll begin an eight-week program — what? No talking in the ranks! Never interrupt me. Get out, you three — the Harmonium gives no second chances.

As I was saying, we start you off with our eight-week training program. The physical training portion of this program begins immediately after this indoctrination session. This week of training will send you, at planned times, to some uncomfortable places. It may seem

meaningless to you, but it's not. Physical exertion to the point of exhaustion numbs your minds. That's what we want. During this first week, you will forget all you think you know. Your instructors will break down all the wrong-headed beliefs you have in your pitiful brain-boxes.

In the second week, we'll issue you a copy of this book I'm holding right now. It's the *Book of the Harmonium*, which describes our rules and regulations. You will learn every word. At the start of the third week you'll receive a second book, *The Sigil Municipal Code*. Since the Harmonium makes up the City Watch, you must know the city's laws. For the most part, just support universal harmony and make sure people behave themselves. Don't worry too much about the details of the city code — that's for the Fraternity of Order to sort out. During the program's third week, you also will begin training in law enforcement, including methods of capturing and restraining criminals using standard equipment, like the *planar mancatchers*.*

By the fourth week, you might begin to feel like you know something. Don't let it go to your heads — you haven't even started. During week four, we test your knowledge of Sigil and teach you landmarks important for finding your way around the city. At the end of the week, your instructor'll blindfold you (and plug your ears and whatever else it takes) and dump you alone somewhere in the Cage. You'll have a set time to find your way back to the barracks.

In the fifth week, you'll study the other factions, so you can learn to recognize the troublemakers. In the sixth week, we introduce you to members of the Mercykillers and the Fraternity of Order. You'll be working with them to administer justice. The seventh week of training is always interesting: We test you on all the knowledge you've acquired, but under adverse conditions. Finally, your eighth week you spend patrolling with Harmonium members. Those bloods will evaluate you at the end of the week. Once in, you earn regular promotions through the ranks.

You have made the right choice, and others will follow in your footsteps. Now, get to your instructors.

— Factol Sarin of the Harmonium
(from an indoctrination session for new recruits)

NICE BUNCH OF GUYS.
UNIVERSAL
PEACE AND HARMONY —
OR ELSE!

— THE EDITOR

** Editor's Note: Every Harmonium patrol carries at least one planar mancatcher, a long pole with a set of sharp jaws at one end. The runes engraved into the steel of this +2 weapon prevent plane-shifters like githyanki from escaping.*



▲ HERITAGE OF ◆ AMBITION ◆

The Harmonium's been around a couple of centuries, maybe more. It depends on who a basher listens to. According to the faction itself — and any member'll tell a body the same thing, 'cause it's drummed into them at indoctrination — the group was founded about 500 years ago on a prime world called Ortho. There, a group of adventurers went off to "rid the country of chaos and bring peace to the land." Simple enough goal, right? Many aspire to the same thing.

Thing is, this group actually went and did it.

They brought peace and harmony to their land, so they started calling themselves the Harmonium. And then they moved on to other lands, and spread some peace and harmony there too. It was tough work, sometimes, because they had to force the peace on some poor berks who didn't know what was best for 'em. But the Harmonium willingly took on these difficult jobs. Eventually, they delivered their whole world into peace and harmony. Naturally, spreading peace throughout the world required the Harmonium to eliminate a lot of nasty types — all those wrong-headed, free-thinking folks who love to cause trouble. Those who journey to Ortho today say it's a very rigid place, where dwarves, orcs, beholders and humans all work together under the Harmonium's law. There's not an elf or a pixie to be seen anywhere, though.

The Harmonium ruled their world, and their world knew peace and harmony. *(If not exactly happiness. — Ed.)* Then the problems started.

Seems that every once in a while, chaos and discord managed to rear their ugly heads. The Harmonium leaders got tired of this occasional disorder and got together to discuss the matter. The high-ups decided that the chaos must originate somewhere else — it couldn't come from within their own perfect world, after all. Suspecting the culprits came from the Outer Planes, the Harmonium mounted an expedition and journeyed to the Abyss. After getting their rumps kicked from the Plain of Infinite Portals to the Caverns of the Skull Goddess and back again, they decided they needed another plan. So, the Harmonium expedition relocated to Sigil, to establish a beachhead of sorts.

And here they have remained.

The faction found some like-minded folks in Sigil — folks like the Guvners — and the Lady of Pain seems to approve of the order they bring to the Cage. They also found targets for their war for peace in the numerous folks of other factions. A lot of those groups regard Harmonium

members as playground bullies, a bunch of berks who want to spoil the fun for everyone. But ask a Hardhead, and he'll tell you he's absolutely right about the Way it Should Be.

Oh, the Harmonium's made some mistakes in its time, though the members'd never admit to it. Just ask a high-up about the recent Arcadia "incident" and watch him twitch while he tries to come up with some kind of answer. *(The Harmonium accidentally allowed the third layer of the plane to slip into Mechanus, as recounted in the Planes of Law boxed set. — Ed.)* Or mention the town of Fortitude on the Outlands; that's also a sore spot with the Hardheads that know about it. *(In response to the loss of the Arcadian layer, the faction tried to shift this town to Arcadia in the adventure Fires of Dis. — Ed.)*

There's also the matter of the world of Athas, the prime planet that's home to lots of giant, psionic bugs, among other things. It seems that a few thousand years ago, a bunch of bashers called the "Champions of Rajaat" went about warring on others to eliminate chaos and bring peace. Sounds familiar, right? Well, the Harmonium wasn't around back then, so the faction couldn't have been involved — although time does some funny things between planes, once in a while. Or maybe the Harmonium took some inspiration from the Champions. Thing is, bashers who've been to Athas call it an awful, dry world wrecked by magic. Almost anything would eat a body just for walking by, they say. Is that what the Harmonium wants?

'Course, the Hardheads deny it. Present-day Athas resulted from the actions of right-minded barmies who didn't know when to quit, they claim. The Harmonium knows to back off before that point. So they say.

Harmonium members do have their work cut out for them — after all, the Cage doesn't exactly embrace peace and law. The Hardheads get some help along the way,

though, from the Guvners and the

Mercykillers, their partners in crime. *(That is, in stopping crime. — Ed.)* The Harmonium makes the arrests, the Guvners conduct the trials, and the Mercykillers enforce the punishment. All three factions believe in law and order, so they work pretty well together, though the Hardheads seem happy that the painfully meticulous, fill-this-out-in-triplicate Guvners don't actually create the laws.

On the other hand, the "wheel of justice" finds opposition in the friends of chaos, like the Indeps, the Revolutionary League, and the Xaositects. 'Course, the Free



THE MULTIVERSE
HAS ALWAYS NEEDED
SOMEONE LIKE US.

— FIRST LINE IN THE
BOOK OF THE HARMONIUM



League seems too independent to constitute much of a threat, but the Anarchists and the Chaosmen can prove dangerous. The Harmonium also considers dangerous the selfish or destructive attitudes of the Fated, the Bleakers, and the Doomguard, as well. The Doomguard has become a special thorn in the Harmonium's side, because this faction controls the Armory and keeps weapons out of Harmonium hands, preventing the Hardheads from launching a full-scale war for peace. Then again, this arrangement suits everyone else fine, from the Lady down to the Clueless.

The Harmonium considers the Athar and the Godsmen a bit barmy, in light of their weird beliefs, but harmless in the end. Hardheads tend to ignore the relatively inoffensive — if spooky — Dustmen. The Signers can become annoying, with their great egos, but like the rest, they seem largely ineffectual; in fact, the Signers help preserve the peace by running the Hall of Speakers and getting the factions to meet. The Sensates also prove little threat, but most Harmonium feel leery of them anyway; by wanting to experience everything, the Sensates go around looking for disorder. The Clueless, though they can become magnets for trouble, remain acceptable to the Harmonium.

The Ciphers seem an interesting bunch. They seek harmony of mind and body — so far, so good, according to Harmonium beliefs. By uniting thought and deed in harmony, a cutter's spirit can align with the multiverse. Thing is, Ciphers seek individual harmony — not too consistent with the universal harmony the Hardheads want. Also, Ciphers act without thinking, which counters the Harmonium desire to think everything through — or at least appear to. Here's the dark of it, though: The Ciphers resemble the Harmonium a bit too much for comfort. Besides their search for harmony, both groups like members to feel so sure of themselves that they act with no prior reflection. The Hardheads see a half-twisted reflection of themselves in the Ciphers, and it bothers them enough to remain peery of 'em.

The Harmonium's outlook on the various other factions dictates how the Hardheads will go about accomplishing their long-range goal of peace. Don't forget, the Hardheads're willing to fight for it. Encouraged by their success long ago on their prime world, Harmonium members truly believe everyone one day will come around and join them. In the meantime, members can eliminate troublemakers: starting with the Anarchists, Xaositects, and Indeps.

◆ FACTOL SARIN ◆

Male human prime
16th-level paladin, Harmonium (factol)
Lawful good

STR	17	INT	13	HP	97
DEX	15	WIS	13	AC	0
CON	17	CHA	17	THACO	5

EQUIPMENT: Red steel plate armor of command, two scimitars +2, gauntlets of ogre power, ring of fire resistance, cloak.

SPELLS/LEVEL: 3/3/2/1.

SPECIAL: Sarin casts spells as an 8th-level priest from the spheres of combat, divination, healing, and protection. In addition to his other standard paladin and faction abilities, he specializes in the use of the scimitar and in the two-weapon style. (See The Complete Fighter's Handbook. — Ed.)



THE RIGHT WAY
IS THE HARMONIUM WAY.

— FACTOL SARIN



The chant says Factol Sarin comes from the Harmonium world of Ortho, where he moved through the ranks to become a high-up. Deserving of promotion, Sarin chose to go to Sigil, rather than take the easier route through the ranks of the prime Harmonium worlds. He

knew Sigil would be a rough posting compared to one on Ortho and that he'd arrive a near Clueless. And he still wanted the Cage.

This fact ought to tell even a leatherhead one thing: Sarin feels dedicated to the Harmonium cause. This commitment shows in his every word, his every action. Since arriving in Sigil some two decades ago, he has become the ultimate Hardhead, embodying all the reasons his faction got pinned with the nickname.

Sarin's tough — not even a barmy or a Clueless ever would suggest otherwise. He believes unshakably in the Harmonium's cause and will do anything honorable, lawful, and good to promote peace and harmony. Not surprisingly, this attitude makes it very difficult for a lot of folks to deal with Sarin.

And the factol deals with a lot of people. Because he remains active in Sigil, locals see his imposing figure on the streets with some regularity. The tall, broad-shouldered factol wears a perpetually severe look and his unmistakable armor, made of a prime-world metal some call red steel. The front of the armor is decorated with the Harmonium's faction symbol, and the spikes sprouting from the shoulders and helmet resemble the Lady of Pain's own shining blades. The likeness is no coincidence; Sarin likes to remind bashers that he supports the order of the Cage, and that he supports the Lady by doing so.

Anyway, the factol's appearance attracts attention, and so does his personality. Some Harmonium members might feel inclined to soft-sell the faction, but not Sarin. No, he'll take the chance to lecture anyone, anytime, if he doesn't think they understand the absolute *correctness* of the Hardhead cause. He also feels he can increase his people's morale by performing himself the tasks he asks them to do. Sarin doesn't figure he's doing a good job unless he arrests someone personally, at least every day or two.

The factol makes himself accessible to faction members in a social context, if they happen to run into him — but he'll talk faction business only with cutters who go through the proper procedures to get an audience with him. He'll deal straight with any faction member, and treats everybody fairly — at least given the Harmonium view of "fair."

Sarin has a smooth, deep voice that can really boom in a lecture hall or on the streets of the Cage. He can act charming, almost friendly — when he wants. But even when he's harping on the Hardhead chant or drumming the law into some poor cross-trader's brain-box, his magnetic personality commands respect. Without a doubt, Sarin numbers among the finest leaders in Sigil. He even has the respect of other factols, including those who hate him or disagree with him. The Hardhead even occasionally sways them to work with him — though that works partly because of the threat his faction presents to those who don't behave. Make no mistake, though, Sarin deserves respect, and he gets it; he never has to lead through intimidation.

Sarin has headed the faction for a little more than five years so far, and he's looking forward to leading it for a long time to come. The even-tempered blood's not given to rash decisions that might get him booted, so he likely will hang around for a good, long time.

Besides being a prime and a charismatic and popular leader, Sarin sticks out among most factols for another reason: He's married and has a family. His wife, Faith, is a priest (Pl/♀ human/P12/Harmonium/LG), one of the faction's spiritual leaders. Sarin and Faith have nine children, all of whom they raise in a loving but disciplined fashion. Their oldest, a girl of 14 named Marinda, already plans to join the Harmonium.

◆ CITY BARRACKS ◆

The imposing City Barracks looks like a gargantuan slab of stone heavy enough to crush the very streets. The structure, with its spiked gray slate roof, appears dull but impenetrable and can house more than 1,000 people. It has a single entrance, over which rises an arch in the shape of two arms raised, clasping hands to form a huge fist. (*Some say the high-ups have their own private entrance, but the location's dark.* — Ed.) The barracks is an ugly place — not that any basher wants a Hardhead to hear him say so.

The Lady's Ward around this headquarters remains calm and orderly — faction members see to that! Local businesses — few and far between — all make sure they toe the line this close to the Hardheads' home base. The first thing a body encounters on the approach to the Harmonium's barracks

is a group of guards. Four stand watch at the building's entrance at all times, day or night, no matter what conditions arise around them. They stop everyone who enters, asking simply,

"Who goes there?" The guards reject anyone without a good reason to visit the headquarters but allow Harmonium members to pass, assuming they have faction concerns.

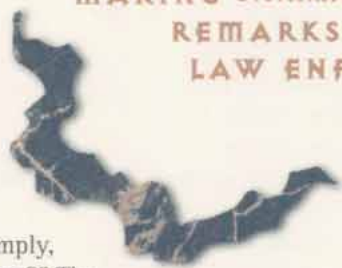
Visitors walk beneath the clasped stone hands arching above the doorway and into a reception area just inside the main door. Non-Harmonium visitors must sign in here and state their business to the faction's receptionist. If she approves the visitor, she issues a pass the guest must wear while in the building. Only

Harmonium may enter freely; those that don't know their way around receive a faction member to guide them.

(*Generally those just out of training.* — Ed.) The receptionist, Diana the Guardian, reminds visitors to stay with their assigned guides at all times.

WHAT AN UGLY BUILDING!

— FARVIS, A CLUELESS,
JUST BEFORE A HARDHEAD
ARRESTED HIM FOR
"MAKING DISPARAGING
REMARKS ABOUT
LAW ENFORCEMENT
OFFICIALS"



DIANA + THE GUARDIAN

Female human planar
12th-level Enchanter, Harmonium (factotum)
Lawful neutral

STR	10	INT	16	HP	31
DEX	17	WIS	15	AC	6
CON	16	CHA	17	THACO	17

EQUIPMENT: *Ring of protection +1, medallion of ESP, staff.*

SPELLS/LEVEL: 5/5/5/5/2.

SPECIAL: Diana's spellbook contains nearly all enchantments of the spell levels she can access, as well as most divination spells, such as *know alignment*. DMs can give her others, but at least one in each level must be *enchantment/charm*. Diana has standard wizard and faction abilities.

A pleasant human in her late 30s, Diana has belonged to the Harmonium for more than a decade and feels very devoted to the group. She's cheerful, bright, and extremely professional, greeting each visitor as he comes in. The receptionist uses divinations and other spells as appropriate in case of trouble or if she senses something unusual in a visitor. She employs a *medallion of ESP* to sense people's intentions and detect when they lie to her.

Diana makes all visitors feel welcome and all Harmonium members feel at home. Her social skills hide her innate toughness, causing more than one intruder to underestimate her. She has called the exterior guards several times to scrag shady types they passed through – she doesn't put up with attitude from anyone.

classrooms, one arrives at a number of dormitories. These sleeping quarters for namers are segregated by gender. The faction discourages fraternization between officers and those of lower ranks by giving the namers quarters downstairs but locating factotums' and factors' rooms on the upper level.

A small auditorium takes up one tower on the first level; a much larger hall encompassing both levels of another tower is used for thrice-daily briefings, held before Harmonium patrols leave for each shift of duty in the city. These auditoriums come in handy for mass meetings, such as addresses from the factotum. The small amphitheater holds some 200 people, while the larger one houses 500.

The back hallway leads past a training room and a mess hall. These facilities have duplicates on this level and upstairs as well. The faction's very extensive library holds books related to law, as well as books of poetry and approved fiction. The library also offers confiscated religious tracts in abundance and multiple copies of the *Book of the Harmonium* and *The Sigil Municipal Code*. Faction members can check books out for a week at a time.

From the ground floor, one can gain access to the immense courtyard the City Barracks encloses. Portions of the recruits' physical training take place here; so do regular exercise sessions for the namers and daily parade march practices. Faction high-ups remain always conscious of appearance, and only frequent drilling gives namers and officers alike the polished military demeanor that so impresses the folk of Sigil.

LEVEL 2: FACION AREAS

The Harmonium reserves access to the second level of the barracks for faction members only. Directly above the library lies the large records room, which holds scrolls listing the Harmonium's membership, along with each Hardhead's current assignment and supervisor. This tower chamber also contains books describing the known history of the Harmonium. In addition, the faction maintains record scrolls of all arrests made by Harmonium patrols in Sigil; a large staff of

clerks tracks wrongdoers, updating the records regularly. Bashers who think the Harmonium's all about fighting to enforce the law get a rude awakening when they find themselves assigned to the records room for a week or two.

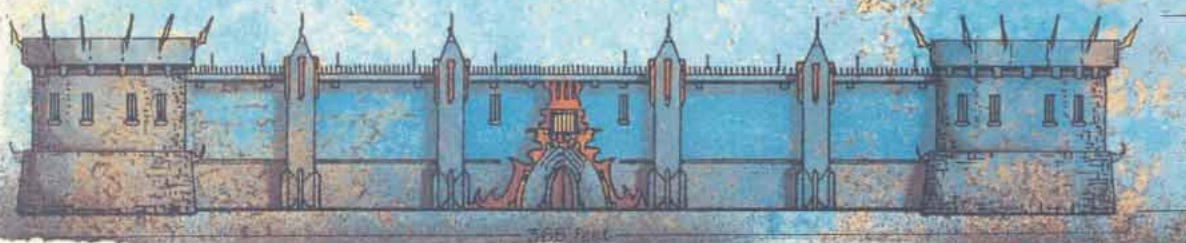
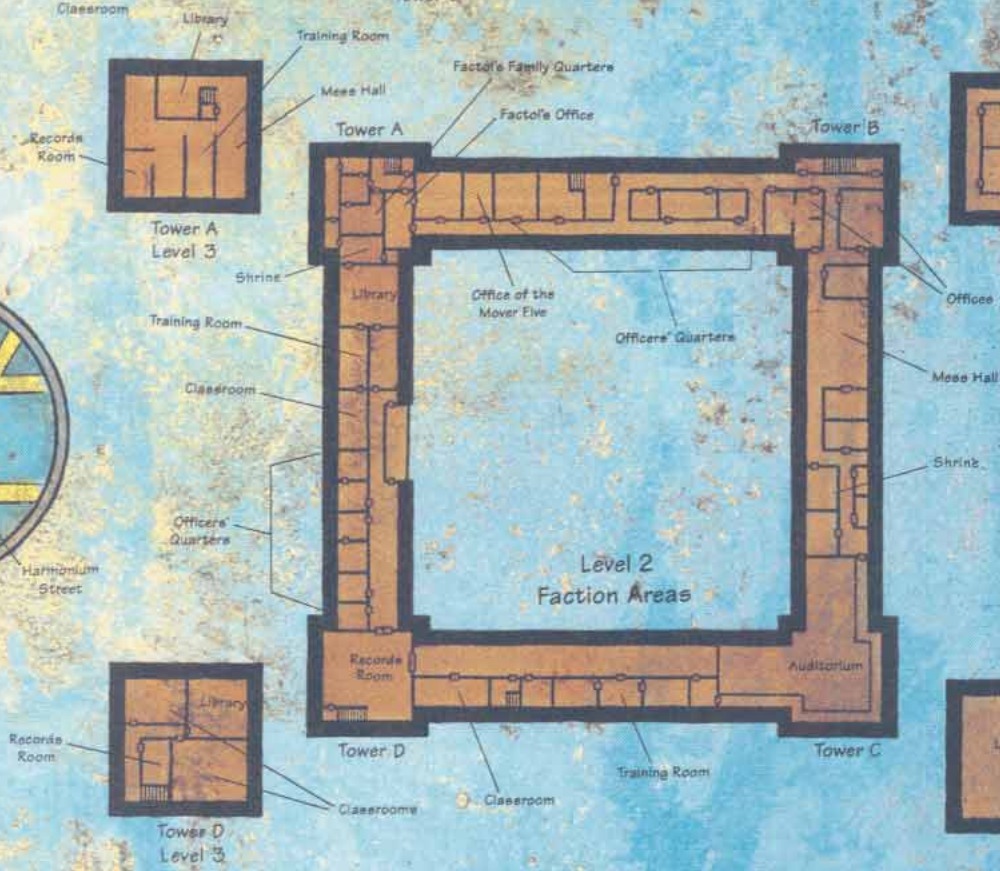
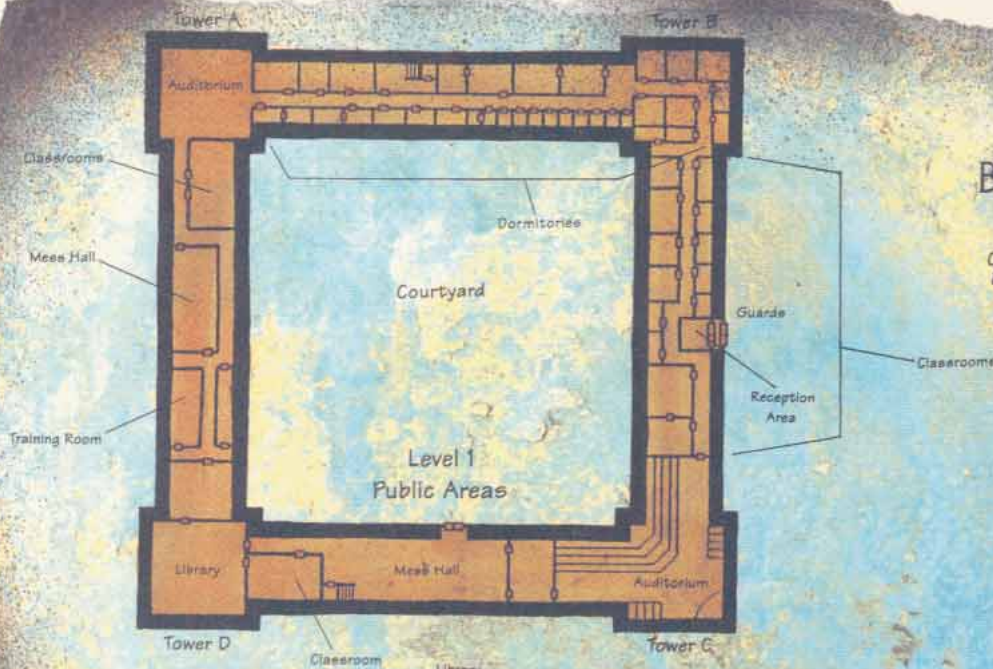
LEVEL 1: PUBLIC AREAS

Once through the reception area, a basher emerges into the public portion of the City Barracks, encountering the first of many classrooms scattered throughout the ground level. In these large rooms, recruits receive instruction, though they attend lessons at the faction's headquarters in Arcadia as well. In addition, Hardheads might visit a classroom for a more advanced officer training class or an official briefing. The rooms hold long tables for study, and dozens of chairs. A classroom typically holds a small stage and instructor's lectern, too.

Walking along the stark, well-lit hallway of the City Barracks, a basher can hear the sound of heavy footsteps echoing. After passing a number of other

CITY BARRACKS

0 80 160
Feet



The upstairs level holds two shrines for personal religious observances. One tower's second floor holds several faction offices.

Officers' quarters lie along the upstairs hallway. Factotums and factors live two to a room. Each chamber has simple furnishings: two single beds, two small tables, and three chairs. The rooms also feature small storage closets. The faction allows some personal decorations, as long as the officers keep them inside the rooms. Garish or overly lavish accessories ain't allowed in officers' country.

Just past the officers' quarters is the office of Sarin's second-in-command, Tonat Shar. This factor handles a lot of the faction's daily business, leaving Sarin free to guide the Harmonium as a whole. The factol gives Shar a good amount of responsibility and power, training him for eventual succession to faction leadership.

Because Shar deals with individual Hardheads more often than Sarin, it's not unusual to see officers as well as the lower ranks in Shar's office. Each morning, the high-up briefs the other factors on faction business. His office, somewhat larger than the factol's, is set up specifically for briefings.

Shar's office holds a large desk, two utility tables, and a large conference table. A dozen chairs sit around the conference table, and another four chairs wait near Shar's desk, allowing him to hold more intimate briefings. The walls bear no decorations, though in a drawer in one of the smaller tables Shar keeps a number of maps that duplicate the ones the factol has hanging on the walls of his office.

TONAT SHAR

Male human planar
9th-level fighter, Harmonium (factor)
Lawful good

STR	18/54	INT	12	HP	53
DEX	17	WIS	12	AC	3
CON	16	CHA	13	THACO	12

EQUIPMENT: Red leather armor +2, two-handed sword +1.

SPECIAL: Shar enjoys all faction and fighter abilities standard for his race and class.

Shar, though as tall as a typical human, has a build burly enough for a dwarf. He wears armor of red

leather with a bright blue Harmonium emblem on the right breast. The factor's serious, severe, and businesslike – and he looks it. Unlike Sarin, who'll smirk to charm his followers, Shar never cracks a grin. Officers who work with him have learned to recognize the occasional gleam in his eye as a sign of excitement.

What he lacks in charm, Shar makes up for in fairness. When he interviews someone, he listens intently, maybe asks a pointed question or three, then makes his decision. The factol must agree with him, 'cause he's never contradicted one of Shar's judgments.

Shar remains crisp and professional at all times. That is, he's always on duty, never taking time away from the faction's cause. As the chant goes, Shar doesn't really have a friend. He sees himself as a sort of father to the Harmonium family, and, while he'll offer support, he doesn't get too involved with the personal lives of the members. The blood just wants to remain objective.

Though not as beloved by his people as Factol Sarin, Shar has every bit as much respect. His accessibility does a lot to overcome the emotional distance he puts between himself and the other Hardheads. Shar would do anything for his organization, and has followed Sarin to Baator and back. Every member of the Harmonium who deals with Shar agrees that he's the right person to take up the job of factol – though they hope that doesn't happen very soon, since they all do like Sarin so much.

But the factol hasn't actually said Shar'll take his place one day – there is the one other factor of Shar's rank to consider: Killeen Caine. Caine (Pl/♂ half-elf/W15/Harmonium/LN) maintains the faction's headquarters in Melodia on the plane of Arcadia. Regardless of Caine's charm and success, the chant puts the smart jink on Shar to make factol.

Once past Shar's office, only a few steps more lead to the factol's office. This chamber holds simple furnishings, including a large desk, two good-sized tables, and a half-dozen chairs. On the walls hang maps of Sigil, as well as maps of other trouble spots currently important to the faction. Right now, these include maps of Arcadia, Mechanus, and the towns of Fortitude and Xaos. A lot of colored markers have been stuck on the maps.

'Course, a non-Harmonium rarely ends up in Sarin's office; such interviews the factol normally conducts in one of the briefing rooms. Only faction members – or high-up visitors – step into the factol's office, for an interview with Sarin or to receive orders.



Next door is the factol's family quarters, a collection of rooms for Sarin, Faith, and their nine children. Other than being larger, the factol's quarters aren't much different than the quarters of his officers. Sarin believes this fact makes him more appealing to the regular rank and file — he wants to be "just one of the cutters." He's right, too. The officers and namers alike respect Sarin more for not maintaining a lavish style.

UPPER TOWERS

The four towers of the City Barracks each rise one level taller than the main building. One tower consists of a landing area for winged messengers and faction members. The other three hold additional small libraries, records storage rooms, classrooms, training rooms, and a mess hall.

NEAR THE HEADQUARTERS

A lot of factions have safe houses in Sigil, but not the Harmonium. The Hardheads prefer to operate in the open. Since they obey the law, they don't need places to hide. 'Course, it doesn't hurt that the Harmonium has such a huge presence in the Cage; with fellow Hardheads just a shout away, a member can feel pretty safe.

Still, the Harmonium does have a few places it tries to keep relatively secret. For instance, take a nearby establishment called Liberty Hall. Most people would call it a tavern, but the place has a pretty sedate atmosphere compared to other alehouses. Here, off-duty Harmonium come to unwind. (*As much as Hardheads ever unwind, which ain't much.* — Ed.) Liberty Hall has a Notary Club (for the namers), an Officer's Club, and a secret back room that holds a portal to the town of Melodia on Arcadia. The faction guards this portal well; fact is, Liberty Hall usually holds more than 100 Harmonium at any given time. As far as the Harmonium know, only members of their faction have ever used this doorway — but a body might hear a different story from certain Indeps and Anarchists. . . .

ARCADIA HEADQUARTERS

The town of Melodia is a Harmonium stronghold on the second layer of Arcadia, Buxenus. Though Nicolai Mabru (Pl/♂ tiefling/W10/Harmonium/LN) rules the town, the real local high-up is Killeen Caine. Like Tonat Shar, Caine has the trust of Factol Sarin, so he enjoys a great deal of power and responsibility. This charismatic blood gets along well with his people. Thing is, his affable nature

might prove his undoing; Sarin prefers distance between faction leaders and members.

No basher calling Melodia a Harmonium stronghold is just rattling his bone-box — nearly 10,000 Hardheads live in town, compared to only a handful of folks who don't belong to the faction. The Harmonium uses the entire town as faction headquarters and operates lots of attractions to show visitors the bliss of life under universal harmony. In addition, new recruits receive training in four large camps that operate constantly just outside of town. Melodia welcomes all recruits and accepts them into the fold.

◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

The Harmonium's a *big* faction. Besides several thousand members in Sigil and the 10,000 in Melodia, the Harmonium includes several thousand more elsewhere in Arcadia and a few thousand in the town of Fortitude — not to mention a whole prime world full 'em. That's a lot of people. A Hardhead seldom finds himself far away from a fellow Hardhead.

ROLE-PLAYING THE HARMONIUM

The Harmonium opens its doors to all who truly believe in the group's terms for universal peace. Members of any race and any profession can join, as long as they follow a lawful ethical code.

ALIGNMENT. True belief in the Harmonium way implies a lawful alignment, but evil members find themselves as welcome as good ones. The understanding of law and order is more important than consideration of good and evil. Fact is, few in the Harmonium seem actually evil; many are good, and lots fall somewhere in the middle of the good-evil spectrum. See, evil doesn't prove truly conducive to harmony and peace. But even a baatezu understands order and the advantages of stability.

RACE. Just as baatezu understand order, so do members of certain other races. Humans and dwarves remain the most likely to appreciate order, and a lot of humans join the Harmonium; dwarves join in smaller numbers, commensurate with their smaller racial population. Githzerai and bariaur generally don't appreciate order and seldom join the Harmonium, but some tieflings and planar half-elves join; while most have too much independence for this militaristic faction, some of these loners find themselves drawn to the sense of family the Harmonium offers. As for primes, elves and gnomes don't seem very fond of Hardhead ideas. (*Especially when they find out that faction members exterminated most of their brethren on Ortho.* — Ed.) Most of the primes who join the Harmonium do so because of the recruitment slogans offering stability and security in a strange, new world.

CLASS. The "world" is a tough one, and it requires tough people who'll fight for what's right. Thus, the Harmonium appeals very much to warriors of all sorts, especially paladins. Rangers don't make good Hardheads, as so often they enjoy being on their own. Priests prove much more common — at least, those who appreciate the tenets of peace and stability. Priests of war gods are harder to find within Harmonium ranks, not because they disagree with the faction so much as having too many of them in the membership would be bad for the Harmonium's image. A lot of the faction's priests revere a power called "St. Cuthbert," from a prime world called Oerth. Seems the followers of Cuthbert have a lot of the same ideas as the Harmonium; any of 'em that visit Sigil find themselves quickly attracted to the faction.

Wizards appear infrequently among the ranks of the Hardheads, though some of the more militant and lawful ones join. Rogues become faction members only rarely, partly because of their very nature — "rogues" don't work well with others, after all — and partly because they are known lawbreakers. It surprises many cutters to see that the Harmonium allows rogues into the ranks, but some thieves actually work to prevent others of their class from committing criminal acts. Even the lawful Harmonium sometimes has a need for good spies — as long as they don't break the law, of course.

Once a cutter has joined the Harmonium, though, things like race and profession don't matter much. A Hardhead is a Hardhead, and they all stick together, cooperating like one big family. Oh, they have their share of squabbles, to be sure, but all Harmonium members know that turning stag means they lose all the benefits of the group. Not only that, they find their formerly beloved faction hunting them; anyone who's belonged to the Harmonium knows he doesn't want to become their prey. Not many Hardheads turn stag.

HARMONIUM MEMBERSHIP

A basher can join the Harmonium in one of two ways. First, a body can go to the City Barracks and ask for some recruitment pamphlets. The interested party then receives an invitation to a few minor meetings and social activities, where recruitment officers observe him. If they agree he shows merit, they'll ask him to join.

Other cutters'll receive an invitation out of the blue to join the Harmonium — it's one of the few factions that actively recruits. Bloods will talk lots of the Clueless into joining, knowing that their faction's stability and strength offers the Outsiders a pleasant view of the future. It appears to provide a home and the comfort of what amounts to one huge family. *(Reports that the Harmonium strong-arms berks into the faction from off the streets using "Hardhead reform tactics" are greatly exaggerated. But when numbers drop too low to handle increased rioting in the Cage . . . well, sometimes things happen that shouldn't. Apparently Sarin knows nothing of these unorthodox recruiting methods. — Ed.)*

Every four weeks, all recent recruits gather for Sarin's indoctrination speech. The factol's talk shows the type of man he is — tough, forthright, charismatic, and unforgiving — and tells the recruits what to expect.

They then get shipped off to training camps on Buxenus, the second layer of Arcadia. At the end of the eight weeks of grueling training, recruits either have dropped out to become common berks again or have turned into official Hardheads.

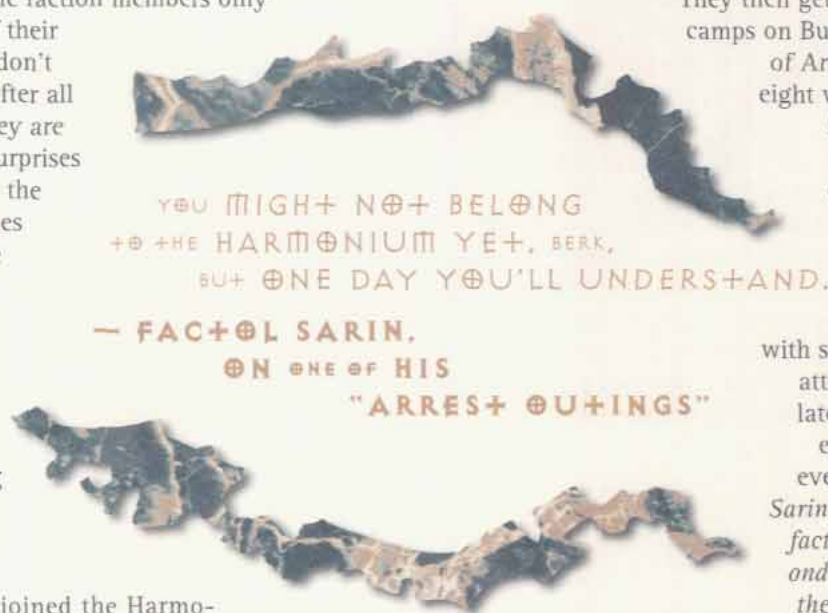
Those that fail, though regarded with some caution, can freely attempt the training again later. See, the faction fully expects everyone to join eventually. *(Despite Factol Sarin's words to recruits, the faction does give some second chances. The only ones the Hardheads don't invite*

back are those who turn stag on the group. Those, the factol has arrested and tried. Guilty sods usually get sentenced to the leafless tree. — Ed.)

The Harmonium has a paramilitary organization. Namers who've completed their training become *Notaries*, common soldiers. Notaries fall into five ranks, depending on their length of service, from the lowest Notary Ones to the highest-ranking Notary Fives.

Some Notaries later decide to pursue officer training. Every six months, Harmonium high-ups select a few Notaries who have proved tough, smart, and dedicated (and have reached at least 3rd level). These cutters receive advanced training and, on graduation, become *Measures*, the Harmonium name for factotums. Like Notaries, Measures are divided into five sub-ranks, depending on the length of time served; the lowest-ranking Measure One eventually can be a Measure Five.

Above the rank of Measure, the *Movers* are the Harmonium's factors. These high-ups select new additions to



their ranks from among the Measure Fives. Each Mover also holds a rank from One to Five. (*Tonat Shar and Killeen Caine are the only Mover Fives.* — Ed.) The factol himself decides who is worthy of promotion among the Movers, basing his decision on ability, length of membership, and outstanding service to the faction.

Governing all the ranks is the factol, also known among the Harmonium as the Composer. (*That's 'cause he's the one directing all the components in Harmony, writing the music, as it were.* — Ed.) The factol holds office as long as his officers deem him competent. When he steps down, a Mover Five becomes the new Composer and promotes a Mover Four to take his place.

FACTION ABILITIES. All Harmonium members, from Notaries on up, can use *charm person* once per day. Those of Measure One rank (factotum) or higher receive additional benefits. At 4th level, because of their intensive training, Measures gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls with a weapon of choice. This ability does not affect specialization; the Harmonium attack roll bonus accumulates with any other applicable bonuses.

Movers of at least 7th level have developed beliefs and dedication to duty so rigid, they become difficult to distract. They gain a +3 bonus to saving throws against fear and such emotion-related spells (or spell-like abilities) as *friends*, *spook*, *taunt*, *forget*, *fear*, *emotion*, *fear*, *despair*, *eyebite*, *cause fear*, and even *dragon fear*.

Finally, Mover Fours and Fives of at least 10th level can use a spell-like ability called *dictate* once per day, regardless of class. (*All Harmonium priests can access dictate as a 2nd-level spell.* — Ed.)

DICTATE (Enchantment/Charm)

2nd-level priest spell

Sphere: Law

Range: 30 yards

Duration: 1 round/level

Area of Effect: Up to

six creatures in a 20-foot cube

Components: V

Casting Time: 5

Saving Throw: Neg.

The *dictate* spell improves on the 1st-level priest spell *command*. It can affect up to six creatures at once with effects lasting more than one round. As a spell or spell-like ability, *dictate* allows the caster to speak a short, precise phrase or order of no more than a dozen words that all targets must obey if they fail their saving throws. Examples include "Throw down your weapons!" or "Stay here until I return!" and even "Seize that elf!" The faction member must state the command in a language the targets know, or the spell fails. Subjects continue to obey long-term orders (such as "Wait here.") for up to one round per experience level of the caster.

To *dictate* an order, a Hardhead must phrase it to create an immediate course of physical action for the target.

Commands to "die" or "sleep" usually don't work, but mandates to "lie down and put your hands behind your head" prove effective. If the faction member phrases the order poorly, DMs can assign the targets saving throw modifiers of +1 to +4. If the caster directs the intended victims to perform an obviously self-destructive action ("Throw yourself off that cliff!"), victims who fail their saving throws stand still for one round, fighting the compulsion to obey.

◆ THE CHAN ◆

The Harmonium always has been one of those factions with Plans. Hardheads want action, and they want to take action against some of the other factions most of all. The Anarchists probably pose the biggest threat to the Hardhead philosophy, since they actively seek to upset the order of Sigil. Harmonium high-ups are formulating a strategy against them, though they continually find themselves frustrated at having to make plans against a bunch of berks without specific plans.

The Xaositects also have become problematic, mostly because other factions can use them for their purposes. The Harmonium as a body hasn't moved against the Chaosmen, though individual officers and Notaries constantly watch for them to break a law. Then they can get the berks off the street. (*Since the Xaositects don't know most laws, and don't care about the ones they do know, they break 'em a lot.* — Ed.)

Members of the Free League get a lot of attention from some in the Harmonium. By refusing to join "real" factions — even those the Hardheads don't like — they flaunt their refusal to accept the Harmonium's order of things. As the Indepts get more organized, they gain Harmonium notice — a source of more than a little worry to the Free League. To some (and not just Indepts), it looks like the Hardheads want to exterminate them. With growing frequency, they arrest folks just for being Indepts, then prepare them for the Dustmen.

The Free League doesn't know it, but this effort ain't officially sanctioned. See, a small group of Notaries and Measures has set itself the task of getting rid of the Indepts — and they use whatever means seem necessary. (*Course, it should go without saying that these Harmonium members fall more on the, well, "lower planar" end of the alignment scale.* — Ed.)

Factol Sarin remains unaware of this minority agenda. As long as the Indep-haters' "extracurricular" activities don't interfere with their normal assignments, he's unlikely to notice them — unless another faction brings 'em to his attention. The Indepts assume he's behind the extermination movement, so they won't bring up the matter with him. If Sarin does learn of the covert campaign, he'll most likely order its organizers to follow their normal orders and quit inventing new duties for

themselves. After all, deciding the faction's course of action is *his* duty, not that of lower-ranked members. Wiping out the Indeps, while not against Harmonium policy, mustn't be attempted without specific orders. That's breaking the rules.

For quite a while, the Doomguard and the Bleakers have shown up high on the factol's troublemaker list. Sure, a lot of 'em appear patient, either because they figure nothing matters (the Bleakers) or because they think everything'll eventually go their way (the Doomguard). However, some of these folks have developed a yen for active destruction. Besides, their philosophies really bother the Hardheads; they don't want either group infecting others with barmy ideas. The Bleakers might prove easy enough to deal with; as with the Xaositects, wait a while. They're bound to make a mistake; then the Hardheads can arrest 'em.

The Doomguard's another matter. The faction has an important function in Sigil: It controls the Armory – a big problem, as far as the Harmonium's concerned. The Hardheads work to undermine the Doomguard in every way possible without confronting the Sinkers directly. See, if they fight them directly, they fall right into the other group's hands, promoting entropy. Factol Sarin is too smart for that. Instead, he tries to move around their authority, to build good works and to step up the generation of harmony and peace. Only by supporting its own goals can the Harmonium hope to defeat the Doomguard; the moment the Hardheads counter this foe directly, they've done things the Doomguard way.

◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

Moving plane layers and towns has become top priority on the dark side of the Harmonium's agenda. The next step toward its ultimate goal involves handling a situation newly developed on Arcadia. See, recently, the Harmonium enacted a plan to convert a bunch of chaotic bashers to their cause. Well, the plan worked to a degree, but it had a side effect: It caused the entire third layer of Arcadia to slip into Mechanus. Seems that the bit of evil generated during the Arcadia operation balanced the good of the layer. When the layer became more neutral, off it went to Mechanus!

'Course, the Hardheads feel pretty red-faced about this oversight, which only proved that head-bashing worked better as a general rule than any subtle plan they might concoct. They want to get the layer back into Arcadia. While they figure out how, they continually work to keep the *modrons* from moving in to cement the layer to Mechanus. Meanwhile, the Harmonium tries to protect this dark, even from most of its Notaries.

There's also the matter of Fortitude, a city on the Outlands. It seems the Harmonium wants to help make up for losing part of Arcadia by causing this town to slip into Arcadia at a gathering called the Harmonious Ascension. (See the adventure *Fires of Dis*. – Ed.) Faction bloods've been keeping things pretty quiet, while sending officers on missions to spread goodwill and harmony among the people of Fortitude. 'Course, the few locals who've tumbled to their plan have begun a counter-plot.



I dream of justice, sweet justice, and nothing more. My heart burns with the desire to avenge all the wrongs of this world, to right the injustices and make good

THE MERCYKILLERS

that which is evil. My being is consumed with this passion, this need to devour the criminal and mete out his punishment.

I am young, but so pure is my faith, so absolute is my conviction, that I have

recently been made factol of the Mercykillers. It was not a hard decision for my brethren: Factol Mallin had grown old and careless. His heart no longer burned with the

bright righteous flame, but instead longed for quiet peace and pastoral beauty. How

fitting it is that, at the Mortuary, I asked the Dustmen to

dispose of his body on

Athas. Surely that blighted world will

give him the serenity he so richly deserves.

But I have been made factol not merely because of Mallin's untimely death, but because my convictions are so strong, so right. I know the path the Mercykillers must now take. I know the road we must follow. I alone know our best and truest destiny — for it was revealed to me in a dream.

Every crime must be punished according to the law. There is no such thing as "extenuating circumstance" to negate or soften that punishment. But a haunting dream has driven me to expose Mallin's deficiencies and take his place. I live this dream each night, and I know now it is directing me, urging me to lead my Mercykillers on to a new and greater level of justice.

The dream is of justice, as always. I quiver with the joy of dispensing punishment to those who are guilty, so guilty! At first my dream is a delight to gladden a righteous soul, but then . . . *she* enters the dream. The Lady herself enters my sleep, night after night.

I stand before a fallen prisoner, his body still twitching as the life drains from him. My joy is short-lived, however, for the Lady floats toward me. We are alone, for I have sent my men on ahead, and she is without her usual dabus. I wonder what she will do, but always the thought flits away — to be replaced by words, real words, *inside* my head. The Lady is speaking to me! To *me*! Never in the recorded history of Sigil has the Lady ever spoken to anyone — but she speaks to me.

I tell no one, of course. I cannot reveal the dilemma the Lady has placed before me. Always, in my dream, she floats before me and says the words: "What would thou do, Factol Alisohn Nilesia, if I committed a crime? What would thou do?" I stare at her. How can the being I most revere be guilty of crime? How can she test my devotion so? Surely she must know how I admire her absolute willingness to dispense justice, to punish the wicked, to flay the skin of the heinous and send them screaming into the Mazes.

I stare, and suddenly I start to feel something crumble inside of me. The answer becomes plain: This is an admission of her guilt. With that enormous

IF THE
MERCYKILLERS TRULY
SOUGHT JUSTICE,
THERE'D BE A
LOT FEWER SODS
IN THE PRISON.
— THE EDITOR

realization comes a chilling new awareness, for I know, of course – of course! – she *must* be guilty. Who could command the Cage for so many centuries *without* committing some crime?

Then in my dream it comes, the confirmation of my musings: The Lady's body fades away, until all that remains is her knife-rimmed face. It grows slowly smaller, and I see a brilliant red sun expanding behind her. The glowing disk grows brighter and larger, blinding me, but still I look on. Then I see the winged snake, its fanged maw opened wide, slowly engulf the Lady of Pain.

And I know, without a doubt, that the Lady's time has come. Her crimes against the multiverse have weighed too heavily upon her head. She has come to me for help in bringing her to justice. She has come to me to die.

And I cannot be more pleased than to bring one so deserving as the Lady to justice.

— Factol Alisohn Nilesia

I KNOW I'M RIGHT.
THE LADY TOLD
ME SO
HERSELF.

— FACTOL NILESIA



◆ THE FIST OF JUSTICE ◆

Ask a Mercykiller why he's joined a faction that's also called the Red Death and a berk'll get one answer: Justice is everything. It's absolute and perfect, but it's got to be correctly applied if it's to mean anything. The Mercykillers set out to do just that, reasoning that if someone (meaning them) does it right, then the multiverse will be cleansed of evil and thus be made perfect – the true culmination of this faction's work.

The Mercykillers are a bit on the newer side, as far as factions go. During the Great Upheaval, when the Lady of Pain passed down her mandate culling the number of factions, a lot of groups faced disbanding. Two groups, the Sons of Mercy and the Sodkillers, joined forces. The Sons of Mercy were a band of lawful good bloods who kneaded the laws of Sigil like dough, finding loopholes for criminals who were wrongfully accused or faced outlandish punishments. The Sodkillers, on the other hand, were strictly lawful evil. Little more than hired muscle, they offered to avenge perceived "wrongs" for the right amount of jink.

Neither faction was very large, and it was unlikely that either would survive the Lady's edict. So the two factols met secretly and hashed out a charter that merged their factions, combining elements of their respective beliefs. The charter as written up some 600 years ago – known as the Eight Tenets of Justice – is still in effect today for the Mercykillers.

THE EIGHT TENETS OF JUSTICE

- I. I will uphold Justice before all else, purging the multiverse of those who break the law.
- II. In all situations I shall weigh the rights and wrongs with a clear and impartial mind.
- III. I shall decide where Justice must fall under the law, and I will mete out that Justice with a firm and unyielding hand.
- IV. I believe in the righteousness of my faction; we alone answer to the higher law of Justice.
- V. I will not pass judgment on good or evil, only on law-abiding and law-breaking, for therein lies wrongdoing.
- VI. I will punish the guilty as the crime demands.
- VII. I will be diligent in my pursuit of the guilty, and while so engaged I will remain innocent of any wrongdoing in the eyes of others.
- VIII. I will never release a lawbreaker until his sentence has been carried out.

The faction embraces these tenets wholeheartedly – some would say too much so. But the Red Death is committed to punishing any and all lawbreakers. As such, they form a perfect triumvirate with the Harmonium and the Guvners. The Hardheads make the arrests, the Guvners convict the criminals, and the Red Death metes out the punishment. Likewise, the Doomguard is sympathetic toward the

Mercykillers, finding in the process of punishment – especially long periods of wasting incarceration – ultimate entropy. The Indeps, of course, think otherwise, but they generally just avoid the Red Death whenever possible.

The faction has regular run-ins with members of the Signers, the Sensates, and the Anarchists, though rarely with the Fated. Alisohn Nilesia has not hidden her growing involvement with Duke Darkwood from her people, and her faction is inclined to look favorably on the Takers as a result.

FAC+OL ◆ ALISOHN NILESIA ◆

Female tiefling planar
8th-level wizard, Mercykillers (factol)
Lawful evil

STR	10	INT	19	HP	28
DEX	16	WIS	12	AC	5 (10)
CON	13	CHA	17	THACO	18

EQUIPMENT: *Pearl of power, ring of sustenance, black robe of the archmagi* (which provides AC 5).

SPELLS/LEVEL: 4/3/3/2.

SPECIAL: Nilesia has standard wizard, tiefling, and faction abilities.

Alisohn Nilesia, the new factol of the Mercykillers, is quite mad and more than a little dangerous. Only 19 years old, the girl – part human and part something-more-fiendish – was born in the Prison she now commands, the daughter of a thief who died during childbirth. She grew up in the Prison under the care of a ward matron, learning the chapter and verse of every law in Sigil – as well as the Red Death's punishment for each infraction. After the mysterious death of her surrogate mother, Nilesia tried to join the faction as a full-fledged member, but Factol Mallin stubbornly refused to allow an eight-year-old child to become a Mercykiller. Three years later, though, her persistence paid off – she was allowed to join the faction at the age of 11.

The child's convictions were preternaturally strong; nothing shook her beliefs. Detractors tried to have her expelled from the faction, but Nilesia merely smiled and bided her time. Before long, her excellent organizational skills acquired her the post of Justice Dispenser, where she wrote up the duties and orders for all the Mercykillers in the faction.

Interestingly, most of Nilesia's detractors were given assignments that cost them their lives. Those few left who'd bad-mouthed the child quickly learned to keep their concerns to themselves; a number of them accepted posts on Acheron for fear of her reprisals. These Mercykillers have watched from afar the girl's rise through the faction hierarchy. (*Since Nilesia became factol, a mysterious illness has struck many of the exiles on Acheron, and the ranks of her original detractors are dwindling. – Ed.*)

Fortunately for the young factol, all the remaining members of the faction are staunchly devoted to her. In the eight years that she's served in the Mercykillers, Alisoñ Nilesia's risen quickly to the rank of factol, watching the faction expand until its ranks in Sigil numbered approximately 25,000. And while a few members of the Red Death view her rapid climb with envy, most feel a sense of pride, believing they've helped mold this very accomplished woman. Fact is, many Mercykillers have developed a fanatical devotion to their new factol. Anywhere from 20 to 30 faction members accompany her at all times; all would gladly give their lives if Nilesia so requested it.

The intensely driven young woman is so obsessed with justice that she makes many other Mercykillers' devotion seem like a passing interest. Restless and high-strung, she sleeps perhaps 15 minutes out of every four hours. Her body's used to this relentless pace, and 10 of her closest Mercykillers have also adapted to this routine (the best known among them is a gloomy basher named Shander Mountpool [P1/♂ tiefling/F8/Mercykillers/LE]). When asked once why she slept so little, Nilesia replied coldly: "Justice doesn't sleep. Why should I? Why should you?" The questioner disappeared shortly after that.

Nilesia's talents lie in organization and coordination. She devotes nearly 24 hours of every day to planning and implementing her schemes. In the two months since she became factol, she's approved the punishment of thousands of inmates at the Prison, the faction's headquarters. A body can't accuse her of too-hastily performing her duties, however. Nilesia reviews the file on each case, catching and clarifying any and all discrepancies. *(A number of Guvners at the City Court and some record-keepers at the Hall of Records have begun to grumble at all the extra work Nilesia's causing, correcting their mistakes. — Ed.)* Only when she's properly satisfied that the prisoner before her is guilty and has been properly tried will Nilesia approve a punishment.

◆ THE PRISON ◆

The Prison's located in The Lady's Ward, the richest and most powerful in all of Sigil. It's a forbidding (and foreboding) structure fully seven stories high. Unlike a lot of Sigil's architecture, there's nothing very graceful or soaring about its roofline. Systematically placed guard towers are the only enlivening feature of the roof. The effect's somewhat dampened by searchlights that sweep the area constantly, day and night. *(The searchlights consist of translucent gems on which continual light spells have been cast, with the resultant glow magnified through treated glass. — Ed.)* Armed Mercykillers patrol the roof's walkways at all hours; they lead packs of Aoskian hounds that bay the moment they scent a prisoner outside his cell.

The walls are slate-gray stones, completely regular and symmetrically placed. The structure's built on a ten-block square area of land, and from the outside it looks like a

solid building. However, the Prison's actually built around an open square, where some of the prisoners are allowed to take exercise and others are forced to perform drills or work details. It's a bleak courtyard — treeless, shrubless, grassless, and generally devoid of any possible aesthetic relief. All that's in the square is a single wide pathway cutting across the center; only Mercykillers are allowed to walk on the path. All inmates must walk on the dirt, which can be a lot trickier than it sounds when Sigil's brown, oily rains turn the yard into a greasy pit.

As grim and miserable as the square is, the interior of the Prison's worse. Save for a portion of the first floor that's devoted to business offices, the factol's quarters, and the like, the remainder of the prison aboveground is entirely given over to cells. All seven

floors surrounding the square contain cells that house anywhere from one to four prisoners at a time, depending on how fast the Guvners can try the sods. Each cell is a tiny area, no

more than 5 feet wide by 10 feet long, and perhaps only half have windows. *(Course, no one but a pixie could escape through these windows — and the pixies are held in a special cell just for them. — Ed.)* All told, the Prison can hold up to 24,000 inmates at a time.

Though the cells are bitter and terrible, there's still a place that's even worse: the underground portion of the Prison known as the Cellars. Down there are mess halls, bathing rooms, and work rooms — all grim places the inmates must visit daily. And down there are also the Sentencing Rooms, where death or torture is meted out. It's even said that the Cellars are filled with "forgotten" cells that house an additional 8,000 prisoners. Inmates live in terror of being called to the Cellars, because they never know if it's to mend some overalls or to have their fingers lopped off for shoplifting.

Factol Nilesia has instituted some new procedures regarding sentencing, but the Mercykiller guards keep prisoners in the dark as much as possible. Nevertheless, word can't be entirely concealed in a place the size of the Prison. It's plain that a few lucky sods — a very few — have actually been set free. Others've been sent off to powers only know where. Few sods hope for the rumored pardons the factol's passing out — hope only makes their suffering that much worse.

GALLØWS HUMØR?
MEBEE +HAT'S WHA+ YA CALL
HAVIN' YER HANGIN'
A+ DAWN
AND YER VISITØR A+ NØØN.
— ØVERHEARD IN +HE
PRISONERS' DINING HALL



The Mercykillers have always carted off "special" prisoners to Petitioner's Square, a public place where jeering crowds can watch a berk get hung, beheaded, or eaten. *(For more information on such dubious gatherings, refer to In the Cage: A Guide to Sigil. — Ed.)* But most of the inmates met their deaths in the deepest, quietest corner of the Cellars. By the time sods learned where the execution chamber was, they were already standing in line.

Now, though, Factol Nilesia's mandated that the inmates be put to death in the open square inside the Prison's four walls. During her first month in office, she had a tremendous gallows built in one corner of the square, directly above a heavily guarded pit said to lead to the Cellars. Deaders get dragged underground and sent through portals to a special area in the Mortuary that handles executed prisoners.

The daily hangings are mandatory viewing for prisoners. Each day, inmates from one floor of the Prison file out to the square. Under heavy guard, they're forced to witness the hangings of fellow inmates whose crimes fall under the death punishment in the new sentencing procedures. Nilesia feels the example will help them avoid making similar mistakes in the future.

VISI+ING +HE PRISON

Most folks who enter the Prison don't come back out again — at least, not till their sentences have ended. But some cutters actually volunteer to set foot inside. Mercykillers visiting Sigil are strongly encouraged to work a guard detail in the Prison every other fortnight. Those Mercykillers assigned to guard duty have the run of the Prison, including the Cellars. *(Other factions are another matter entirely; under no circumstances will outsiders be allowed to "help" patrol. — Ed.)* Likewise, Mercykiller priests may enter the Prison once a fortnight to address the spiritual needs of the inmates. The priests enjoy free access to the Prison, save for the Cellars.

Sometimes comrades of berks who've been locked away come to see their friends or petition on their behalf. In the past, they would have been turned away, but Factol Nilesia's instituted a few new policies.

All visitors with business at the Prison are allowed to enter via the main door. They're taken to a large, dismal waiting area, sparsely furnished with wooden chairs and patrolled by armed guards. Factol Nilesia, surprisingly, attends to most visitors herself. Of course, she's surrounded by a number of bodyguards and attendants, most of whom do the actual work. (Should any PCs attack her, anywhere from 20 to 30 Mercykiller guards will respond in like fashion instantly. All are dual-class fighter/mages of 5th to 10th level.) The factol's available at any time of the day or night for a short audience. She'll listen to

pleas about wrongly incarcerated family members and friends; if there's any proof, she'll study the case and get back to the party involved.

Nilesia also allows prisoners visitation privileges on the first day of every month. Of course, there are certain limitations: The prisoner is brought to a special holding room in the back of the visitors' hall and given all of 15 minutes. Oddly, one member of Nilesia's trusted circle is opposed to this reform: a paladin named Arwyl Swan's Son. He's got his suspicions about Factol Nilesia, but thus far he's kept them to himself. He thinks Nilesia is letting the inmates have visitors as some sort of twisted torture. He's adapted his schedule to Nilesia's and is with her nearly every hour of the day. The factol trusts him implicitly, for he holds the position of Ward Monitor of The Lady's Ward (the most powerful position behind factol).

Nilesia frequently lets Arwyl Swan's Son deal with good-aligned parties, rightly believing that they would be more inclined to trust the paladin. As such, he has a good deal of power, and is likely to meet with adventurers looking for falsely imprisoned comrades. He won't go so far as to help a prisoner escape, of course, but he'll listen to heroes plead a friend's cause. Under *no* circumstances will he let sods from other factions enter the Prison proper. Even lawful good Mercykiller PCs must eloquently state their case before Swan's Son will consider letting them enter the Prison. If they do, and if he's convinced of their willingness to obey the rules, he and another Mercykiller will escort the PC through the Prison to see an inmate. The paladin will bend the rules no further, not for anything.



THE PRISON

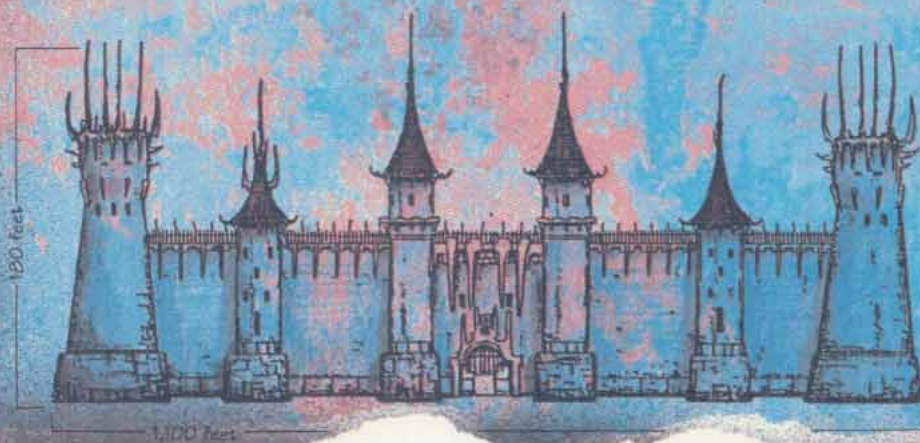
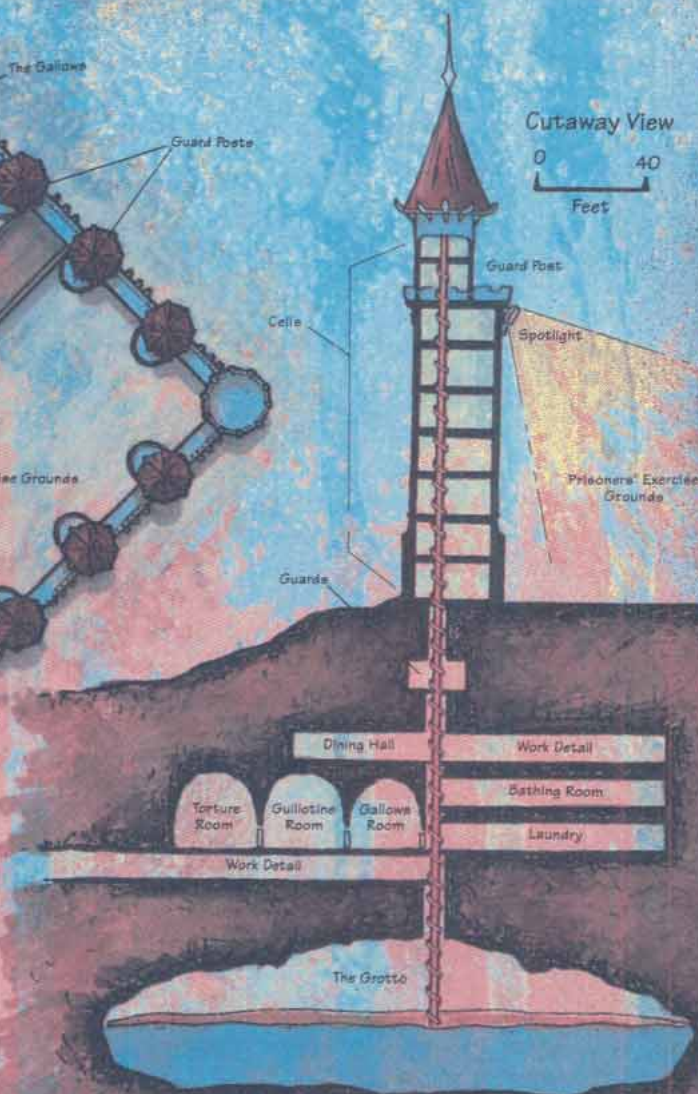
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Top View



Cutaway View

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ARWYL SWAN'S SON

Male human prime

17th-level paladin, Mercykillers (faction)

Lawful good

STR	18	INT	16	HP	97
DEX	18	WIS	13	AC	4
CON	13	CHA	17	THACO	4

EQUIPMENT: Long sword +2, ring of protection +2, dagger.

SPELLS/LEVEL: 3/3/3/1.

SPECIAL: Arwyl Swan's Son has standard paladin and faction abilities.

Arwyl Swan's Son hails originally from Cormyr in the world of Toril. As a young (and zealous) paladin, he chased a succubus all the way to the Outlands, where he caught the fiend before she could return to the Abyss. It was a desperate battle, but Swan's Son persevered. He was badly injured, however, and unable to return home.

A nameless Justiciar (see "Mercykiller Membership" on page 109) happened upon the injured young man and tended his wounds, regaling the paladin with tale after tale of justice brought to wrongdoers. When the Justiciar left, Swan's Son was hale and imbued with a strong desire to embrace justice in the extreme; he promptly became a devout member of the Mercykillers in Sigil. But he's had some trouble adjusting his desire for justice with his belief in the lawful good. Often it seems to him that the Red Death stretches the bounds of goodness in the name of justice – and even commits acts of out and out evil. So he tries to ensure that not a single sod goes to the gallows for a crime he didn't commit. Recently, Swan's Son has begun trying to increase the number of lawful good Mercykillers, putting them in positions of greater responsibility and importance in the Prison.

◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

As is the case with Arwyl Swan's Son, the Mercykiller faction allows player characters to interpret the abstract concept of justice according to their personal ideals. Of course, this can lead to arguments between two Mercykillers, not to mention between a Mercykiller and another character – say, a thief who steals to feed the poor. But, as a lawful faction, the Red Death also offers strict regimentation to those who seek it. After all, sometimes the easiest way to live is just to do as you're told and follow the rules – even blindly.

ROLE-PLAYING THE MERCYKILLERS

The pursuit of justice ain't easy. First and foremost, a player must realize that Mercykillers don't arrest or try a berk, no matter *what* he's accused of. It falls to the Harmonium to arrest lawbreakers, and to the Fraternity of Order to conduct trials for the accused. Only when a sod's been found guilty of a crime under the law may a Mercykiller carry out punishment.

In an adventuring party, that means a Mercykiller PC can't automatically punish a fighter for slaying an innocent peasant, or kill a thief for picking a noble's pocket. The Mercykiller's got to stay his hand until the "criminal" has been duly arrested, tried, and found guilty. 'Course, if the party has both a Hardhead and a Guvner, the Mercykiller might be able to convince them to hold a quick court. Failing that, the PC can only keep track of crimes that go unpunished, hoping to see justice done at the earliest possible opportunity.

The most profound conflict for a Mercykiller usually arises over the specific interpretation of justice. After all, what might seem wrong to one member of the Red Death may not seem so to another, especially when the two have different alignments.

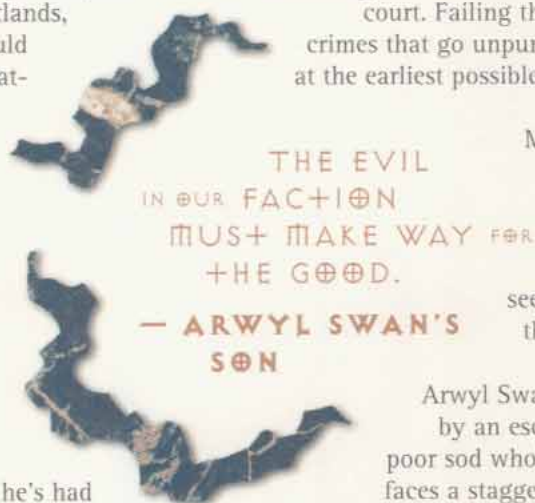
Lawful good Mercykillers – like Arwyl Swan's Son – often are less troubled by an escaped criminal than they are by a poor sod who's been wrongfully imprisoned or faces a staggeringly inappropriate punishment.

Many Mercykillers, inspired by the high-up paladin's commitment, have likewise chosen to seek out and correct examples of gross injustice.

But infighting only hinders the cause of justice, and the faction strives for internal harmony. They seek to rely on the letter of the law, not its spirit, as their mediator. Any sod who doesn't follow the law is a criminal and must be punished – that's the official faction line. But when two Mercykillers butt heads – well, something's got to give. If they can't come to a mutual compromise quickly, one that satisfies both sides' sense of justice, the DM is free to impose the following faction penalties:

- ◆ Wizards and priests cast spells at half their actual level; they can't cast spells that aren't available above their penalized level.
- ◆ Fighters receive only one attack per round and lose any specialization bonuses.
- ◆ Rogues perform all thief functions at half their usual percentages.

These penalties represent the internal conflict of the character, distracting him from the task at hand. The DM



shouldn't impose these restrictions for more than a day unless a Mercykiller ardently refuses to put justice before all, including his alignment. Some Mercykillers choose to live with these restrictions, trying to maintain a precarious balance between their own viewpoint and the ideals of the faction.

Of course, being a Mercykiller requires more than a simple love of justice — no matter what his class, a Mercykiller must undertake a lengthy period of training and study if he wants to progress beyond the rank of namer. Those who do learn the law to an exacting degree — the factotums of the faction — are called *Justices* by the Red Death. They carry out the day-to-day functions of running the Prison and maintaining the faction's outposts on Acheron. The most devoted Mercykillers go on to become factors. And an elite few may even become *Justiciars* (a special kind of factor) and be assigned to track escaped criminals.

ALIGNMENT. While the Red Death requires only that its members be lawful, only those who're lawful *neutral* may truly understand the final goal of justice above all else. Lawful evil and lawful good characters, if they properly play their alignments, allow the distracting factors of *good* and *evil* to cloud their judgment and search for justice.

Of course, some players may feel that their faction goals override their alignment ideals. But truly exciting role-playing can take place when a character tries to meld these two potentially conflicting attributes. A Mercykiller's got to find a compromise that satisfies his inner turmoil. Otherwise, he might face the faction penalties described above — or end up in the Gatehouse with the other barmies who couldn't handle the strain of the multiverse.

CLASS. Though the book *A Player's Guide to the Planes* in the *PLANESCAPE Campaign Setting* restricts rogues from the ranks of the Red Death, a generous DM might allow a thief to join the faction after all — provided the

berk's willing to take an oath foreswearing all thieving activities that break the law. Thus, a Mercykiller rogue could hide in shadows, but not pick pockets. (*A thief who constantly tries to suppress his cross-trading tendencies should make for good role-playing.* — Ed.)

Other classes might also pose conflict for a Mercykiller. Priests, for instance, might try to punish the guilty in the name of their power, rather than in the name of justice. But they'd be missing the point; justice ain't beholden to any power. Most Mercykiller priests learn quickly to place justice above all else. Any cleric who wants to punish lawbreakers in his power's name had better keep his actions dark from the faction high-ups — unless, of course, his god's a power of justice.

A Justiciar prepares to arrest her quarry.



MERCYKILLER MEMBERSHIP

Cutters looking to join the Mercykillers face some pretty stiff restrictions. All members must be lawfully aligned, whether good, evil, or neutral. An applicant with *any* criminal taint in his past is usually tossed out into the street, with a warning never to return. For those who measure up, though, joining the Red Death is a simple matter. The faction holds enlistment days once per fortnight, and an applicant need only present himself at the Prison. The day's candidates gather in a room for a lengthy discussion of the Eight Tenets of Justice. At the end of the day, any berk who still wants to join must swear to each of the tenets. Doing so means he's henceforth considered a Mercykiller.

FACTION ABILITIES. All members of the faction are taught how to *detect lie* (per the 4th-level priest spell) once per day to a single chosen question. Furthermore, every Mercykiller wizard automatically receives the 1st-level spell *shocking grasp* (the better to handle obstinate criminals) in addition to all other spells granted by the cutter's level or Intelligence. And a priest in the Red Death'll find himself able to use the 1st-level spell *command*, regardless of his Wisdom, granted sphere(s), or other spells.

What's more, a Mercykiller's beliefs allow him to impose additional suffering on his foes. Twice a day, a character can tell the DM that he's dealing his next blow in the name of justice. Whether he's swinging a sword, casting a spell, or dislodging a rock from overhead, the damage rolled is doubled, including all bonuses. 'Course, this special power doesn't come without cost. Half of the extra damage caused is immediately subtracted from the PC's hit points. But a true Mercykiller gladly takes any and all pains in his quest for justice.

Another benefit is the faction's tendency to turn a blind eye to its own violations of the law — to a point. If a Mercykiller commits a crime while pursuing or punishing a known criminal, he'll consider himself innocent, of course. Justice takes precedence over all. On the other hand, if he commits a crime *outside* of his punishment of a felon, he's subject to the full weight of the law. (*To date, not a single Mercykiller has ever refused such sentencing, even if the pronouncement is death.* — Ed.)

The faction's also developed a dark red liquid that intensifies a body's guilt; they call it the *blood of justice*. The stuff's said to be made of the blood of the great wyvern kept in the faction's Tower of the Wyrn. (*See In the Cage: A Guide to Sigil for details on the wyvern and the tower.* — Ed.) If the *blood* enters the target's body, whether he drinks

the liquid or gets cut by a sword coated with it, on the next round the berk starts confessing to any and all crimes he's knowingly committed in the past 24 hours. If the

target makes a successful saving throw vs. spell, the *blood* has no effect. One of the guard captains at the Prison, a basher named Reggia Pylk (Pl/♀ human/F10/Mercykillers/LN), controls the faction's supply of the *blood of justice*. A Mercykiller of at least 3rd level can request one vial per month from her; each vial contains three doses of the liquid.

Any Mercykiller factotum of 5th level or higher who shows an extreme aptitude for dispensing justice may be chosen by the factol to become a Justiciar. Only the most resolute and



I HAVE HERE A WARRANT, SIRRAH!
SURRENDER Y@URSELF WILLINGLY —
OR I SHALL HAVE THE PLEASURE
OF EXECUTING Y@U IMMEDIATELY.

— JASY, A JUSTICIAR,
AFTER A
DECADE-LONG SEARCH



responsible Mercykillers are picked, for Justiciars are the bloodhounds of the multiverse, tracking down and bringing to justice heinous criminals who somehow slip through the wheels of law. They're excused from all other duties and assignments, and they can command any resources or assistance from other Mercykillers as necessary in pursuit of their prey. Even if the quest takes a lifetime, Justiciars are fanatically devoted to bringing in their quarry. Many have died in the attempt.

A Mercykiller who's chosen to become a Justiciar must undergo three steps. First, he swears an oath to pursue his assigned target, which he signs in blood. Second, he's linked to his target by a magical binding ceremony. Finally, he's equipped with a magical warrant of holding to serve his prey.

The binding ceremony serves two purposes. First, it provides the Mercykiller with an innate sense of distance and direction regarding his opponent. Even the planes don't distort this special sense; likewise, no spells or magical items can disguise or hide the target. Second, it announces to the quarry that the hunt is on, often saddling the criminal with a sense of impending doom. The material component of the binding ceremony is a piece of evidence from the crime, or something belonging to the criminal. The Justiciar must keep this item on his person for his special sense to operate.

The warrant contains a highly specialized *hold person* spell that works only against the criminal named therein. Upon finding his prey, the Justiciar reads the scroll (regardless of his class); the spell imposes a -4 penalty to the target's saving throw. Even creatures normally immune to *hold* effects are subject to the power of the warrant; they must make a saving throw vs. spell or be held. The warrant's effects last for 5d4 rounds.

Justiciars don't chase everyday criminals like pickpockets; they're sent after only the most dastardly villains that somehow give the Red Death the laugh. Accepting an assignment as a Justiciar can be an excellent jumping-off point for an adventure, as Justiciars may bring any desired companions along on their quests.

'Course, any Mercykiller — Justiciar or otherwise — who ever fails to uphold the faction's Eight Tenets of Justice must pay the music.

First, the accused gets a short hearing before the factol. If he can't give a satisfactory explanation for having shirked his duty, he's given a choice: death by beheading in the Guillotine Room, or abandonment in the cavernous Grotto beneath the Prison. Most Mercykillers so charged have chosen the quick and relatively painless death accorded by the guillotine. It's said those few who've chosen the Grotto found death by a much less pleasant means.

◆ THE CHANT ◆

The Mercykillers have posted declarations all over the Cage announcing their sentencing reforms, which they claim have "simplified" the process of punishment. Henceforth, all crimes committed in Sigil fall into one of three categories, and all crimes committed in the past get reclassified according to the new structure. For all felonies (such as murder, rape, burglary, or arson), the Mercykillers' new punishment is death. For all misdemeanors (such as assault, embezzling, jaywalking, begging, or vagrancy), the new punishment is 10 years' hard labor in the Lower Planes. And for all other rules infractions (such as failure to pay fines, falsifying reports, and so on), the new punishment is 10 years' incarceration in the Prison.

Factol Nilesia's said to have some sense of fairness, though. For instance, a berk who's already served more than 10 years for operating a tavern without a license is now free to go. But sods serving life for previously sentenced felonies are getting the hangman's noose. The chant says that 3,200 prisoners have been led to the gallows since Nilesia's takeover. Now she even wants to hold a special monthly hanging, open to the public — figuring the best method to deter future crime is by showing the results ahead of time.

No one knows yet what the other factols'll do about Nilesia's new punishments and procedures, but it's a safe bet their response'll be a strong one. The prisoners, on the other hand, have made their feelings known: Eight guards are said to have lost their lives in a massive cell block riot last week. The Mercykillers have since cracked down even harder, but word leaked to the outside of a "kingpin" among the inmates — a baatezu erinyes called Lygess the Cruel (PI/♀ fiend/HD 6+6/LE) — who's uncovered a dirty secret about Alisohn Nilesia, a secret that'd pull the factol down faster than quicksand.

More troubling resistance to Nilesia's plans might come from a bit closer to home — within the Red Death itself. Plenty of faction members learned to hate and fear Nilesia as she rose to power, watching their friends flee to Acheron or disappear altogether. Rumors among Prison guards mention a band of lawful good Mercykillers led by

a high-up in the faction – perhaps even Arwyl Swan's Son himself – that's planning a secret trip to Acheron. They want to check out reports that "inconvenient" members of the faction're being jailed in the fuming city of Vorkhehan, the faction's base on the evil plane. (*For more information on Acheron and Vorkhehan, refer to the Planes of Law Campaign Expansion boxed set.* – Ed.)

Some folks say the sods locked up in the Prison aren't as bad off as many think. A cross-trading berk named Baggerblade (Pl/♂ githzerai/T5/Revolutionary League/CE) is boasting at a few taverns that his sentence was cut short in exchange for exotic fruits and ales he procured for weary guards. Baggerblade also claims to have learned that prisoners are allowed to exercise solely to keep them in good shape – they're going to be used as the front line in an upcoming war for the heart of Sigil, a war that'll be fought not by Nilesia or her Mercykillers, but by Duke Rowan Darkwood, factol of the Fated.

Fact is, Darkwood and Nilesia *have* begun an odd courtship of sorts, one that seems likely to end in some sort of marriage. The factols haven't kept their relationship dark from the rest of their factions, but no one knows if their affection is real or if it's just a front for a more sinister deal.

◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

Things are moving fast in Sigil for Alisohn Nilesia. Her dramatic changes in the Mercykillers' punishment code'll almost certainly invite trouble from the other factions, once they've had a chance to digest the full impact of the new procedures. For the most part, Nilesia's got the Red Death squarely behind her, and it could lead to a faction brawl in the Cage before long. The Harmonium – who love to see lawbreakers get their due – might come down on the side of the Mercykillers, whereas free-thinkers like the Indeps and the Anarchists are sure to oppose them.

'Course, Nilesia's also got to deal with the growing number of cutters *within* her faction that're opposed to her doings. The chant's right about a squad of lawful good Mercykillers heading for Vorkhehan, and they'll be glad to get help from other members of the Red Death – and their companions – who think as they do. But the secret mission isn't going to be led by Arwyl Swan's Son; the paladin wants to maintain a low profile until he has a real opportunity to fix the "misguided" elements in his faction. Nonetheless, the group's in for a rough time – Mercykillers who speak out against Nilesia are being tossed into the Wells of Vorkhehan, alongside desperate criminals; some are

even being made to excavate the perilous Mines of Marsellin, where a berk can be turned to ironlike stone.

The chant's also right about Lygess the Cruel – the fiend's hooked up with an imprisoned clerk from the Hall of Records who swears he can prove Factol Nilesia willfully killed her surrogate mother. Lygess has the berk secreted away in the Grotto under the Prison, where even the guards dare not go. *If* the record-keeper's right, and *if* a Hardhead's willing to arrest the factol, and *if* a Guvner's willing to convict her – well, let's just say that Nilesia's ordered the Prison guards to find out the dark of Lygess's claim, and fast.

As for Baggerblade's claims, they're only partially true. His jail time for thievery was indeed cut short, but not because he brought the guards Arborean twinkle tea – no, he was sent to Acheron, to fight in the faction's war on the goblins and other evil armies of the plane. Strong and capable prisoners often get sent on such missions. A sod who survives usually finds himself set free afterward, his sentence commuted to time served. (*Unless, of course, the Red Death thinks he's too valuable a fighter to let go.* – Ed.)

Baggerblade doesn't know it, but many prisoners are also sold as slaves to the tanar'ri, baatezu, and yugoloths of the Lower Planes.

The lucky ones end up marooned on the prison-plane of Carceri, but most're exploited as cheap labor or fodder for the Blood War.

As for the romance between Factol Nilesia and Duke Darkwood, it's genuine – at least, as far as

Alisohn's concerned. (The Duke's charismatic dominance won over the young tiefling more strongly than he'd planned.) He's hinted at a plan that'd make him ruler of all of Sigil, and Nilesia offered him the hypothetical support of inmates from the Prison as troops – for the small price of marriage. She's willing to remain behind the scenes and help Darkwood succeed. After all, being the force behind the throne is often easier – and far more interesting – than being on the throne itself.

Watching how Darkwood handles the Lady of Pain might even give Nilesia a clue toward realizing her obsession of punishing the Lady's crimes. For the meantime, though, Nilesia's ordered several of her top aides to learn all they can about the Lady's agents, the silent dabus, hoping to unlock the Lady's secrets in the process. The Lady's ignored Nilesia so far, but disturbing her agents is a sure way to grab her attention – and maybe even earn a one-way ticket into a Maze.

THE REVOLUT+IONARY LEAGUE

You bang around the Cage long enough, you hear a thing or two about the Revolutionary League. Folks talk about what the Anarchists support, what they do. Now you've decided you want to be *one*? Well, here's a glimpse into the dark: The Revolutionary League doesn't support anything, doesn't make anything happen. It *opposes* things, *keeps* things from happening. League members try to destroy every established organization, and one day they'll do it.

Yeah, I know I keep talking about the Anarchists like they're someone else. You don't think I belong, do you? See, I'm not an Anarchist myself. But I can tell you a little about them. I can put you in touch with someone who might know someone, who might know someone — you know?

The Revolutionary League searches for the Dark. I don't mean just the dark of who's who or what's what, but the ultimate truth, the Big Dark. 'Course, there's a problem. To find the Big Dark, a body's got to be free. But now, no cutter anywhere has freedom, and won't have it, either, until all the factions are brought low. Sure, a lot of factions say they're looking for truth, and a few of the sods that belong really think they've got a chance to find it. But these misguided seekers don't realize that the high-ups of every faction play the game only for the power. Nothing else.

It's obvious that some of them want it — take the Guvners, for instance. They don't hide their thirst for power. But others act more subtly. They say, "We seek *something greater*," but they only want to hold onto their power. Just look at Rhys of the Ciphers and Skall of the Dustmen. They both claim to want to shine a light into the dark of things. "As soon as we can see this dark," they say, "we'll ascend to another level of existence." But there they both remain, supposedly the highest representations of their factions' development, in the positions of power they've held for years. I don't see any signs of ascending, do you? Truth is, these factols like to be in charge. They want to maintain power, maintain control. And they keep every poor sod in the Cage from freedom. Fortunately, a few cutters know the facts. They join the Revolutionary League and work to remove the old order. That way, everyone can have the freedom to find the Big Dark. They're helping us all, see, but most berks don't even know it.

Now, understand something. The Anarchists don't just rattle their bone-boxes — they act. And to act, they have to have some organization. Oh, they could bounce around like the Xaositects, with no real direction. But they're smart. They know that for real anarchy to have a chance, they must have an actual plan to get rid of order.

Make no mistake, though. The Revolutionary League ain't in it for the power. They know they'll eventually have to overthrow every faction to reach the Big Dark — and that includes themselves. They're already partway there, seein' as how they got no factol. With no factol, no single cutter of them's above the rest. No one gets a lot of power, so no one can get too used to the idea of keeping it. It'll be a cinch for 'em to close the book on themselves.

The Anarchists, they like independent thinkers like you. I can tell you feel lost — you need a friend or two. You'll find 'em in the Anarchists. They befriend those in trouble, 'cause they know that seeking freedom gets a body in trouble with the other factions quicker'n anything else he might try. The Anarchists adopt the loners, the lost, the ones that just don't fit. The Lady likes that.

Look. Go to the Great Gymnasium, stand under the big mural, under the symbol of the Guvners. Look directly away from the wall, and you'll see a street across the way. Walk down three blocks, and turn down the alley. There's a safe house with a red door. Tell 'em Beringe sent you.

Watch it, there's a bunch of Hardheads! Look, you never saw me. Got it?

— Beringe of the Revolutionary League

WE KNOW
M+OST+ FAC+IONS DON'+
+RUST+ +H+ER FAC+IONS.
BU+ ANARCHIS+S —
+HEY DON'+ EVEN +RUST+
EACH +H+ER.
— +HE EDI+OR

PIKE IT!

YOU CAN'T PROVE A THING.

— COMMON

ANARCHIST RETORT

TO HARDHEAD INQUIRIES



◆ ALWAYS IN SHADOW ◆

Who's to say how long the Revolutionary League's been around? Most likely, as long as there's been authority to oppose, a group like the Anarchists has stepped forward to oppose it. Documents in Sigil's Hall of Records refer to "anarchists" working the Cage as long as 700 years ago, back when Factol Jaretta ruled the Guvners.

'Course, were they anarchists or Anarchists? That's a good question that's got no good answer. A body'd be hard-pressed to find a difference between an independent anarchist and one who's part of the League. One problem with Anarchists (and most anarchists) is they don't write down things like this. They don't leave evidence or witnesses, and they never admit to anything — 'cept maybe that they refuse to accept authority.

The Anarchists get blamed for a lot of supposed sabotage: whenever something goes wrong with another faction's plan, when some high-up gets assassinated, or if some building gets knocked down. And every once in a while, some Anarchist scrawls a message somewhere to take credit for this or that promotion of freedom. The Harmonium has pinned a few events in Sigil — and elsewhere on the planes — pretty firmly on them.

About 300 years ago, an Anarchist lit off a spell that killed the factol of the Mercykillers. The spellcaster managed to blame it on the Fated, starting a war that came to involve almost a dozen factions and put an end to three factions altogether. 'Course, the Anarchists still feel mighty proud of that one.

And then there's the time, about 50 years ago, when the Anarchists managed to place an operative, a blood named Omar, in the Harmonium. He managed to fake it all the way up to factol — and then he tried to disband the faction and shut down its headquarters in Sigil! Hardhead factors accused the cutter of acting against the rules of the organization, arrested him, and took

him to the Guvners for trial. In the much-publicized case, the cutter announced that he'd always belonged to the Revolutionary League! The Mercykillers made short work of him after the trial, of course. The Hardheads issued a few statements saying they'd let Omar *think* he was in charge, so he'd give himself away. And who'd argue with the Harmonium?

Anyway, Omar remains a hero to the Revolutionary League, a martyr for the cause. And the Harmonium has felt unhappy with the Anarchists ever since, even more than they were before the spy exposed himself. The Hardheads've even gone so far as to declare the Anarchists a public nuisance. According to the chant of the day, they keep working on a plan to eliminate them — once they find 'em, anyway.

WE HAVE NO PAST,
AND YOU HAVE
NO FUTURE.
— ONE OF MANY
FAC+ION M0++S



The Anarchists always prove tough to find, too, because of their faction's structure. (See "Within the Ranks," page 117. — Ed.) Plus, they can usually smooth their way into other factions without being detected. The social chameleons live everywhere, doing what they do best: fomenting unrest, playing faction against faction, undermining authority, and toppling governments.

And when they're done, they'll have the freedom they need to find the Big Dark.

BERINGE, ◆ A FAC+ION HIGH-UP ◆

Male human planar

13th-/13th-level dual-classed fighter-thief, Revolutionary League (factotum)

Neutral evil

STR	18/40	INT	13	HP	72
DEX	17	WIS	13	AC	-1
CON	16	CHA	14	THACO	8

EQUIPMENT: Plate mail, shield, short sword, *ring of chameleon power*, *hat of disguise*, *boots of elvenkind*.

SPECIAL: Beringe has standard faction and fighter abilities, plus he uses his thief skills to benefit the Anarchists: PP 84%, OL 82%, F/RT 80%, MS 95%, HS 85%, DN 89%, CW 95%, RL 80%. However, he doesn't use them unless he's wearing armor more conducive to covert activities. His magical items help him hide and move silently while armored.

Though he'd never admit it, Beringe is as much of a high-up as the Anarchists have. Because he's a smooth talker and a good planner, he leads several cells of members. He covers his face most times, seldom revealing much more than his bulbous nose and wild eyes. When he carries an Anarchist symbol, it's usually emblazoned on his shield like a crest. However, he carries the symbol only when he wants recognition as an Anarchist — when he wants the group to receive credit for some act of his.

Beringe leads missions with some regularity, always exhibiting few qualms about the tasks required by his Anarchist vocation. He has set traps, killed highly placed officials, led fellow Anarchists to start riots, and conducted missions to topple governments on prime worlds. Though concerned mainly with the state of the planes, Beringe remains firmly convinced that the planes constitute only a part of the solution; eventually, the Anarchists must cleanse the Prime of factions as well.

Beringe prides himself on his status as one of the Revolutionary League's finest recruiters. He roams Sigil between missions, looking for the lost, the lonely, and the

weary. Whenever he finds a sod like this, he befriends him — maybe buying a meal, maybe just talking. He subtly introduces the concept of factions as bad; if the berk seems receptive, he tells him what the League does to alter the situation. If it all works out, he eventually introduces the recruit to a few Anarchists who begin teaching him the ways of revolution.

'Course, Beringe never admits he's an Anarchist, even to other Anarchists. He often poses as a Hardhead, a Taker, or an Athar. He likely shows his real face in some situations, but wears disguises in most. In fact, Beringe has several separate cover identities, complete with histories. This Anarchist can pass for a member of a Hardhead patrol as easily as he could appear as just some basher a body passes on the street. He shows up at unlikely times, always with some creative plan to defy authority. And truth is, he's never even been arrested!

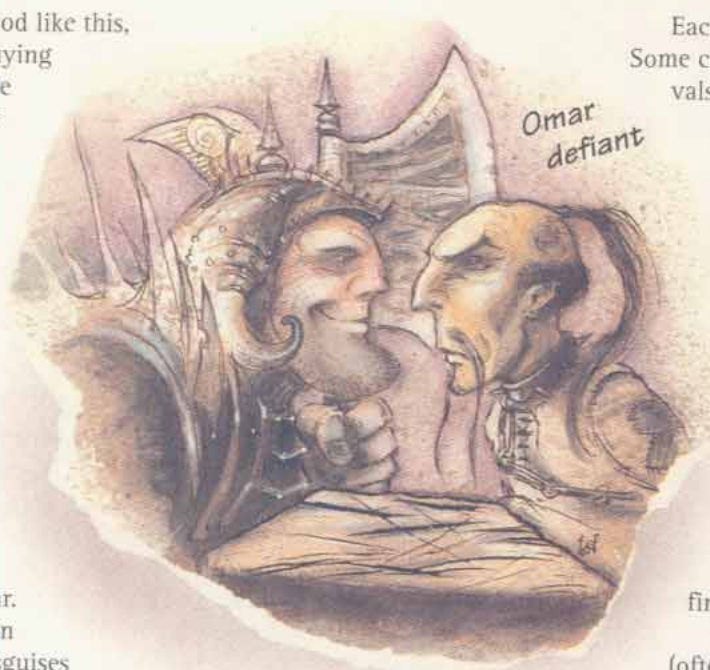
Leastwise, not under his own name.

◆ SAFE HOUSES ◆

The Revolutionary League doesn't have a regular headquarters, or even an irregular headquarters. *(Some recruiting drives take place in Transformants' Square in The Lady's Ward spikeward from the Prison, but usually they just provide a cover to throw the Hardheads off the trail of a real operation. — Ed.)* The League does maintain safe houses, though: places Anarchists can go for quiet talks with like-minded folk.

New Anarchists learn the location of one or two of these refuges once their contacts trust 'em enough to share a bit of the League's own dark. No one knows exactly how many safe houses the faction maintains, but a body might assume every one or two Anarchist cells have their own. And, as no two houses are run by the same people, none resemble each other in the least.

They do share a few common qualities, however. Each safe house has a cover: One might look like a shoemaker's shop, another like a theater, another like a warehouse or tavern. The "cover" is usually legitimate, attracting customers like any other public establishment. Most of these folks have no idea faction business takes place there. So, it not only proves difficult to find a safe house, it sometimes seems tough to make contact with a faction member once one arrives.



Each house also has a password. Some change theirs at regular intervals, others always use the same one. Still others use secret signs, require display of the Anarchist symbol, or use a regular password plus one that changes every few days. Learning the password can prove easier than a body might think: One safe house has its password scrawled on the wall like graffiti; it blends into the decor so a body has to look to see it.

So, a basher first has to find the safe house, then make contact with someone inside (often a door guard) and use the password. The newcomer then finds himself directed to a secret room (sometimes one of several), where Anarchists can meet without fear of discovery.

INTERPLANAR IMPORTERS

The most upscale Anarchist safe house lies in The Lady's Ward, not far from the City Court. Not only do the Anarchists enjoy operating out of the Guvners' backyard, they also maintain Interplanar Importers as a safe house for at least a half dozen other factions! A handful of Anarchists work on a rotating basis, spying on the other factions from hidden rooms, secret panels, and two-way mirrors.

Interplanar Importers is a merchant house run by a woman named Quin (PI/♀ human/W8/Sensate/CG). The owner, in her early 40s, seems pleasant and professional and has a good business sense. Not surprisingly, Quin knows about the secret rooms and passages in her establishment, but she lets them stay. Fact is, the Sensate helps maintain them — having customers from so many factions offers her a wide range of experience.

In addition to selling materials from throughout the planes, Interplanar Importers also holds a good-sized restaurant offering a wide variety of exotic food and drink. The chef, Katya (PI/♀ half-elf/B6/Sensate/NG), loves to experiment with new recipes and expresses her artistic side by redecorating the dining area. Restaurant manager and host Mikal (PI/♂ human/F4/Cipher/N) finds some amount of inner peace by handling the daily lunch rushes through sheer instinct. Together, they've created the perfect dining experience.

The Anarchist operation in the safe house was started four years ago by Quin's daughter, Strader.

STRADER

Female half-elf planar

8th-level thief, Revolutionary League (factotum)

Neutral

STR	11	INT	15	HP	26
DEX	17	WIS	12	AC	4
CON	13	CHA	16	THACO	17

EQUIPMENT: Leather armor, *ring of protection +1*, dagger, sling, 20 sling bullets.

SPECIAL: Strader has standard faction, race, and class abilities, plus thief skills: PP 75%, OL 50%, F/RT 25%, MS 25%, HS 25%, DN 75%, CW 65%, RL 75%.

Strader, sometimes known as “the djinni” because she seems to create a whirlwind wherever she goes, used to belong to the Sensates. Eventually, though, she became dissatisfied with their philosophies. After speaking once with a member of the Revolutionary League, she joined without a second thought. Under her cover as a Sensate, however, she has infiltrated their ranks quite deeply.

The young woman lost no time in setting up two Anarchist cells in her mother's business, to let her comrades spy on the factions that met there. At the time, Strader handled all her mother's hiring and placed more than a

dozen Anarchists into positions there. The cells remain discreet, gathering information but protecting their cover by avoiding destructive activities.

THE HARIM

A friendly little establishment called the Harim, not far from the Great Gymnasium, caters mostly to Sensates, Ciphers, Signers, and other self-absorbed sorts. Furnished mostly in soft cushions, the Harim has a theme of decadence with overtones reminiscent of desert evenings. It boasts five metallic domes overhead and a large, open courtyard enchanted to resemble a lush, ivy-covered refuge. Staff members, in silky garments that look comfortable and sensuous, provide patrons with food, drink, and entertainment. Managers encourage the staff to converse with customers at length.

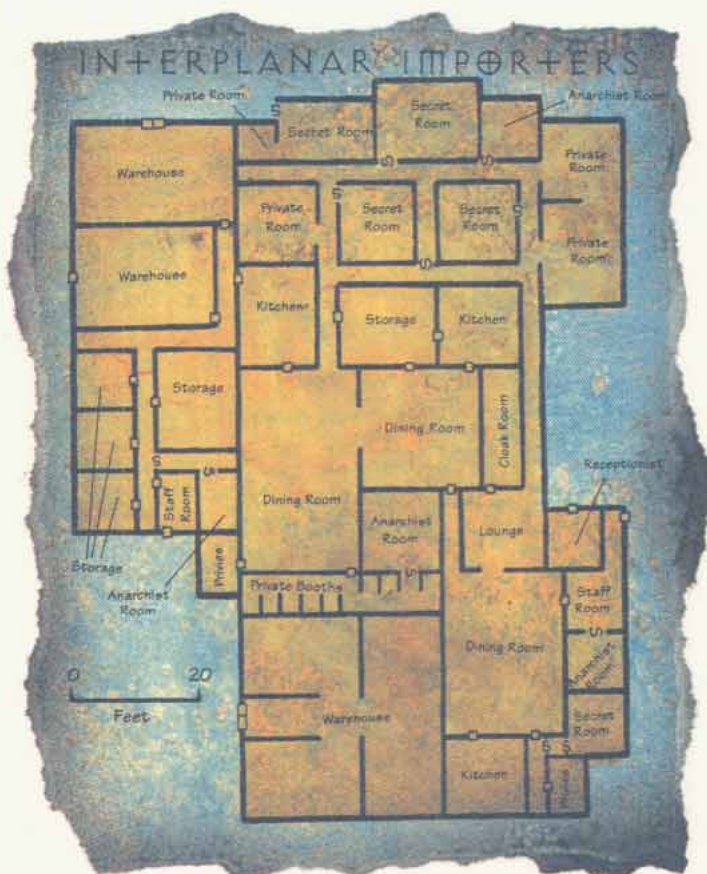
The top manager is the Harim's owner, Cassandra (PI/♀ human/F3/Cipher/N), a pretty young woman with light-colored hair. For a while, business seemed pretty erratic, as Cassandra's reflex decisions would change the Harim's menu, decor, and policies in a wink. However, the fact that her choices of late — like allowing the Anarchists a foothold — have increased business indicates that Cassandra's on her way to the unity of thought and deed her faction demands.

Two cells of the Revolutionary League work out of the Harim. One run by Nanice (Pr/♂ elf/W5/Anarchist/N) devotes itself to gathering information. Traice (PI/♂ half-elf/T7/Anarchist/CN) heads a cell involved in missions of destruction. Both groups carefully avoid activity too close to their base; Harmonium troops have raided the Harim more than once, but it always gets by with just a warning, thanks to Cassandra's well-placed connections. (They include a friendly Guvner who defends her when necessary. — Ed.)

OTHER REFUGES

HOUSE OF THE GRIFFIN. One of many Anarchist bases in the Hive Ward, the House of the Griffin caters to the low. The place takes its name from its tough, smart proprietor, the Griffin (PI/♀ human/F3/Doomguard/N). This thirtyish woman gets her nickname from her piercing gaze and sharp tongue. She sees bar-fights in her place as the progression of entropy and approves of the Anarchists, under Valer (PI/♂ tiefling/T6/Anarchist/CN), helping that process along.

THE SQUARE BAR. Everything in one Anarchist safe house looks perfectly square: the floor, the tables, the cross-section of every beam — even the walls are painted in square designs. Members of the Harmonium, Guvners, and Mercykillers frequent this small Lady's Ward tavern — 'course, so do the Anarchists, always hungry for information on the activities of Sigil's “wheel of justice.”





THE SECRET DOOR. From the outside, the Secret Door seems nothing more than that: a door on some nondescript wall. Thing is, the door's really a portal to a demiplane, and a body needs a gate key to enter the place at all. This is the most secure safe house — only Anarchists can get in. Some faction members know that cells of Anarchist leaders meet here, so the chant calls the Secret Door the headquarters of the central cell, if such a thing exists. A blood named Brimarc (Pl/♂ githzerai/F7/Anarchist/CN) runs the place and enjoys picking up the magical door and moving it from time to time, to keep it really secret.

◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

The Anarchists give the appearance of complete chaos, but it just ain't so. See, their organization style just differs from what's normal for other groups. The Revolutionary League divides itself into *cells*: little groups of bloods who act together and share information. The cells talk to each other through representatives, so a typical Anarchist never meets more than a dozen other members of the faction. This way, Anarchists that get pinched can't give too many others away. And by the time the Hardheads trace the connections back a cell or two, the League members involved all

have changed their names, found new kips, and disappeared into the woodwork. That's why they're so tough to root out, and almost impossible to destroy.

And look into this dark: When the Harmonium or another group kills an Anarchist or wipes out a cell, it actually *helps* the Revolutionary League. Other factions wouldn't seek the Anarchists' destruction unless they feared them, see? So, lots of berks join up, figuring the League must be doing something right.

ROLE-PLAYING THE ANARCHISTS

A basher might think the Revolutionary League's natural secrecy implies a certain amount of paranoia among its members — and he'd have the dark of it. The Cage can't hold a more suspicious bunch. Even Hardheads trust at least each other, plus most Guvners, Mercykillers, and select others. Anarchists don't trust *anyone*, not even other cell members.

RACE. Most Anarchists are human, since they can best infiltrate other factions. Its peery nature makes the Revolutionary League a good home for loners, so tieflings and half-elves join in large numbers. However, they seem less inclined to participate in the more subtle undertakings of the cells that require them to interact with other groups under cover. Bariaur often prove a little flamboyant for the Anarchists' tastes. Githzerai have a special affinity for the League, but dwarves and other races strongly inclined toward law seldom join.

CLASS. Of the many Anarchist warriors, most work as fighters, though the League has a few rangers, too. It also embraces priests and wizards, the latter usually concentrating on enchantments, divinations, and other covert magic. 'Course, the most common profession by far in the League is that of thief and other rogues.

ALIGNMENT. Though they claim to accept all comers, the Anarchists keep out lawful types, who'd feel adverse to overthrowing the order in society. A few good bashers join, believing in the nobility of bringing down factions, despite the violence that arises. Some evil types join *because* of that violence. However, most of the faction breaks down evenly between chaotic and neutral members. 'Course, perhaps the lack of lawful types is what keeps the League from really getting organized.

ANARCHIST MEMBERSHIP

Joining the Revolutionary League proves an adventure in itself. Since the Anarchists are everywhere, they're very easy to find. Trouble is, most sods don't know when they've found one. Berks

asking for them too vocally will likely draw unwanted attention, and that means they'll *never* attract the Revolutionary League.

But the patient cutter, who casually tells a few folks how unhappy he feels with authority, sooner or later has an Anarchist approach him. Until the League member satisfies himself that the cutter really wants to belong, he remains the newcomer's only faction contact. When the Anarchist trusts the new basher — after an hour or a year — he takes him to a cell meeting.

Cells have at least three members, and sometimes as many as eight. When too many bashers join a cell, it splits; one person remains a part of both cells, to help communication. Sometimes, a member of a cell recruits Anarchists to lead a new cell. Each cell's leader always belongs to one other cell.

Think of the League's structure as a web. In the center lies a cell of leaders, more or less equivalent to the factors of other factions. The leader of this cell comes closest to a factol, but the position rotates, so no one gets too used to the power. Each blood in this cell runs one or more other cells of factotums: those who've proven their devotion. In turn, each factotum runs one or more other cells of factotums and namers.

'Course, that's just the *theory* about the League; no Anarchist would willingly reveal details of the faction's structure. Nobody even knows whether League has one central cell or several. The variations on the Anarchists' symbol seen around the Cage imply quite a few central cells with very little membership.

The chant goes like this: If the Anarchists really stemmed from a single central cell, they'd have a firm direction. By now, they'd surely have chosen which faction to topple first. With all the resources at their disposal, a truly organized League could've toppled a dozen factions already. If the group devotes a central cell to each other faction, these cells inevitably work at cross-purposes sometimes. Fortunately for the other factions, the League's natural secrecy keeps it from organizing itself enough for a big push — so far.

FACTION ABILITIES. The Anarchists admire stealth and other rogue skills, so the cells train their members in forgery and disguise. A League factotum (any cutter belonging to two or more cells) can learn nonweapon proficiencies from the rogue group at normal cost, regardless of class. Rogue characters gain a special +2 bonus to their scores for their rogue proficiencies.

Best not forget the special power that all Anarchists share: They can pose as a member of any other faction automatically, without being detected. While they don't receive the special abilities of the assumed faction, they gain acceptance, access to their headquarters, and can call on members of other factions for aid. (*Fact is, Anarchists can get help from a member of another faction sooner than from their own.* — Ed.)

The League dislikes all organizations, and near the top of most members' hit lists sits the Guvners. Their structured philosophy bothers Anarchists, their sturdy grasp on Cagers frightens them, and their restrictive attitude infuriates them. However, Anarchists can't agree on what to do about the Fraternity of Order. Since the Guvners work with the Mercykillers and the Harmonium, most Anarchists favor dismantling the entire beast of law and justice. A lot consider it best to strike off the beast's head first by going after the Guvners. Others want to start with the legs — toppling the Harmonium first would cut off the beast's support. Still others favor lopping off its sword arm, the Mercykillers, to end the triad's power to punish those seeking the Big Dark. 'Course, some push to attack all three factions at once. Not only can't the Anarchists decide on a target, they can't agree on what to do once they've got the target.

Next on the list, after the triad of law, comes the Fated; their grubbing for power earns them a fair amount of Anarchist hatred. The Dustmen and Signers, so sure they know the Big Dark already, also hover near the top of the list. Godsmen annoy the Anarchists too, but at least they don't claim to know the Truth already.

The misguided leatherheads in the Sensates think they can learn the Big Dark through experience; they haven't a hope, according to the Anarchists. The Doomguard's desire for entropy sounds promising, as it predicts the fall of all organizations. Unfortunately, say League members, a lot of Doomguards seem happy just to watch the growing disorder rather than promote it.

The Anarchists feel pretty neutral toward the Ciphers. First, they look for the Truth. Sure, they might be seeking it prematurely, but they've got the right idea. Also, the Ciphers don't have much of a power structure, and they act without thought — something of a plus. They're almost Anarchists already, if they'd just stop training their reflexes long enough to devote some "action" to destroying the other factions.

The Revolutionary League sneers at the Indeps, who realize the worthlessness of all factions, but ain't got the courage to do anything about it. The Xaositects don't like authority, so they become good pawns for Anarchist plots. The Athar see into part of the dark: They know the powers are fakes, but they fail to extend the idea to all representations of authority.

Anarchists almost admire the Bleakers. They're right in that a basher ain't likely to find any Truth now. But Bleakers seem like perpetually depressed Anarchists, so despondent about the whole situation that they've given up hope of ever finding the Big Dark. Hope's the main thing that keeps the Anarchists going.

The only other faction the Anarchists appear at odds with is . . . the Anarchists. No cell accepts that any other cell does things right and each one thinks its own scheme would work best and wants its target to get most of the

faction's attention. The petty squabbles this attitude starts ain't good for anyone 'cept other factions.

But every once in a while, a couple of cells get together and hatch a plan. That's when they become really dangerous, and wise cutters stay out of their way.

◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

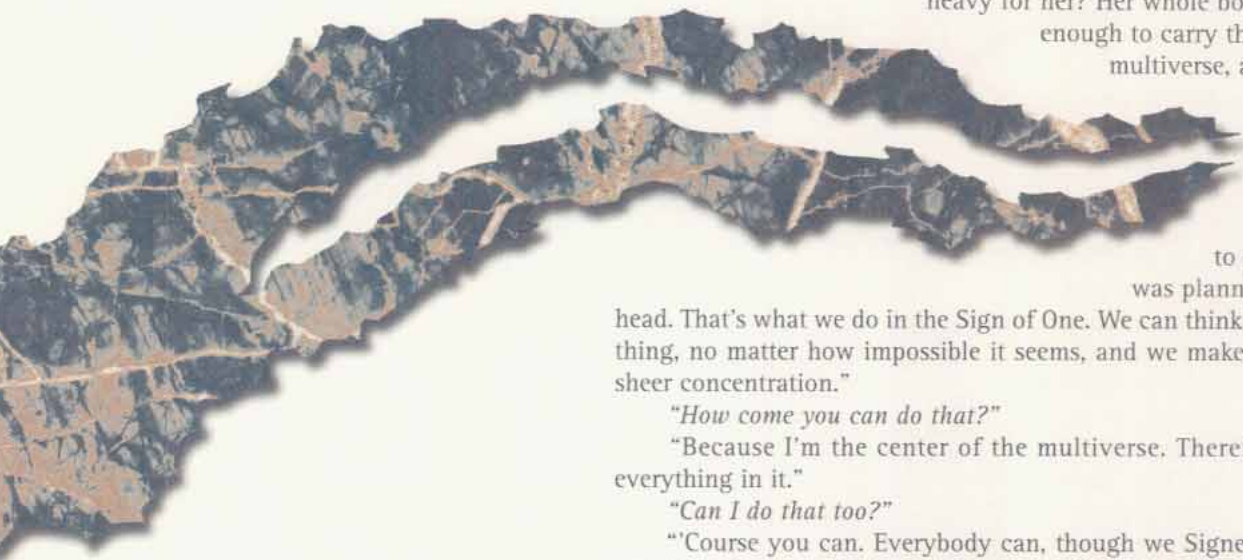
One thing a body can count on about the Anarchists: The rumors are true. All of 'em. If a body tells you the dark of it has the Anarchists allied with the Doomguard against the Godsmen *and*, at the same time, some other basher says they're planning an attack on the Doomguard with the Godsmen's help, better believe 'em both. Should the Anarchists catch a chant about a new revolutionary plot that rings false, it's a cinch one of them'll pick it up and try to put it into action anyway.

Again, the members of the Revolutionary League can't agree enough to threaten Sigil too seriously, but they do have plots against every other faction. One campaign currently underway would set the Harmonium against the Guvners by convincing enough Hardheads that Factol Hashkar's a petitioner. Is he? Doesn't really matter to the Anarchists. They just hope the suggestion of something suspicious will make the Harmonium sense wrongdoing and go after Hashkar, creating a rift between the Hardheads and the Guvners.

Then, on to the next target.



THE SIGN OF ONE



"Good afternoon, children. I'm Factol Darius. Your teachers tell me you've been enjoying your visit to our beautiful Hall of Speakers today. It's pretty quiet, for once, since the Council's not in session today. The room you're in right now is called the Speaker's Podium, named for that big wooden lectern up there. This is where we make Sigil's laws.

"Now, I have only a few minutes to spend with you. Do any of you have questions about your visit?"

"Is that big statue out front supposed to be you?"

"Yes, in a way, it is me, just like it's every other member of the Sign of One. That sculpture, called 'The Power of the One,' represents our faction. As you approached the Hall you passed right by it, a woman holding an entire world on her back. Remember how it didn't even look

heavy for her? Her whole body looked powerful enough to carry that world across the multiverse, and her face wore a

confident smile, as though she were imagining exactly

where she wanted to put that world. She

was planning it all out in her

head. That's what we do in the Sign of One. We can think about doing something, no matter how impossible it seems, and we make it happen through sheer concentration."

"How come you can do that?"

"Because I'm the center of the multiverse. Therefore, I can control everything in it."

"Can I do that too?"

"Course you can. Everybody can, though we Signers do it best of all. Try this when you get back to your case tonight. Pick some task, anything that involves manual deftness, like threading a needle. Sit down, close your eyes, and imagine yourself trying to thread that needle. Imagine that you just can't do it. The thread won't go through the needle's eye. Then, open your eyes and actually try to do the task. Try threading that needle a half dozen times. What do you think'll happen?"

"I can't do it?"

"Exactly. Then, try something else. Close your eyes and imagine actually threading that needle. Your fingers hold steady, and you can picture yourself threading it on the first try. Then open your eyes and really try to do it. Try it another six times. What happens?"

"Bet it works, now."

"That's right, it works. You'll naturally succeed more often this time than in your earlier attempts. See, the mind is a powerful tool. The results it envisions frequently come to pass. I know some berks pass this off as the effect of practice. They say that by rehearsing mental images you train your body. But that doesn't explain why imagining the return of a lost item usually causes it to reappear. Has that happened to you?"

"I can tell you why it works like this. The mind creates the multiverse — maybe just a small chunk of it, maybe a whole plane, or perhaps the entire Great Ring. You think about it enough, it'll come to pass. It all depends on the power of the mind doing the envisioning.

"Here's a challenge for all of you. Grasp that slice of the multiverse which is your life and take control of it. Imagine the happy ending, the triumph. It could be yours, if you've got the guts. Don't cling to failure. Stop

THE GODSMEN
BELIEVE +HE MUL+IVERSE
M+OLDS US.

THESE SIGNERS,
+HEY +HINK +HEY
M+OLD +HE MUL+IVERSE!

— +HE EDI+OR

whining, stop blaming, stop worrying. Imagine yourself radiant. You could be. And when you've grown up and you have what you imagined, think about whether you want more. Would you like to guide the destiny of a city — an empire? If that appeals to you, I would offer you the Sign of One. We have the entire multiverse at our fingertips."

— A recent talk between Factol Darius and a group of schoolchildren touring the Hall of Speakers

Factol Darius
contemplates a
figure of Aoskar.



◆ THE TIMES OF THE SIGN ◆

The Sign of One's an old faction, dating back many centuries. Its members subscribe to a story about the first Signer, Rilith, whose metaphysical adventures gave birth to the organization and its philosophy.

Rilith possessed an avid fascination with spiders. She had a lot of jink, see, so she could indulge her eccentricities. She collected arachnids from around the Great Ring and from a smattering of prime-material locations. As she preferred her eight-legged pets to arrive for her collection alive, Rilith nearly ended her participation in the hobby when an exotic specimen bit her arm. Its venom produced the typical blue mottling on the skin of the afflicted limb, but Rilith closed her eyes and refused to watch it spread. "Healthy arm, easy breathing, clear vision," she whispered, over and over. Half an hour later, it was true.

She should've died — no other collector had survived the bite of an orange-speckled recluse. Surprised herself that she was still living, Rilith tried a few more thought experiments. First, she imagined she'd obtained an arachnid species discovered by no one else; the twin-tailed blue pincer joined her collection within the week. She pictured her collection winning critical acclaim; Udell Dexlin, Sigil's expert on spiders, knocked at her door the next day. Many more distinguished individuals followed in his footsteps.

Rilith founded a collectors' society aimed at the amateur. She taught her techniques to its admiring membership, including the idiosyncratic habit of imagining desired results. The arachnophiles soon saw the broader application of the latter tactic. They expanded the society's activities beyond its initial focus on spiders to explore the ramifications of positive and negative thinking. Their move into the cerebral realm drew the ire of the Transcendent Order, though. The Ciphers considered the concept that thought controls the multiverse a direct affront to their own philosophy that calls action without thought the purest form of existence. They did everything they could to destroy Rilith's society, but their efforts had the reverse effect. More Cagers heard about the group and joined!

Eventually, the members of the Transcendent Order decided to stop wasting their time and energy. What did it matter

that the misguided were many, and the enlightened few? So long as each Cipher pursued the goal of harmonizing body and mind, the rest of Sigil could go to the Mazes. The Ciphers ceased their harassment, and the Signers continued moving in the direction that shaped their early history. In time, they would come to regard themselves the chosen ones of the multiverse — but that's much later.

They soon embarked on a crusade to teach the entire Cage the benefits of positive thinking and the hazards of negative imagery. 'Course, the Bleak Cabal took instant and hostile exception to this goal. The Signers' claim that they controlled the multiverse trampled on the Madmen's assertion that the cosmos made no sense. Tensions rose as neither side backed down. The Signers announced at the Speaker's Podium that they'd assembled teams to envision 'round the clock the death of Bleaker Factol Nobey. When his attendants found the high-up unbreathing in his bed the next day, the Cabal's hatred for the Sign of One crystallized into a permanent bias. (*No cause of death was ever found: No signs of sickness, violence, or evil magic attended the factol's corpse. — Ed.*) To this day, Bleakers seek new ways to make Signers swallow dirt.

With Nobey's demise, the Sign of One began pursuing a new pastime. The faction started making public proclamation of its designs for the future, followed by much fanfare when these visions came to pass. Thing is, the Signers' methods in these later successes weren't always exactly scrupulous. At times, they secretly dispatched assassins, healers, or mediators to aid the imagining they practiced at their headquarters.

Individual members began to adopt their faction's habit, registering personal prophecies with a factor, then bringing their triumphs to the notice of their peers. Signers possessing a long history of shaping the multiverse to their liking grew in influence and prestige within the faction. Success in molding events through mind power became more important than the wish for happiness that supposedly prompted such attempts in the first place. Signers lost some of their compassion and became preoccupied with status. "We are the elect," the factol declared. "We admit into our ranks only those cutters who can sculpt reality."

(Taken from The Writings of Gaelan, factol at the time of the Signers' first major philosophical shift. — Ed.)

Unlike some factions (namely, the Anarchists), recruiting converts to their philosophy and members for their ranks remains a subsidiary goal for the Sign of One. Instead, their primary desire is to increase the respect and awe in which their neighbors and rivals hold them. They want all Sigil — and all the Great Ring — to revere them as creators of the multiverse.

The Signers' current strategy for demonstrating their superior powers involves reviving a dead god. Currently, groups within the faction are bickering over which long-forgotten power to choose. Some have settled upon Aoskar, a former god of portals and opportunity, as the best candidate for the procedure.



However, others favor Enki, a god of rivers and oceans once from Mechanus and known for his great hatred of fiends — when he still had worshipers, that is. Both sides are organizing campaigns to “believe” these ex-powers right out of their helpless state adrift in the Astral. *(They’ve even prepared little figures of the two gods to help foster concentration. — Ed.)* They merely await the factol’s choice.

◆ FAC+ΘL DARIUS ◆

Female human planar
11th-level Diviner, Sign of One (factol)
Neutral good

STR	10	INT	17	HP	24
DEX	12	WIS	16	AC	2
CON	14	CHA	16	THACO	17

EQUIPMENT: Vibrant purple *ioun* stone bracelet (holds up to seven spell levels), pendant of protection (as bracers of protection [AC2]).

SPELLS/LEVEL: 5/5/5/4/4.

SPECIAL: Darius casts spells from any school except conjuration/summoning, but one from each spell level must be a divination. She has other standard specialist wizard and faction abilities.

Darius the Veyl currently serves as factol of the Sign of One. This olive-skinned woman has soft gray eyes and a flawless complexion. Her vague, unfocused demeanor matches her soft appearance, yet somehow she holds a body’s attention. Something in the fleeting moments of steadiness in her gaze or in the deliberate grace of her movements commands respect.

She was born in the Outlands realm Tir na Og, on the shores of the vast sea her people, the Esprene, call Feyliriel. The daughter of a philosophical wizard, Darius learned metaphysics at her father’s knee almost before she could rattle her bone-box. Exposed to rationalism, hedonism, stoicism, mysticism, solipsism, existentialism, and other systems of thought from an early age, Darius became cynical toward intellectual exercise. Her contempt for the mental realm changed when her father introduced her to spellpower: Clearly, thought properly channeled could accomplish a lot!

Darius specialized in divination, earning the title “The Veyl,” an epithet bestowed by the Esprene upon one who dispenses wise advice. She might have remained forever in her father’s house, studying magic and counseling bashers on the horns of dilemmas, but for the arrival of the assassin Toddy.

Toddy had just accepted (under duress) an assignment from the fiend Za’rafas to kill a wanderer named Mason. The tanar’ri’s superiors had caught the chant that Mason could successfully block an Outlands raid they were plan-

ning, so they wanted him out of the picture. Thing was, Mason had pulled Toddy out of lethal scrapes twice. The assassin wanted to spare his friend; if he took his time, might his employer perish in the raid? Then Toddy need never finish his work. ‘Course, if Za’rafas survived, Toddy’d take his friend’s place in the dead-book! What did Darius advise?

The Veyl did far more than advise. After scrutinizing the immediate future, she recommended that Toddy lie low: Za’rafas would die of wounds received in battle. Then she sought out Mason. One meeting with the roving warrior showed her that his flair for diplomacy, combined with his talent in tactics and strategy, would give him what he needed to lead Outlands locals in defense against the tanar’ri. ‘Course, putting down the raid quickly didn’t entirely prevent warfare, or the destruction that comes with it; renegade tanar’ri razed a few Outlands burgs before their defeat. *(See page 70 of Sigil and Beyond, in the PLANESCAPE Campaign Setting, for more on the raid.*

— Ed.)

Welbey, Darius’s family home, numbered among the ravaged hamlets. The Veyl escaped death, but her father and the other village folk did not. With nothing left of her former life, Darius chose to relocate to Sigil.

Once ensconced there, she drifted into company with Signers and soon joined their faction. She proved a potent dreamer — some say she achieved her present position merely by envisioning herself there. Darius suffers less from self-centeredness than most Signers. Her primary goal for the faction seems a noble one: popularizing the Sign of One’s tolerance for diversity throughout society while enhancing the empathic abilities of the faction’s members. ‘Course, she agrees that her faction deserves more respect, so she authored the scheme to revive a dead god.

Thing is, she’s not certain Aoskar’s the better candidate. Sure, the Signers could handle the opposition they’d receive when the Athar picked up the chant. *(The Defiers use Aoskar as a symbol of their group’s beliefs; plus, they make their base in his Shattered Temple. — Ed.)* She’s not



WE IMAGINED
+HE GΘDS IN+Θ
EXIST+ENCE —
SΘ SΘRRY YΘU DΘN’+
LIKE +HEM.

— FAC+ΘL DARIUS
+Θ FAC+ΘL TERRANCE
ΘF +HE A+HAR





even worried about the Lost learning the dark of the plan: Aoskar's revival would require the destruction of the Athar's magical tree,

the Bois Verdurous. See, what concerns Darius is that the *Lady of Pain* booted Aoskar out of Sigil. Some say this god of portals got so popular even the dabus worshiped him, and others say folks started revering the Lady as one of his aspects! Reviving an enemy of the Lady of Pain just ain't a healthy idea.

Darius favors garb of beige, ecru, or cream, generally donning tunic, kilt, and many-strapped sandals beneath the silken folds of her balandrana. Her most notable idiosyncrasy is the wimple covering her hair and neck: No one ever sees the Veyl without it.

◆ THE HALL OF SPEAKERS ◆

Seems amazing, but a body bound and determined to poke his sneezer around the Hall of Speakers can see quite a lot before anyone thinks to stop him. See, the Hall's a public place: Any sod can get in, but few get to look beneath the surface of normal legislative goings-on.

The Signer headquarters rests in a lively corner of the Clerk's Ward. Street criers, scribes, touts, and couriers stay plenty busy. Visitors to the Hall need their services and will pay. Mercenaries resting between campaigns book rooms in the lush inns here, refurbish their gear, and change their foreign coins for local jink with the money-lenders. Importers of exotica sell their goods to the wealthy and the perverse. Devas in disguise pursue the goals of their powers. And lone knights of the post – the most adept at the trade – skim the rich pickings available.

The Hall itself has no lawns or terraces, but rests amid the surrounding welter of affluent lodgings and domiciles. Its tall, graceful spire makes the place hard to miss. (*So does the titanic iron statue out front, called "The Power of the One." – Ed.*) The oval Hall itself is carved of marble. A covered arcade surrounds the building, interrupted by two entrances: the Signer's Portal at one end and the Speaker's Portal at the other.

The foyer inside either entrance looks bright and airy. The walls seem to glow, and high windows checker the floor with light. A continuous stream of visitors flows through the entrances; some head for the meeting rooms and private apartments leased out by the Signers, but more make for the chamber called the Speaker's Podium. A basher standing in the foyer of the Speaker's Portal can hear quite clearly the debate raging dead ahead:

"I demand that the Fhurling Bridge be demolished forthwith!" yells an irate Indep. "That crumbling span's a hazard to any basher crossing it, and I'm tired of telling

the Clueless why they can't get from Ulick's Bowse in the Hive to Ilyer's Haberdasher in the Lower Ward without going all the way up to the Zaddfum Trestle."

Debates such as this usually get resolved in the Council Chambers to either side of the Speaker's Podium. Folks on the speaker's list come here to hold public hearings or discussions. Getting on the speaker's list (and getting others off) makes this Hall another arena for interfaction battles. See, anybody can be a speaker, as long as they get on the list. The Council of Speakers comprises only official delegates from each legitimate faction – factols or other high-ups. The Speaker, always a Signer, oversees all public sessions, presiding over the debates regarding statutes, decrees, and Sigil law. After sufficient public hearings, the Council retires to chambers to vote the proposals into law – or vote them down.

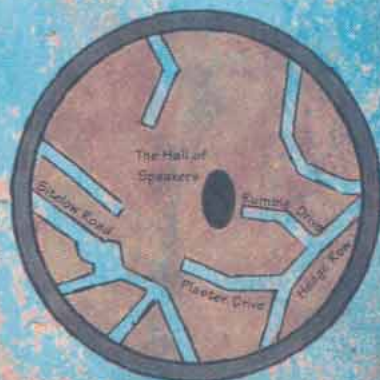
Across the corridor and to either side of the Speaker's Podium, a visitor might spot two spiral staircases that give access to the Hall's upper chambers. A pair of identical stairways flanks the Signers' Portal at the other end of the Hall, and more stairs are situated at intervals along the corridor that encircles the Hall. A basher climbing to the top of a stairway sees a long, curved hall, spotted with doors at regular intervals. Behind these doors lie meeting rooms, faction members' kips, and the rented cases of visitors and dignitaries who don't mind having landlords who happen to be the centers of the multiverse. The stairs each climb 10 stories above the Hall's main floor.

Back on the main level, heading down the corridor, more than one cutter's been accosted by some berk trying to sprinkle flower petals over him. Through the open door to one of the meeting rooms here, a body might see a dozen more petal-strewers conversing. "Sigil's hopeless," a woman says. "The only thing that grows here is razorvine. I almost think we should give up." A man's voice answers her: "Nonsense. The rich have conservatories. Once we fill them with roses, we'll have a better idea of how to tackle the streets." Other bashers passing by chuckle quietly at the discussion of the Rosebringers, a sect devoted to filling the multiverse with the scent of roses, which most considered merely a bubble-tale.

The far end of the Hall's faction territory – but except for the guards on either side of the Signers' Portal, the area frequently goes unpatrolled. A daring basher could approach even the factol's quarters without anyone squelching the peel. Though glimpsing Darius herself always makes a body wonder what she's thinking, spying on her rooms is pretty dull. 'Course, a blood that does as much concentrating as she does wouldn't clutter up her bland quarters with a lot of knick-knacks and treasure.

Exiting the factol's rooms into the Hall's immense garden, a basher can sneak right past the faction's Chamber of Concord. Watching the long line of Signers pass out its door, a basher has to ask himself how they ever arrive at consensus. Aligning so many personal multiverses into a shared view can't be easy.

THE HALL OF SPEAKERS



The most mysterious chamber in the Hall of Speakers is the tomb of faction founder Rilith. The impressive vault, oval like most other rooms in the Hall, features strangely organic pilasters supporting a cornice that resembles stalactites arranged in a line. Magical light from high above in the curved roof — everything looks curved in the Hall of Speakers — focuses on a massive urn carved from a colossal ocean pearl. According to the chant, Rilith's remains rest within that urn. A contingent of Signers watch the thing day and night, all the while thinking about their founder. See, they fear Rilith might disappear from history, should their attention lapse a moment. And, without its founder, the faction itself might vanish!

SAFE HOUSES. 'Course, Signers don't believe in maintaining a network of safe houses where beleaguered faction members can go to ground. Why waste the time? Signers in trouble ought to imagine themselves out of the blinds — or at least, imagine a hiding place into existence.

The faction does possess a sanctuary on the Beastlands, which functions as an extension of its headquarters. When a permanent portal to the conservatory of an old Krigalan manor suddenly appeared in the Hall of Speakers, the Signers adapted the ruins of the estate to their purposes. Appropriately enough, travelers need only envision a *speaker's key* to use the exit. (See "The DM's Dark," page 129. — Ed.)

More than a century ago, the stonework of the abandoned manor was repaired and its rooms cleaned and refurnished. Sarazh, an aging factor, oversees the management of the Dreamhearth, as the case is called.

SARAZH

Female tiefling planar
14th-level priestess of Deneir, Sign of One (factor)
Lawful good

STR	11	INT	18	HP	46
DEX	10	WIS	17	AC	10
CON	13	CHA	14	THACO	12

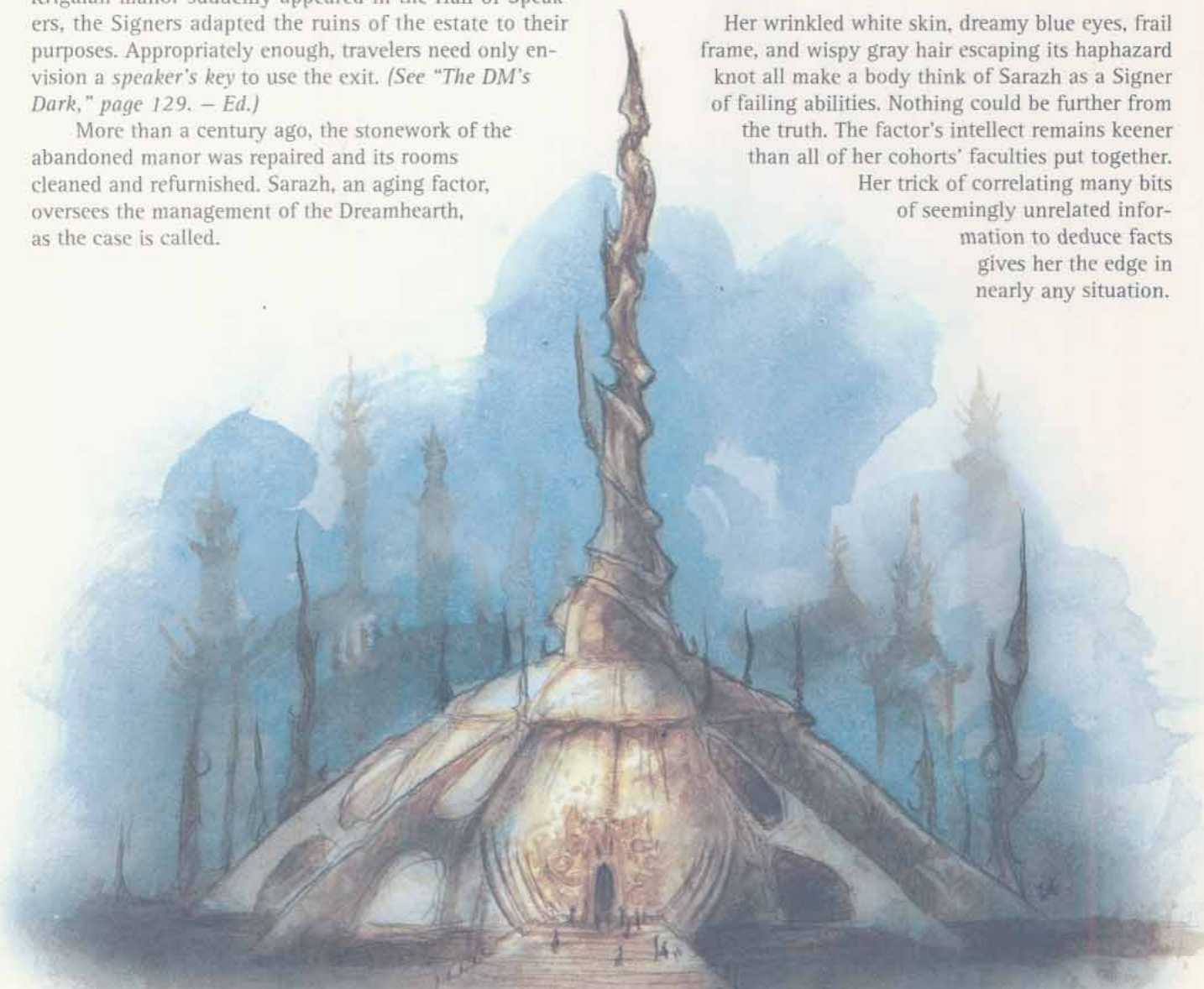
EQUIPMENT: Quarterstaff.

SPELLS/LEVEL: 8/8/7/5/3/2.

SPECIAL: Sarazh has an incredible memory and perceptual abilities, which allow her the following spell-like powers once per day: *detect evil*, *detect lie*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *detect snares and pits*, *find the path*, *locate object*, and *tongues*. As a priestess of a god of literature, art, and recorded knowledge, she casts spells from these spheres: all, astral, charm, divination, and guardian. However, her Wisdom 17 doesn't let her cast 7th-level spells. She has other standard priest, tiefling, and faction abilities.

Her wrinkled white skin, dreamy blue eyes, frail frame, and wispy gray hair escaping its haphazard knot all make a body think of Sarazh as a Signer of failing abilities. Nothing could be further from the truth. The factor's intellect remains keener than all of her cohorts' faculties put together.

Her trick of correlating many bits of seemingly unrelated information to deduce facts gives her the edge in nearly any situation.



Sarazh oversees the operation of the Dreamhearth, coordinating the activities of Signers who use the manor as their base and studying the multiverse for clues that might help Factol Darius steer the faction to its best advantage. The factor has a phenomenal memory – a few minutes' search allows her to dredge from her mind the contents of a page read decades ago, the lines of a face from her childhood, and even the layout of a city she visited only briefly. She knows the names of current faction members and their deployment: namers living ordinary lives in Sigil, factotums away on errands to the Inner Planes, or factors engaged in delicate espionage.

Characters visiting the Dreamhearth will encounter Sarazh at least once. It's a cinch she'll deduce more about them and their plans than they can possibly guess.

◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

Some Signers seem like vague daydreamers, while others display impressive gifts of observation. But the one quality all Signers exhibit is open-mindedness: After all, when a body can imagine anything or anyone into existence, the multiverse gets treated to a wide diversity of creatures and creations! No true Signer takes offense at even unpopular statements or beliefs from someone they encounter. A fiend from Carceri deserves a hearing as much as a deva from Elysium or a local thief that bobbed some cutter's case.

Signers generally also seem more self-centered than most folks. See, exterminating a rival or betraying a friend become more attractive alternatives when a body views others as products of one's imagination without subjective realities. Such self-centeredness means Signers have difficulty understanding (or caring about) others' feelings. They suffer –2 penalties on all encounter reactions and NPC loyalty checks.

ROLE-PLAYING THE SIGNERS

Signers can have nearly any personality types as long they see the multiverse as a place they can shape.

ALIGNMENT. The Sign of One bars no one from joining. 'Course, remember that lawful types consider the multi-

verse a complex but orderly place that exists objectively and can be analyzed by bashers who live in it. Such folks can't tolerate the subjective nature of reality Signers espouse. Lawful good folk, for instance, feel awfully peery of the views of evil beings. Even lawful neutral types seem uneasy about the lack of order in the Signer creed. Only lawful evil characters, with their self-serving behavior, might appreciate the philosophy of the Sign of One for allowing them to seize the advantage wherever they choose.

Cutters of neutral or chaotic alignment can feel at home in this faction. The former understand how positive and negative thinking can help a body balance tragedy with triumph in life. Chaotic Signers let whims direct their thoughts and like to imagine new things into existence just for the sake of change.

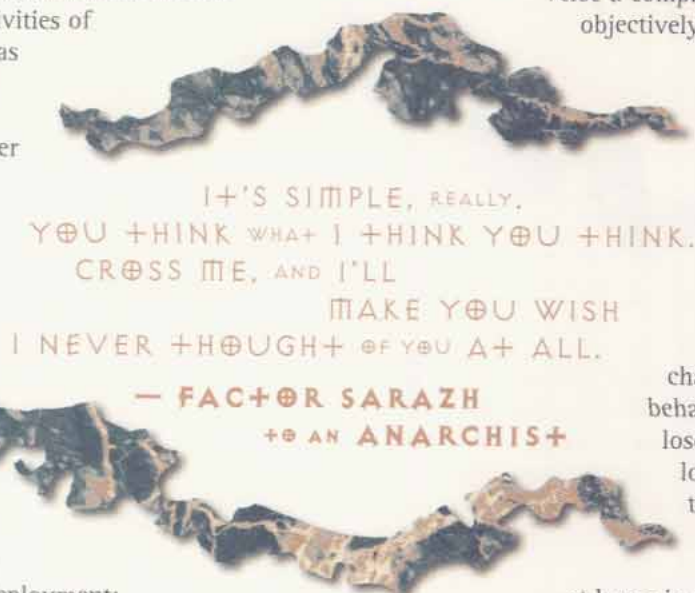
Good Signers revive practices from the faction's early years, like teaching their fellows how to think positively. In the reality they envision, folks all treat each other kindly. Evil Signers try to make rivals think negatively. They imagine a cosmos where they enjoy power and recognition. And more neutral Signers envision a life where bashers mind their own business.

CLASS. Signers welcome members of any character class. Thing is, certain classes, like paladins, likely won't feel comfortable in the faction. Paladins who do join hope to teach all beings a proper reverence for self as the font of all creation. They believe many multiverses exist side by side: one for each individual.

Fighters in the Sign of One seek to prove their status as the chosen of the multiverse through brilliant combat. They believe defeating an enemy in combat will send him spiraling down into negative thinking and thus ensure that his defeat persists through time.

Signer rangers and druids think they have a special duty to envision havens for animals and to benefit the natural world, since the flora and fauna can't do it themselves. Priests in the faction revere their gods as products of their own imagination, the way the faction's wizards think of their spells. (*The faction's spellcasters love researching spells and possess wide repertoires.* – Ed.)

The faction's thieves practice imagining themselves moving stealthily as much as they actually practice stealth. When they get caught, they rarely credit their captor's vigilance. Rather they blame themselves for envisioning failure. Signer bards feel their gift to sway audiences gives them great power.





THAT'S YOUR
PROBLEM —
YOU THINK
+@@ MUCH.
— CIPHER
+@ SIGNER

RACE. The Sign of One, among the most diverse of factions, encourages all and sundry to rub elbows within the organization. Tanar'ri are Signers, as are baatezu, titans, hellcats, and aasimon, as well as bariaur, tieflings, and half-elves of the Outlands . . . and on down the line.

SIGNER MEMBERSHIP

The Sign of One does not recruit new members as actively as other factions. See, bashers need to *prove* they can alter the multiverse before the faction'll admit them. The Signers recognize the chosen by allowing faction hopefuls to register their visions for the future at headquarters. Bashers whose predictions come to pass become namers, but their faction allows them to do little more than serve as runners and legislative clerks and hold various menial jobs in the Hall of Speakers. They spend their free time improving their concentration, to prepare for greater faction duties.

Namers of 4th level or higher can ascend in the ranks the same way they got in — successfully predicting future events. *(Each rank in the Sign of One has a special conclave devoted to evaluating members of the level below, checking their recorded predictions, and promoting the most talented. — Ed.)* Factotums enjoy the privilege of going on faction missions and speaking at major events in the Cage and elsewhere. Some perform guard duty within the Hall (such as at Rilith's Tomb), and the best can join special "think tanks" concentrating on the Signers' vital goals.

A character must have reached 10th level to become a factor. These Signers work as personal assistants to the factol, guard faction outposts, and supervise factotums involved in complex missions. As factors have worked tirelessly to improve their concentration abilities, they form the core of the Sign of One's "think tanks."

FACTION ABILITIES. It's hard to put one over on Signers, as their belief that they create the multiverse lets them see through illusion. *(All members receive an automatic saving throw vs. spell to resist illusion magic. — Ed.)*

Those of at least factotum level share the power of *imagining*, which a character can use to bend the fabric of reality to conform to his wishes. To imagine a thing into (or out of) existence, a factotum must make a successful imagination check: in other words, roll at or below the average of his Wisdom and Intelligence scores, modified by -5. For each subsequent attempt that week, the check receives a cumulative penalty of -5. Imagining's hard work, berk.

With a successful imagination check, a Signer factotum mimics the effects of *any* wizard or priest spell (up to 4th level) as if he were a wizard or priest at his current experience level. *(Course, he can only mimic the effects of spells a caster of his experience level could actually use. That is, a 5th-level factotum can't cast a 4th-level priest spell. — Ed.)* Factotums who fail their imagining checks find themselves unable to wield the skill again for the rest of the week.

Using this power, a Signer factotum can imagine an object into existence (as with the *minor creation* wizard spell), heal a comrade of a sickness (as with the *cure disease* priest spell), or any number of other feats. All that matters is the power of the mind!

'Course, imagining has its dangers, too. Factotums who fail their checks by rolling a "1" believe themselves imaginary! They become *shadow monster* versions of themselves; the sods temporarily possess only 20% of their hit points, inflict 20% normal damage in combat, and cannot cast spells or use racial or class abilities. They can try once a day to make a successful imagining check and return to reality.

Signers of factor rank can take imagining to even greater heights. Factors who make their imagination checks (with the same modifiers as factotums) can mimic priest and wizard spells up to 9th level. However, factors who fail the check lose their imagining powers until they gain a level. Rolling a "1" means the factor has imagined too well a multiverse without him: He ceases to exist. The

only way he can return to the multiverse is through the use of a *wish* spell — or if another Signer imagines him back!

◆ THE CHANT ◆

Though they want everyone in the Cage to see them as serious, powerful managers of legislative matters, the chant's got some dirt on the Signers. Seems they look for berks talented at booing, whistling, and applauding to hire as audiences for proceedings in the Speaker's Podium and speeches and presentations elsewhere. They figure that using disapproving listeners to induce negative thoughts in their enemies only makes sense, as does providing an approving crowd for their allies.

'Course, a body doesn't have to work for the Sign of One to park his ears in the Hall of Speakers awhile; any old berk can come in and listen to a session. The best ones revolve around a new bill the Bleak Cabal proposes: that the position of Speaker no longer be held by Signers. The Bleakers figure that barmies from the Gatehouse in the Hive should preside behind the Podium. Laws the madmen formulate would prove the senselessness of things in short order. And it's just like the Chaosmen to support an even more extreme concept: Their bill requires that no one stand at the Podium. Just think of the chaos that'd ensue!

Speaking of chaos, a basher by the name of Waring (Pl/♂ human/W15/NE) has turned up in the gate town of Xaos. He claims to be an ex-proxy of Hades. Says he turned stag in Hopeless and wants asylum before the power puts him in the dead-book. Waring's got to be pullin' a peel, but what if he's for real? The Dustmen want him in their hands, figuring he knows some fearsome darks on the land of the dead. The Godsmen also have an interest in the supposed ex-proxy: Surely he's got the inside track on the true nature of the powers. 'Course, the Athar trust that Waring could prove that Hades is a fraud. The real question is this: Can the Signers get to Xaos before any of their rivals and before Waring skips town? Since they hope to revive a power, Darius wants to get the dark from the death god's ex-proxy.

◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

The Sign of One's secret and unusual resources include a significant resident of Baator. See, the Signers helped the pit fiend Bel obtain his position as leader of the host of Avernus through the power of imagining. Bel has vowed to perform any favor of like magnitude for the faction whenever the factol demands payment.

The faction's most closely guarded secret is the existence of *speaker's keys*. These look like a mesh of gold wires set with seed pearls where the wires cross. The magical item fits over the wearer's teeth, one part covering the upper jaw and another for the lower jaw. A Signer wearing a *speaker's key* can speak first in any gathering, and his voice carries over all other sounds, including other voices. Additionally, his words seem to have more weight than those of other speakers.

A character wearing a *speaker's key* gains a +2 bonus to initiative in verbal situations. Additionally, a body can hear this character's voice clearly up to 1,000 feet away. Listeners must make saving throws vs. spell or find their thoughts moving as the Signer suggested.

'Course, the Sign of One wants to keep these keys in the dark. If other factions suspected their existence, they'd develop ways to counter their effects. The Speaker's Podium might become less respected if listeners knew the Speaker had magical help. The factol keeps the keys hidden in her quarters and lends them to Signers engaged in public speaking on behalf of the faction.

She does not hand them out indiscriminately.

A crucial matter at the moment is the retrieval of a *speaker's key*, lost by a factotum named Jaye (Pl/♂ centaur/B5/Sign of One/NG). Jaye

knows he had it when he spoke to a crowd in Glorium, but it was gone before he reached his next speech on Sylvania.

The Signers want that key before anyone figures out what it does and how to use it. In the wrong hands, a *speaker's key* could really blur the faction's image as the multiverse's chosen.

The factol's latest project needs to stay just as dark as the workings of the *speaker's keys*. See, Darius wants a fruit from the tree growing in the heart of the Shattered Temple. 'Course, the Athar can't know she has it — they'd mobilize every namer they've got if they suspected an attack on their Bois Verdurous. But Darius wants a glimpse of the magical tree's power before deciding whether to try reviving Aoskar.

THE SOCIETY OF SENSATION

"So, you're wantin' to join the Sensates, are you?"

She whispered across the room to me, and I suddenly felt the allure in her voice, a compelling urge to join her — Erin Darkflame Montgomery, factol of the Sensates. I stood in a small antechamber in the glorious complex known as the Civic Festhall and faced my hostess. My eyes met hers, and for a moment I felt myself swimming in those eyes, pools the color of ripe limes. But I only smiled ruefully and said, "Nay, Lady, I'm afraid not."

She walked closer to me, her pale, brocaded gown shimmering in the candlelight. "Aye, I could've told you *that* with the first step you took on my carpet," she said coolly. "You've taken great pains to see me, sirrah. Why're you *really* here?"

I shook my head. "Believe me, I'm tempted, but I can't join you — my job forbids it."

"Your job?" Her words were accompanied by the arch of her auburn brows.

"Yes, Lady. I'm a culler for *The Tempus Sigilian*."

"Hmph," she said, apparently unimpressed. Had she seen through my lie? "And what's that to do with me?"

"I want to interview you . . . find out about your faction," I said eagerly, sure that I'd fooled her. "My assignment—"

"Oh, now, what makes you think I'll grant such an interview?" Erin interrupted. Her eyes flashed at me, and she crossed her bare, slender arms across her chest.

I stared at her without hesitation, not hiding my trembling admiration — or was it fear? Then I took her face in my hands and kissed her with all the ardor I could muster.

She pushed me away gently, an amused smile lingering on her full lips. "I'm afraid *that's* not enough of a reason, my friend."

I smiled back at her. "Then how's this, Lady: You've never been interviewed before."

Montgomery paused for a breath, then threw back her head and laughed, her copper hair dancing on the crest of her porcelain shoulders. "Oh, aye, you've got me there!" She gestured at the damask-covered davenport behind us, and we sat down. She looked at me for a moment, clearly curious. "Very well," she said, "but I'll be havin' final approval of that article."

"We don't normally allow that, Lady," I said slowly. Perhaps she suspects after all?

She smirked, a certain glee lighting her face. "And I don't normally lay out the dark of me or

A SENSATE'S
LIKELY TO JUMP IN
THE RIVER STYX
TO MAKE
EVERYTHING
NEW AGAIN.

— THE EDITOR

my faction. That's my terms, culler. Take 'em or leave!"

I held up my hand, a smile slowly growing on my lips. "I agree to your conditions, Lady, I agree!"

She looked at me with such verve in her eyes, in her whole body. I knew I was sitting with someone who'd give me her all — someone who'd be totally present in the here and now, who'd make me the single most important thing in her life, even if only for the course of a conversation. I nearly revealed my secret to her then and there, nearly babbled that I wasn't from any addle-coved newsrag at all.

But I kept my head. And that's how I got the dark on Erin Darkflame Montgomery, Factol of the Sensates.

— Rathvold Rathson

(This chapter is dedicated to the memory of Rathvold Rathson. The poor sod was found dead not long after turning over his findings to me, and several pages of his notes disappeared from my files before they could be incorporated into this volume. While his death is certainly a tragedy, I'm sure Rathson would've agreed that the greater crime was the theft of the truth. — Ed.)



TO FEEL, ◆ + ⊕ LIVE, + ⊕ KNOW ◆

(*Factol Montgomery was more than happy — with no further prompting from Rathson — to speak at length about her faction, her every word bursting with the passion of what it means to be a Sensate. Those words'll now speak for themselves. — Ed.*)

Bein' a Sensate is, pure and simple, the greatest thing in the planes — if a berk's a *true* Sensate, that is. To be sure, the Society of Sensation has plenty of faction members, but a good many're just in it for the pleasure. Like as not, they don't realize that bein' a Sensate's much, much more. I keep those sods around anyway, though, because they're useful; they do a lot of the daily business in the Cage. And there's hope for 'em, as well. Most learn in time there's more to life than the gut and the loin.

Every culture's got its folks who know how — nay, who *allow* themselves to let their inhibitions go. And it's the willingness to try all things, be they physical, cerebral, or emotional, that marks a true Sensate. It's bein' in a state of such awareness and preparedness that fear don't enter a body — only the desire to experience the next sensation, the next *now*. Only at the cost of life or limb will a Sensate refuse a tantalizing new experience. We live each moment as if it were the only one that ever mattered, always seeking new experiences, new sensations, new realities, new perspectives — anything to give us a greater grasp of the world at large.

'Course, we pay a dear price for our willingness to experience without rebuke or repugnance: Some of the other factions see us as debauched lechers and drunkards, fit only for cleanin' gutters. Sods like the Mercykillers, the Bleak Cabal, the Doomguard, and the Dustmen're leatherheads, every one of 'em. And the Sinkers — that'd be the Doomguard — *like* to see us wear ourselves weak with celebration, figurin' a handful of drunk Sensates can only serve their blessed entropy that much more. Those factions're too blind to see there's truth in everything. And in *experiencing* everything, we learn that truth.

But we also see the pain that livin' such a restricted life causes, and we do our best to ease another sod's suffering with merriment. "Pleasure is the balm that keeps fevered rage at bay," as they say. And it's true that without the Society of Sensation — without the pleasures we import and provide for the Cage — a berk'd go barmy here. There's just too many beings pressed close together, too many passions and desires and philosophies all fightin' to come out on top. So we're the escape valve; we provide sweet release.

The chant says that, long ago, the Cage was much more lawful and organized, and much less likely to boil over. But times change, don't they? Sigil attracted berks of

a more — how might I say — *chaotic* bent. Strange creatures and even stranger philosophies came to call the city home. Forces of law and chaos, good and evil, were mixing together, and only the truly neutral could maintain the balance. Back then, near seven centuries ago, the Sensates weren't really a society at all, just folks who got together every now and again for amusements to take the sting out of life. We'd plot some little escapade — say, a sightseeing trip to Carceri and back — or bring some strange new entertainment into a tiny den hidden away in the city.

Word spread of our doings, and others naturally wanted in on the folly. Oh, some naysayers said the newcomers were bored, or stifled, or just plain curious. But wiser bloods knew the Cage entered a new era then, that the time'd come for a fresh openness of thinking. And the first Sensates quickly saw that a profit could be made from meetin' other sods' needs. A lot of the jink went into building the Civic Festhall, a palace for acts and shows pulled from the farthest corners of the multiverse. Like a trained leucrotta that jumped through hoops while reciting Ardistanian poetry. Or the birth of a cambion as his balor father stood by, holdin' his human mother's

hand and strokin' her sweaty brow. Aye, business boomed. Even today, though we're inclined toward more *cerebral* pursuits, the Sensates still bring in some brisk business.

All the new folks streamin' into Sigil needed a handle on the multiverse, didn't they? Especially the green primes just realizing what lay beyond their own little worlds! We Sensates were an attractive lot, accepting any and all comers. But mayhap we were *too* indiscriminate back then. Berks who weren't *real* Sensates wanted the same entertainment night after night, the same inebriation, the same euphoria. Happy with just one stimulus, the sods couldn't see why anyone'd want anything different. And that's not what bein' a Sensate's all about.

But other philosophies came to light in Sigil, too. 'Tis said there were a faction or three to suit every possible bent — all sure they knew the dark of things, and all running 'round recruiting as many berks as they could. A cutter sharp enough to ask for a signing fee could make good jink joinin' half a dozen factions each day! Chaos, it were. And sure you know, the Lady of Pain put a stop to all that, what with her decree to cut back to only 15 factions. A good thing it were, too — she probably stopped a civil war from breakin' out.

A good many factions fell by the wayside, but the Sensates were too strong to fade away. 'Course, we did lose a good share of folk in the shakeup, but that turned out to be a blessing, as we could be far more selective in letting future members in. And we voted ourselves a *fac-tol* to help organize the Society, something we'd sorely



SURE!

— TYPICAL SENSATE RESPONSE
+ ⊕ ANY PROPOSITION ⊕

needed. We still let any cutter into our faction, whether she be good or evil, lawful or chaotic, prime or planar. All that matters is that she's got a true desire to sense, to experience what the multiverse has to offer. She's got to really *want* to taste a dozen different types of honey, to savor each variety, its virtues and flaws. And then she's just got to convince us that she's sincere. And, as you found out, culler, we can sniff out a blustering sod in the wink of a quasit's eye.

That don't mean we're without an agenda, though. It's just that our motives and plans aren't as blunt as, say, Duke Darkwood's. The Fated's factol wants to take over the City of Doors – that's sure. But the Sensates already run the city; we don't need a formal declaration that it's ours. This very moment, there're over 40,000 Sensates in the Cage. If I pulled 'em all out, the place'd go up in civil warfare inside a fortnight. After all, we control nearly all of the public and private entertainment houses – what would the poor sods here do for fun without us *besides* go to war?

(After this discussion, dear reader – and I use the term “discussion” loosely, as Rathson told me he sat enraptured while Factol Montgomery spoke – the factol announced that the interview'd come to an end. Rathson remained in the Civic Festhall to unearth the rest of the information needed for this volume. The results of his efforts, however fruitful or wasted, follow.)

FAC+OL ERIN DARKFLAME ◆ M+O+G+O+M+E+R+Y ◆

Female human planar

9th-level priestess of Diancecht, Society of Sensation (factol)

Lawful good

STR	9	INT	14	HP	45
DEX	14	WIS	17	AC	5
CON	13	CHA	18	THACO	16

EQUIPMENT: Wand of magic missiles, purple ioun stone (holds up to 8 spell levels, set in a silver tiara), crystal mace (+4 vs. evil creatures, +2 vs. all others, double damage vs. creatures linked to the Negative Energy Plane, creates circle of sunmotes once per day – see *Tome of Magic* for details).

SPELLS/LEVEL: 6/6/4/2/1.

SPECIAL: Montgomery has access to the spell spheres of all, animal, creation, divination, healing, plant, and protection. Her power grants her the ability to memorize and cast any spells of the healing sphere as if they were one level lower, to a minimum of 1st level. She also has a psionic wild talent (lend health, 36 PSPs), as well as standard priest and faction abilities.

At 33 years of age, Erin Montgomery's seen and done more than most planars three times her senior.

While growing up in the tiny village of Grim's Head, out on the Outlands in Tir na Og, her family discovered her mind-talent for healing

others. At the tender age of 10, she became a novitiate to Diancecht, the Celtic god of heal-

ing. By 13 she was a full-fledged priestess, committed to the impartial healing of all injured, friend or foe. And when a Blood War raid ran rampant through Tir na Og a few years later, Montgomery gave her all to help heal the wounded. Unfortunately, she had nothing left to give when the tanar'ri captain Za'rafas and a few of his fellows collapsed before her. Most of the fiends died, but a few made it back to the Abyss to report their woe. As it turned out, Za'rafas was a favorite of a powerful Abyssal Lord, and the fiend blamed Montgomery for the captain's death. He began to send assassins after her; how she's eluded them thus far, none will say.

At 17, Montgomery left Tir na Og, hoping to spare her family and friends from any more tanar'ri trouble. For the next decade she wandered almost exclusively from world to world on the Prime Material Plane. (*The recounting of Factol Montgomery's time with the Skylarian Knights disappeared from my files before this volume was assembled.* – Ed.) She was still young enough to want to lead a boisterous life – something she'd never been able to do as a priestess back in Tir na Og. So she joined a decadent group called the Pax Imperica, mesmerized by its spectacle, by the ease with which they conducted pleasure and life. She developed an appreciation for fine wines and foods and fostered a growing desire for ever more prurient entertainment.

Cuatha Da'nanin (Pr/♂ half-elf/R15/Sensates/LG) was a slave in the royal court, of which Montgomery was a favored – and frequent – guest. Her jade eyes liked what she saw: a tall, finely muscled body combining the best features of elf and human parentage. His eyes, which first caught her attention, were a startling green – so much like her own that she thought she saw herself every time she looked at Da'nanin. But the image those eyes reflected back was an ugly one: proud, sadistic, self-serving, and arrogant. Montgomery still had the grace to feel shame each

TO EXPERIENCE
EVERY+HING
IS +O+ UNDER+AND
ALL.
— FAC+OL ERIN
M+O+G+O+M+E+R+Y

time she looked at Da'nanin, and for a while she avoided him. Then one day his name was called for the nightly entertainment known as the Spit, a circus of atrocity that the half-elf wasn't likely to survive.

Though she'd witnessed – and even participated in – the horrors of the Spit many times before, Montgomery had no such desire that night. She secretly freed Da'nanin and used a gate key to jump to Sigil; they've been a pair ever since. 'Course, Montgomery's need for sensation couldn't be entirely quelled, only channeled, and she joined the Sensates a year after entering the Cage. She knows that hedonism's destroyed more than one faction member, and, as factol, she's tried to steer the Sensates toward more cerebral pursuits, rather than immediate gratification at whatever cost.

Da'nanin joined the faction, too, as Montgomery's consort; he helped her rapid rise to power and now acts as her right-hand blood. The half-elf's interested in all manner of visitors, especially adventurers and travelers from strange lands – even the Clueless are likely to receive a reception from him that's quite warm by Cager standards.



◆ THE CIVIC FESTHALL ◆

Of all the unusual architecture in Sigil, many say there's none more commanding than the Civic Festhall, headquarters of the Society of Sensation, a building of staggering grace and beauty. The magnificent structure soars more than 1,000 feet upward, its buttresses and supports leading from one pinnacle to another, making it a distinctive focal point in the city's skyline. It's quite distinctive on the street level, too, as hordes of jugglers, singers, dancers, and the like gather to perform around the building's entrances, hoping to catch a copper or two from appreciative passersby.

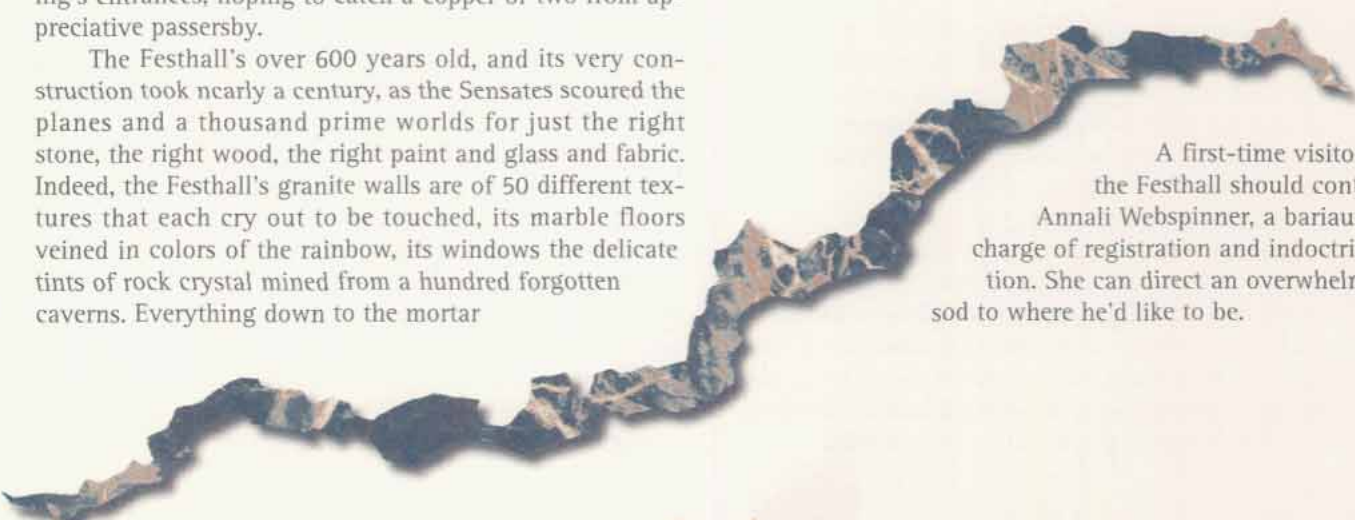
The Festhall's over 600 years old, and its very construction took nearly a century, as the Sensates scoured the planes and a thousand prime worlds for just the right stone, the right wood, the right paint and glass and fabric. Indeed, the Festhall's granite walls are of 50 different textures that each cry out to be touched, its marble floors veined in colors of the rainbow, its windows the delicate tints of rock crystal mined from a hundred forgotten caverns. Everything down to the mortar

was given careful thought and planning; everywhere a body looks, there's something to delight one or more senses. Even the main entrance is a marvel: The doors are some 90 feet high, tall and narrow, and surrounded with glittering stones that form abstract images of sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste. Flat against the outside wall, a geyser of crystal-blue water regularly erupts upward for hundreds of feet, seemingly dissipating into the air.

The Festhall's also remarkable in that it's one of the very few buildings in Sigil to take into account the city's peculiar dimensional properties. From the outside, the sprawling structure fills an area some 750 feet wide by 1,000 feet long. But on the *inside* the building's far more convoluted; some sages speculate that there's two to four times as much square footage as the exterior dimensions should indicate. And the Festhall is, if anything, even more grand and luxurious on the inside. Incense perfumes the air, mingling with spices and other delightful scents. Colors cloak each hall and room, whether the palest pastels or the most vibrant of hues. Sounds haunt a body's ear wherever he goes, from the rhythmic beats issuing from a training room to the enthusiastic cheers and clapping from the theaters.

The ground floor of the Festhall basically consists of three theaters and two sensoriums. Then there're the faction quarters – assembly rooms, lecture halls, training rooms, and the factol's private quarters. The remaining floors hold an intoxicating number of entertainments the like of which can't be detailed in so short a space.

Suffice it to say that a body who can tear himself away from the sensoriums will find taverns that serve both the sweetest and the most sour ale ever tasted, museums with statues more lifelike than the crowds around them, jewelers selling glittering necklaces that threaten to blind the wearer, and practically every other service and diversion a body'd ever need.



A first-time visitor to the Festhall should contact Annali Webspinner, a bariaur in charge of registration and indoctrination. She can direct an overwhelmed sod to where he'd like to be.



ANNALI WEBSPINNER

Female bariaur planar
7th-level fighter, Society of Sensation (factotum)
Chaotic neutral

STR	13	INT	15	HP	58
DEX	10	WIS	12	AC	4
CON	11	CHA	9	THACO	14

EQUIPMENT: *Hornblade +2* (appears to be a simple horn carried at her waist), *cloak of protection +2*, *eyes of true seeing/charming* (spectacles imbued with a permanent *true seeing* spell, allowing Annali to know exactly who or what is in the Festhall, as well as letting her *charm* any would-be infiltrators).

SPECIAL: Webspinner has standard fighter, bariaur, and faction abilities.

Annali Webspinner's coat is an unusual angora variety, black and several inches long. She has an attractive face, though she constantly squints through her ever-present spectacles. In addition to directing the registration and indoctrination at the Festhall, she coordinates most of the entertainment, planning events up to two years or more in advance. She's always on the lookout for cutters with new or unusual experiences to add to the sensoriums, so she's unusually accessible to strangers. Likewise, she's also willing to give any berks a five-minute audition, if they've got a talent to peddle at one of the Festhall's stages.

THE THEATERS

Ren Hall, named in honor of a legendary prime hero of old, is the largest public theater in Sigil. Performances are staged twice a night, almost always to full houses. Productions vary: one night a githyanki play, the next a ballet performed by lizard men, the third an opera featuring the howlers of Pandemonium. The Sensates put on a lavish performance, sparing no cost in actors, settings, magic, music, and sensory enhancers (such as producing odor where appropriate).

Elloweth Theater is a smaller, more intimate setting, generally used for dramatic performances and dance interpretation. Its ceiling is made of capiz shell, a thin, nearly transparent material that lets in considerable light. As such, the theater is used in the day-

time for poetry and essay readings, extemporaneous speeches, and the like.

The Northumber Amphitheater's the same size as the Elloweth Theater, though it's an outdoor playhouse. The seats are carved of shale and limestone, all descending deep into the ground. Contests are staged here, as well as grudge matches between opponents who want an audience. Usually, three performances are held each day, though some contests of magic are held at night – for example, to better see the fireworks of a wizard duel.

THE SENSORIUMS

Sensoriums are rooms within the Civic Festhall where folks can record or experience a certain event or sensation. The Festhall features a Sensate Sensorium and a Public Sensorium, the former usable *only* by Sensates – even a spot of garnish won't help.

Thankfully, exuberant faction members were eager to share the dark of the place. Experiences to be had in the Sensate Sensorium are fully detailed, overwhelming events, usually the potent recordings of other Sensates. Factol Montgomery's instituted a new policy by which many of her junior Sensates glean needed sensations via the sensoriums. She's also mandated that all Sensates in Sigil *must* record any new sensations they

encounter so that others may benefit from their experiences. Furthering the collective experiences of the Sensates in this manner is also an important means of moving up in the ranks of the faction. Use of the sensorium costs nothing for Sensates.

The Public Sensorium's a different matter. It's a crowded place, despite being open 24 hours a day. More than 200 rooms are available on each of the 20-plus floors in this part of the Festhall. Most are individual rooms offering sensations that last from 5 to 20 minutes and cost about 10 gold pieces. A number of dual sensoriums, open to two people at a time and lasting half an hour, cost 20 gold pieces per body. A berk with a limitless budget or a party wishing to experience the same recorded event can rent one of the *deluxe* sensoriums. These cost 100 gold pieces per user, last for four hours, and must be reserved a week in advance. Adventuring groups often record their experiences at the Public Sensorium and replay them as training sessions, particularly if a foray's been unsuccessful. Some groups even use the rooms to prepare for trips that'll take them to strange or hostile environments.

Regardless of the sensorium used, the procedure's basically the same. After requesting a specific sensation or ex-

YOU SWALLOW
FLAMING MAELEPHAN+S?
RIGHT.
LIKE WE HAVEN'+ SEEN
+HA+ BEFORE.
— ANNALI WEBSPINNER
A+ +THE DAILY AUDITIONS

perience, a body (or group) enters a sensorium. The client focuses his thoughts while holding onto a *recorder* – a small, round stone made of many semiprecious minerals that contains the full force of the experience. (*The Festhall owns literally millions of recorders; if removed from the sensoriums, they revert to unenchanted rock.* – Ed.) A Sensate remains nearby to help the client concentrate. Slowly the magic encoded in the stone unfolds, and the berk – particularly a first-time user – is likely to be blown away by the experience. The room loses all reality; nothing exists for the person save the sensation that engulfs him. Some sods grow addicted to experiences without risk, but the Sensates restrict use of the sensoriums to three times per day.

The Sensates have a tremendous collection of sensations, experiences, and events on hand, but they're currently paying 500 gold pieces for anything not in their catalogue. (*Especially anything that might be used against Duke Rowan Darkwood or the Fated.* – Ed.) A cutter convinced he's got something to share can enter the Public Sensorium

QUARTERS, CLASSROOMS, AND THE SANCTUARY

The remainder of the first floor of the Civic Festhall is devoted to various faction quarters and public rooms. The reception hall off the main entrance contains pillars, a dais, and a throne – all carryovers from ancient times, though Cuatha Da'natin generally sits on the throne and receives visitors. He deals with this public duty approximately six hours every day, so visitors to the Festhall are quite likely to encounter him. Erin Montgomery's private reception hall is located directly behind the dais, and Da'natin often slips into the room to discuss matters with the factol. Passersby warn that the private chamber's said to contain a number of secret doors that conceal guards and teleportation rooms – some of which lead directly to the



private
quarters of
the factol and
her consort.

A goodly portion of the Sensates' headquarters is devoted to lecture halls and training classrooms.

Demonstrations and displays of weapon use, magic, and thieving skills – along with lectures on every subject in the multiverse – take place 24 hours a day. Sensates are strongly urged to study and learn, and any Sensate passing through Sigil's expected to spend time in the training area, either passing on or learning a new technique. Members of other factions may attend these sessions, provided they're accompanied by a Sensate and pay a fee of 10 gold pieces.

and inquire at the ticket counter. If he's lucky, he'll be escorted to a room on the second floor to make a detailed recording with an empty *recorder* stone. The process usually takes about an hour, though long or complex experiences can take an entire day. A Sensate remains with the cutter the whole time, asking questions to gain subtle nuances and empathically enhancing the recollections.

The heart of the Civic Festhall is said to be the Sanctum Sanctorum, a mysterious area accessible only via a hallway from Erin Montgomery's private chambers. (*Rathson managed to squeeze the dark of the place from a faction cutter after buying him a few rounds of bub. — Ed.*) A blood who claimed to have been in the Sanctum described a mosaic depiction of the faction symbol emblazoned across the floor in lapis lazuli, sapphire, opal, and other precious and semiprecious stones. Strangely, he swore that the mosaic's an ancient, slightly different version of the faction symbol, looking a bit like the Lady of Pain herself. (*The remainder of the Sensate's comments disappeared from my files before this volume was assembled. — Ed.*)

◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

(*Getting Sensates to talk about their faction wasn't hard; Rathson simply found a few who hadn't been interviewed before and convinced them it was a sensation worth experiencing. It worked on their factol, after all. — Ed.*)

ROLE-PLAYING THE SENSATES

Many players might think a Sensate character can try all sorts of things, get into scrapes galore, and generally make a nuisance of himself — that playing a Sensate is just one big orgy of food, wine, and debauchery. Truth is, Sensates are much more than hedonists, though this is a lesson not learned by all members of the faction. Some Sensates remain pleasure-seekers for their entire lives, while others eventually learn that there's more to experience than simple physical gratification.

True Sensates want to learn, to experience, to *sense* all things, yes, but they've got brains, too. A real Sensate respects his comrades' wishes; if they don't want to try something, he won't force the issue. Likewise, a real Sensate won't try something that might cause him or another bodily harm. 'Course, there's nothing wrong with offering to suffer damage in place of another — in other words, taking on a harsh experience not just for the sake of it, but to save a weaker sod from something he might not be able to handle. But a Sensate sure as Nessus won't swallow a draught of lethal poison "just to see what it tastes like."

A Sensate desires *new* sensations. He shouldn't want to go into every local tavern, try every wine and pastry dish, and sleep

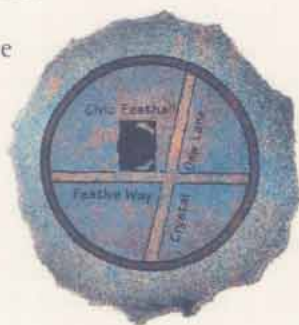
with every barkeep. Granted, he may try this approach when entering a new plane, where everything's different, but back home it's another story. As Sensates grow in ability and gain levels, most realize that whole realms of thought and emotion wait to be explored. One Sensate might set himself a goal of trying to feel all the different aspects of love or anger, for instance, while another might choose to experience all the nuances of verbal comedy — in every language she can find.

As Sensates age, too, they naturally grow in acceptance of others and of all things, having seen and felt so much in their lifetimes.

Sensates are found, in varying numbers, throughout the multiverse. Their desires for experiences lead them far and wide, from the Outer Planes to the Prime Material to the Inner Planes and beyond. However, the Gilded Hall of Arborea holds the largest congregation of Sensates outside of Sigil. In the immense, ever-changing palace, many faction members spend their lives in endless revelry. Factol Montgomery rarely visits more than twice a year, though when she does the celebrations reach fevered pitch. But the Hall is where she usually sends (*banishes, some say*) faction members who can't seem to grasp what it means to be a true Sensate. It's a judgment call, of course, but those who repeatedly shy away from a new experience — whether through ignorance, fear, or stupidity — generally end up at the Gilded Hall. And few Sensates ever leave that shiny, delightful prison.

ALIGNMENT. A body's alignment seems to have little impact on a Sensate. The overriding goal of experiencing and understanding all takes precedence. This doesn't mean that a lawful good Sensate'll kill an elderly sod just for the feel

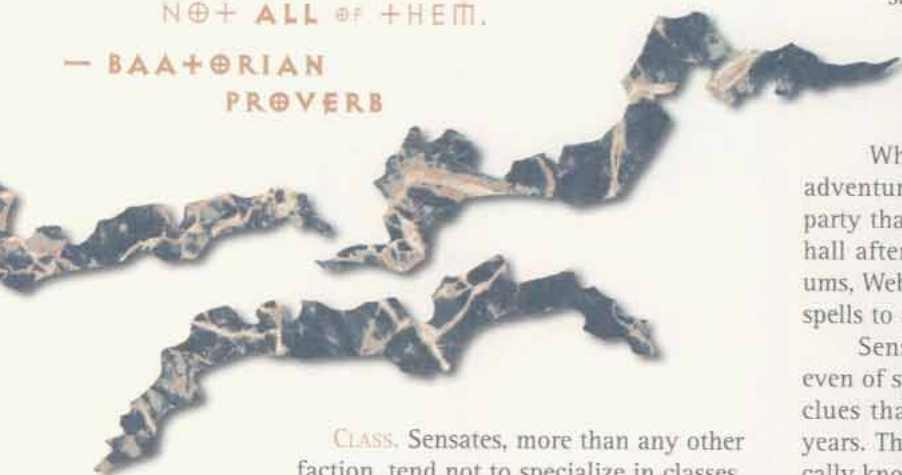
of it — after all, he could just request the sensation at the Civic Festhall's sensorium (and almost certainly would). But he'll savor the taste of combat with the same zeal as would any evil faction member. Likewise, a chaotic evil Sensate dedicated to a god who advocates death before charity would use a sensorium to feel what it's like to give to the poor. Few Sensates are ever appalled by the acts of their fellows, often cooperating to help grant the experiences another faction member seeks.



THE CIVIC FEST-HALL



CURIOSITY
KILLED THE HELLCAT,
BUT NOT THE SENSATE —
AT LEAST,
NOT ALL OF THEM.
— BAA+ORIAN
PROVERB



CLASS. Sensates, more than any other faction, tend not to specialize in classes, though they have a proportionately higher number of dual- and multiclass members. Specialization tends to limit a body's range of possible experiences — a problem for Sensates. Fighters prefer to train in as many combat styles as possible, while wizards study as many schools of magic as they can, relying on Sensate mages for scrolls to spells they don't have access to. (*Illusionists are derided for "faking" experiences, though some Illusionist Sensates do exist.* — Ed.)

SENSATE MEMBERSHIP

The Society of Sensation has the easiest of all requirements for entrance into its faction: none. Any being of any race, gender, class, or alignment can join. All a character needs is a genuine desire to experience the multiverse.

Annali Webspinner at the Civic Festhall will direct an applicant to a factotum who'll administer a test designed to weed out mere curiosity-seekers. Using *recorder* stones, the applicant must contribute five worthwhile experiences to the Public Sensorium's library, each of which focuses on a different sense — sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste. Alternatively, the cutter may contribute a single experience that has strong elements from *each* of the five senses. Only the factotum may decide if the applicant's experiences are creative enough to allow him membership into the faction. If the Sensate doesn't think the initiate's ready, he'll tell the sod to go out and play a bit more in the multiverse, then return to the Festhall and try again.

FACTION ABILITIES. Most who fail the entrance test do return, as being a member of the Sensates has its privileges. As mentioned in *A Player's Guide to the Planes* in the *PLANESCAPE Campaign Setting*, Sensates have highly attuned senses. All Sensates — regardless of race — have in-

fravision to 60 feet. They also gain +1 bonuses to all saves vs. poison and to die rolls for surprise.

'Course, there's much more to the group than that. As managers of most of the entertainment in Sigil, the Sensates are by far the richest faction in the Cage, and they're generous to their members. Characters who join the Sensates immediately receive a signing bonus — new characters begin with three times the typical starting money.

What's more, Annali Webspinner's quite receptive to adventurers who seek her help at the Civic Festhall. If a party that includes a Sensate agrees to return to the Festhall afterward and record its experiences in the sensoriums, Webspinner's likely to donate a magical item or a few spells to aid in the quest.

Sensates are also innate readers of body language, even of species they've never met. They pick up on minute clues that other sods might never notice in a thousand years. Thus, all Sensates have a 10% chance of automatically knowing if a berk's lying to them; the chance of success rises to 20% if the Sensate is of the same race as the berk who's speaking.

Because they spend their lives trying to glean all they can from the experiences of others, more advanced Sensates are naturally empathic. Any Sensate of 3rd level or above can perform a *sensory touch*, a laying on of the hands to heal wounded sods. The *touch* works automatically, but it can be performed only once per day and only in a moment of quiet reflection. The Sensate touches the person's injuries and opens his mind to the pain. As a result, 1d10 points of healing are transferred from the Sensate to the wounded person; the Sensate, in turn, *suffers* the same number of points of damage. The reciprocal damage can't be healed by magical means — the Sensate can recover the lost hit points only through natural rest.

Beginning at the 5th level, most Sensates have started to explore more than just their physical surroundings. They've built up an extensive store of experiences that often give them unusual insights into a problem. This experience translates into the fact that Sensates of 5th level or above can use a bard's local history proficiency and identification abilities as if they were 1st-level bards.

◆ THE CHANT ◆

The Society of Sensation's a ripe faction for rumors — after all, when you've got a reputation for trying *anything*, the public's ready to believe *everything*. 'Course, the chant in the Festhall isn't necessarily all true or even half true — it's just what the Sensates *themselves* are passing along.

The most prevalent subject of talk seemed to be Duke Rowan Darkwood, who's become factol of the Fated in a suspiciously quick manner. More than one Sensate whispered that the Duke wants to take over Sigil, but most sneered at the idea — after all, the Duke'd first have to

overcome Factol Montgomery's formidable clout in the Hall of Speakers. It's no dark that Factol Hashkar of the Guvners and Factol Darius of the Signers generally vote with Montgomery, and she recently scored quite a victory by getting Karan of the Xaositects to side with her — on occasion, at least.

"Don't you fret none, culler," said a centaur emerging from a performance in Elloweth Theater. "Erin's not about to roll over, not for a cross-trading bully like the Duke. You didn't hear this from me, right, but we've stuffed a spy or two in the ranks of the Fated, and that can't hurt, can it?"

It was harder finding Sensates willing to talk about their factol's *own* plans for the City of Doors. But it turns out that Montgomery's rivalry with the Duke doesn't stem from mere political squabbling. She'd long ago begun work on a secret plan that was close to reaching its payoff, a payoff hoped to move the Sensates as far ahead of the other factions as a Lord of the Nine is above the lowest lemur. But the rapid rise of Duke Darkwood put a cork in that bottle, at least for the time being. "Once Erin takes out the Duke," said a well-dressed gnome, "it's a bet she'll put her plan to work and we'll ascend. Join up while you can, culler, 'cause if you're not on our carpet, you'll be left in the mud."

Two other strands of talk in the Festhall seem worth reporting. One mentioned a sign posted by the ticket window at the Public Sensorium, announcing the recent theft of numerous *recorders*. The faction assumes the worst — that the enchanted stones were taken from the Festhall, thus losing their encoded experiences. Any adventurers willing to undertake special missions designed to recreate the missing sensations should give their names to Annali Webspinner.

The other bit of chant seemed even more sour. A number of lesser tanar'ri — alu-fiends, cambions, and succubi — have been spotted in and around the Civic Festhall over the last few weeks. Many Sensates fear that the tanar'ri are spies or even advance troops from the Abyss, here to punish Erin Montgomery for failing to save the Blood War troops 15 years ago in Tir na Og.

◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

Factol Montgomery's plans for Sigil involve turning the Cage into a threshold of cerebral transcendence. She believes that the Sensates — and indeed, *all* beings in Sigil — can free themselves of their physical bodies and explore the multiverse without restraint, free to be at one with thought itself. Montgomery puts a great deal of faith in the power of belief, which, after all, does have tremendous strength on the planes — enough even to destroy gods and shift realms from one plane to another.

To bring about this next stage of existence, however, things need to be quiet in Sigil. Montgomery's done her

best to sway others to her way of thinking, and she's got Sensates burrowed deep in most of the other factions. When the time comes, they'll smother the Cage in an all-out seduction of philosophy. 'Course, the Sensates don't plan to tell anyone what they're up to; if all goes well, folks'll just evolve without even being aware of shucking their physical bodies. But Duke Darkwood's unknowingly (or so it's hoped) thrown a poison dart in the works. Factol Montgomery's spending so much time and resources on a political power struggle with Darkwood, the transcendence has been forced to the side — for now.

There's also more to the Civic Festhall's Sanctum Sanctorum than most suspect. Only Factol Montgomery, Cuatha Da'nanin, and a handful of their closest advisers (all wizards of 14th level or above) know that the Sanctum hides two of the faction's greatest secrets. The first is an underground tunnel that winds all the way to the archives below the Hall of Records — the better to spy on Duke Darkwood's faction and scour the Fated's vaults for sensitive information. But the other secret's even more significant: a ring of portals that lead to almost every other known plane. The Sensate advisers, chief among them a tiefling named Quellig (Pl/♂ tiefling/W16/Sensate/LN), have discovered most of the keys needed to use the portals; they can travel to the Prime Material, the Outlands, the Positive and Negative Energy Planes, the Astral and Ethereal Planes, and all the Outer Planes except for Limbo, Mechanus, and the Beastlands. The wizards are working diligently to discover the keys to the Elemental and Paraelemental Planes. However, one of the advisers — Kenda Fretterstag (Pr/♀ human/W14/Sensate/CE) — is said to be toying with the idea of selling the dark of the portals to others.

Factol Montgomery's also weeding less productive members from her faction. Sensates who refuse to try new sensations or indulge too often in repetitive experiences are sent to the Gilded Hall on Arborea. In game play, the Dungeon Master should keep private notes. If a Sensate character shies from new experiences four times within a year of game time, the DM should privately send the character off to the Gilded Hall (possibly warning the character after the third transgression). 'Course, the Sensate's comrades might try a rescue attempt, but the banished sod should refuse to return — sure, a *true* Sensate would gladly leave the Hall, but not the kind of narrow-minded pleasure-seeker that gets sent there in the first place.

Unfortunately, no Sensate or spy could account for the numerous tanar'ri spotted in and around the Civic Festhall of late. Most suspected the fiends were, indeed, after Factol Montgomery, but they felt sure that not even the tanar'ri would dare stage an attack in the middle of Sigil, not when the Lady of Pain's likely to interfere. Unless, of course, the Lady's somehow involved with the Sensates on a personal level, for good or for ill. After all, the ancient faction symbol in the Sanctum Sanctorum *does* resemble the Lady.

"I am myself and my circumstances.

"Understand yourself, and you'll be in touch with the multiverse. Then you can transcend the mundane to become one with all there is.

THE TRANSCENDENT ORDER

"The rhythm of the multiverse has played through my very being. I am one with the Cadence of the Planes.

"If you need to think before acting, then you open yourself to doubt, to hesitation. To failure.

"Yes, I can share my knowledge with you. I can even tell you what goals to pursue, but I cannot teach you. Teaching has to come from within. You must learn the secrets of yourself.

"Know. Act. Be.

"Learn your place in the multiverse, in space and time. If you know — really know — you need not think at all. You can simply do. At first, you may spend only a few seconds in this unique state of awareness, where idea equals action. Then you can spend minutes there. Soon you'll be enjoying this perfect melding of body and mind for an hour, a day, even a week. Once you achieve this state so well that you remain within it always, you have transcended to the next level of existence, for which we all strive.

"I and many others were with former Factol Valny Hawkins when he suddenly stopped, smiled with satisfaction, and faded from view. He has not been seen since.

"Achieve understanding of self. Play music or dance. Paint or fight. Find your own way. And practice. Keep practicing until your body knows what to do. You have had years to learn the wrong way to do things, and it may take you years to learn the right way. The key is to act.

"Course, any fool can act without thought. Many do. But they act not only without thought, but also without knowledge. They move themselves external to the ways of the multiverse. Know yourself and your place in the multiverse, and you will see yourself moving as one with the planes, without thinking.

"The multiverse has a flow, a balance. Act, strive for balance, create harmony of mind and body, and you will eventually no longer need to try or to think. That will be the next step on the road to understanding, the first measure of the Cadence of the Planes.

"I have spent weeks in the state where every action and reaction happens automatically. I feel the Cadence of the Planes and know harmony with myself. One day, I will enter that state and never leave."

— The Collected Wisdom of Factol Rhys of the Transcendent Order*

THE RIGHT+ HAND
DOESN'+ HAVE +@/
KNOW WHAT+
THE LEFT+ HAND
IS DOING.

— THE EDITOR

• *Editor's Note: The above is not an excerpt from The Collected Wisdom of Factol Rhys of the Transcendent Order: It's the entire work. Scholars studying the Transcendent Order spent years painstakingly searching through public and faction records. In the end, their efforts yielded only one short page of public statements and writings from Factol Rhys.*

Sure, it's pretty short. But don't think this wisdom represents the sum of the factol's knowledge. See, it's just not Rhys's style to spend a lot of time talking — or writing, for that matter. This never really proves a problem, though, since a page seems about all a Cipher ever wants to read at one time, anyhow.



◆ A SEQUENCE OF TODAYS ◆

Folks outside the faction really don't know much about the Transcendent Order. (*That's why they call the faction's members "Ciphers."* — Ed.) The Order has existed for hundreds of years, but in many ways, it has no history. Like certain other factions, especially the Sensates and Xaositects, the Transcendent Order exists in the *now*, living for the moment, in the moment.

Like the Signers, the Takers, the Godsmen, and the Sensates, the Ciphers concern themselves with . . . themselves. They look inward more than any other faction, even more than the Signers. This trait tends to remove them from the events of history, even as it unites them with the multiverse.

In a way, the Ciphers resemble the Harmonium — after all, they both strive for harmony. Like the Guvners, the Indeps, and the Anarchists, they seek truth. In their search, they encourage members to harmonize body and mind, and this harmony of self somehow lends harmony to the multiverse too. Members of this faction influence history subtly just by doing what Ciphers do best.

So, a body ain't going to find the history of this Order written in a series of volumes sitting in a faction library. See, the group's triumphs wind up recorded mostly in *other* factions' histories. The Ciphers, more than any other faction, share ideals with other groups and don't anger any of 'em too much. Therefore, without even trying, they bring into effect what the Harmonium seeks, but probably will never bring about. Merely by searching for their own proper place in the multiverse, Ciphers serendipitously find themselves serving to balance the other factions by eliminating the extremes. Whenever a faction acts in an unusual way — whenever the Dustmen show passion, whenever the Guvners show compassion, whenever the Xaositects seem organized — chances are good that a Cipher stands behind it.

Lots of high-ups in the Cage ask the Order to mediate disputes because Ciphers have a natural tendency to balance the actions of others. As this nature fosters compromise, they often stop factions from going to war before either side even realized they were close. Though some of 'em can't extend their instincts — or their interest — beyond their own development, most reflexively know it's their job in the multiverse to understand others' needs and desires.

Factol Rhys is one such Cipher, and one of the best advisers the faction's ever seen. With just a couple words, she speaks volumes. In response to the coldly legalistic Guvners, she acts with compassion; her reaction to the Hardheads is tolerance; to the Xaositects, she lends stability. This instinct does seem to confuse the other factions, as her actions change often in reaction to the situation of the moment.

◆ FACTOL RHYS ◆

Female tiefling planar

15th-/15th-level fighter/mage, Transcendent Order (factol)
Neutral

STR	17	INT	17	HP	68
DEX	18	WIS	12	AC	5
CON	15	CHA	18	THACO	6

EQUIPMENT: *Cloak of the bat*, dagger, *staff of the magi*, *horseshoes of speed* (as *boots of speed*).

SPELLS/LEVEL: 5/5/5/5/5/2/1.

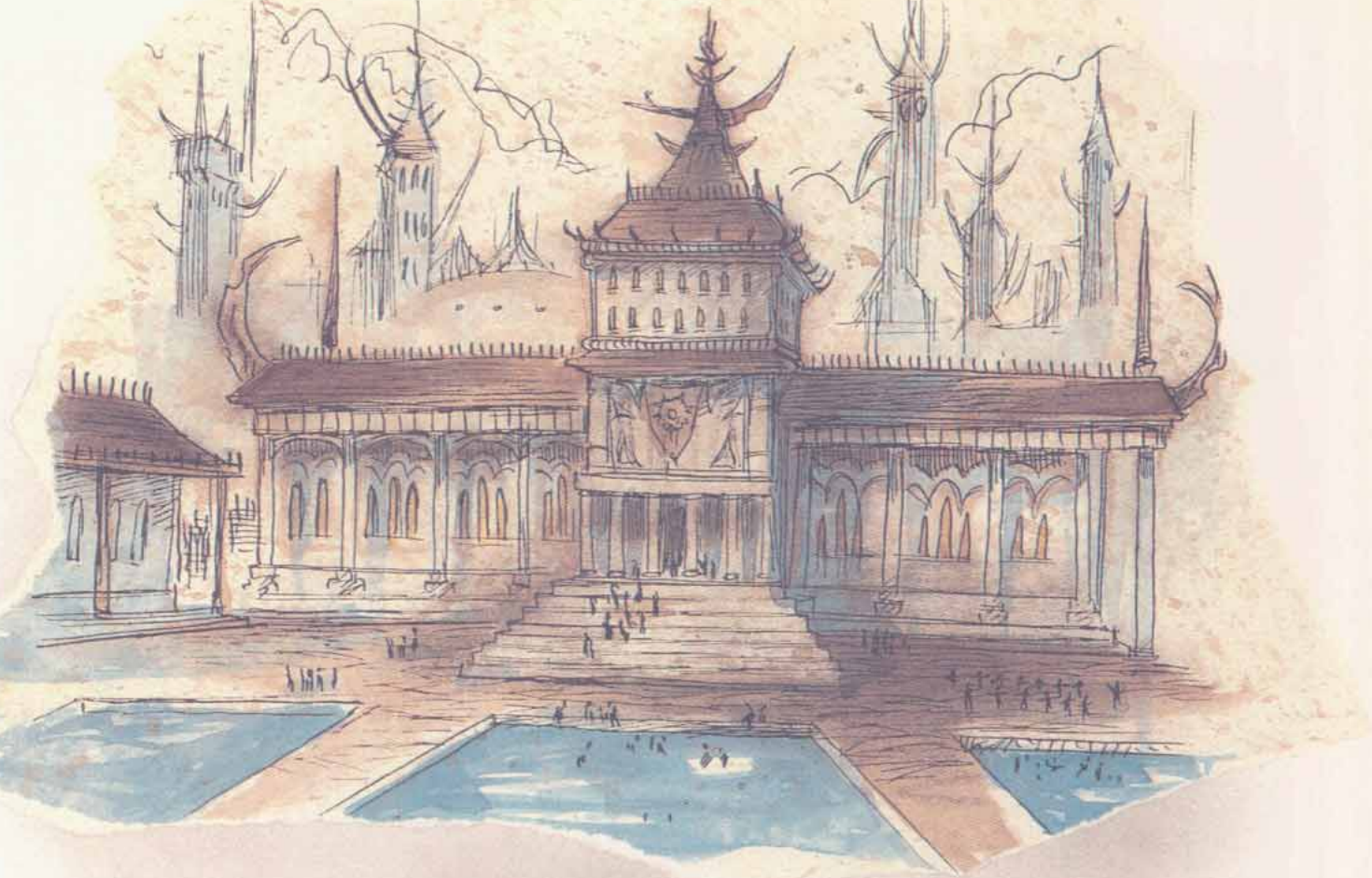
SPECIAL: Rhys's large spellbook includes enchantments, alterations, divinations, and abjurations. She never uses illusions and avoids most necromantic magic. The factol prefers spells with short casting times and never uses any that take more than a round to cast. She also has standard tiefling, fighter, mage, and faction abilities.

Rhys, a darkly beautiful tiefling, has long, pointed ears; dusky skin; reddish eyes; and thick, dark hair. Her legs resemble the hind legs of a horse. This tiefling also boasts a reptilian tail and a partial carapace, like that of an insect. (*The carapace provides protection equal to leather armor.* — Ed.) Even in calm conditions, her hair moves as if ruffled by the wind; sometimes the strands seem to writhe on their own, like serpents.

The factol radiates an aura that draws others to her, a natural charisma she can use to persuade — or intimidate. She seldom uses this charisma, though, as she usually prefers introspection to contact with others. At times, while existing in a state of unity of mind and body, she seems distant and aloof; whether practicing combat moves with the staff or striding purposefully through her faction's headquarters — the Great Gymnasium — she makes a basher think she's deeply in touch with the multiverse. Other Ciphers (and many members of other factions) see her as an ideal: a representation of ultimate harmony and beauty.

A key reason Rhys makes such a good factol is that she can inspire people to greatness. She has achieved such a great degree of internal harmony, she can afford to turn her attention outward. (*Although it's true Rhys tends to avoid contact with others, she nevertheless reaches out more than most in her faction.* — Ed.) She serves as a great coach, providing direction to Ciphers and others training in the Great Gymnasium with just one choice remark. She can grasp instantly the necessary compromise in any dispute, which allows her to further harmony among the other factions — at least temporarily. Any berk can see she'll achieve her personal unity with the multiverse any day now: She practically glows with harmonic radiance and seems to vibrate on a level just beyond the senses.

Rhys always proves a formidable combatant. She possesses a wide collection of spells, a handful of powerful magical items, and great skill with the staff, dagger, vari-



◆ THE GREAT GYMNASIUM ◆

The Ciphers make their headquarters in the Guildhall Ward at the Great Gymnasium, the best place in the Cage to train and soothe body and mind. The huge compound, built of gold- and rose-veined black marble, contains pools and an exercise field, baths and steam rooms, massage tables and lounges, a large portico for instructional seminars, and centers for music and art.

Most folks know the Great Gymnasium as a place of calm — Ciphers want it that way. Since a basher can achieve unity of thought and action only in a peaceful environment, faction members keep dangerous distractions out of the Great Gymnasium. So, check those weapons at the front gate, berk! Same thing with magic — the Order allows no use of arcane abilities on the premises. *(The Ciphers do provide mock weapons for combat training and, for wizard faction members, special chambers that contain magical effects safely. — Ed.)* This way, folks can come here and forget the noise, pressure, and many other stresses of life. It's no surprise the Great Gymnasium becomes a perfect neutral meeting ground, where disagreeing parties can find a Cipher skilled in mediation and naturally able to balance opposing forces.

Once through the gate, bashers can walk along the

ous other blades, and a few exotic weapons. Unless a situation calls for her to show anger, count on the factol to remain calm. However, some leatherheads think she has a short temper, since she acts without thought — she can react emotionally to a situation before it even happens. Fact is, Rhys acts so quickly at times, she seems to have a sixth sense for danger.

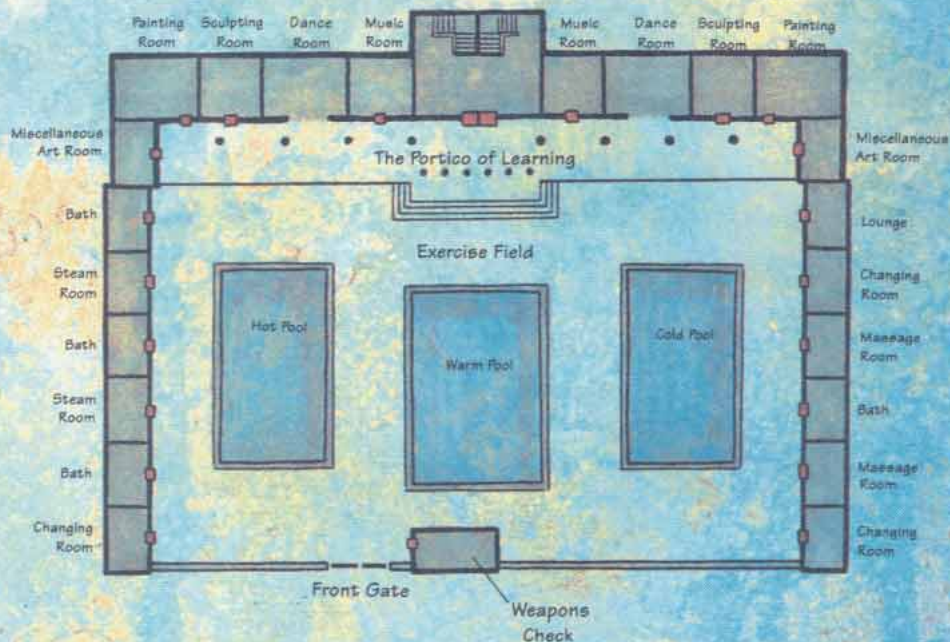
'Course, folks' memories of Rhys's previous evil tendencies give the factol a tough reputation to shake. *(As she came to understand the faction's philosophy, she migrated to a true neutral alignment. — Ed.)*

The tiefling seemed a natural Cipher from the day she joined, considering her introspective inclination and the decisiveness she gained having depended on herself almost since birth. After only a couple of years in the Transcendent Order, she became a master of the highest order. Then, when former Factol Valny Hawkins reached personal harmony, she and the other masters, in unspoken accord, decided she would ascend to the post.

While many factols prove difficult to reach, Rhys remains accessible. The Ciphers have no true hierarchy to prevent those of "lower rank" from speaking to the factol, and she never bothers with personal guards when she travels in public. 'Course, just because Rhys makes herself equally available to all, don't think finding her's easy; she spends her time training, working on behalf of the faction, or just acting however the multiverse pulls her.

THE GREAT GYMNASIUM

Ground Floor



Second Floor



Third Floor



0 40
Feet



grand, well-kept exercise field amid the sounds of calisthenics and other activity. A breeze often wafts through the yard to cool off those at work. Visitors pass several inviting, ivory-tiled pools (hot, warm, and cold water) and faction members selling refreshments on the way to

the Portico of Learning at the field's far end. The Ciphers use this open area for seminars, sometimes mistakenly called "classes" by berks in other factions.

Here, a master offers inspirational words to new Ciphers, outlines reflex-training techniques, and listens to new ideas. The master does not so much teach as show the other faction members how to learn on their own. Self-teaching remains the key to self-enlightenment, see?

After a few words from a master, faction members make their way to one of the practice rooms off the courtyard. Everybody 'cept addle-coves and Clueless know that the Ciphers devote most of the facility to physical activity. Bashers train with mock weapons, practice hand-to-hand battles, and sometimes just exercise for the sake of exercise. Other facilities, like the baths, steam rooms, and massage tables, allow folks to relax after physical activity.

But combat ain't the only way to train a body's reflexes. The Great Gymnasium also provides spaces for activities like painting, sculpting, and playing musical instruments. The Transcendent Order considers these and other artistic pursuits good methods for clearing the mind and training the body to operate on reflex alone. *(In fact, the faction's quite proud of the mural the Xaositects recently painted on their outer wall. — Ed.)*

The Great Gymnasium doesn't include some features of other faction headquarters, like dormitories for members or an office for the factol. Ciphers all keep their own kips elsewhere, and Rhys doesn't want an office — she prefers to operate on the hoof.

'Course, the place does hold a few rather unexpected rooms as well. Take the Chamber of Shared Meditation, for instance. This quiet area surprises many bashers who visit the Gymnasium. Ciphers acknowledge that some folks need a place for quiet contemplation, and this long, narrow room can handle quite a few people. The chamber holds a few tables at one end and features plush carpet and onyx chandeliers to offer a serene feeling of luxury. The factol sometimes uses the chamber for meetings she mediates, especially gatherings between representatives of different factions. The room's atmosphere encourages calm and reason, and the guards there make sure everything remains peaceful and quiet.

Encompassing the building's entire third floor is the Cadence of the Planes Chamber — essentially a sensory

deprivation room, permitted only to faction members. The Ciphers carefully regulate temperature and air flow in this empty chamber. They make use of magic here to keep the room in constant darkness and silence and to maintain its

levitation field. Ciphers wanting to use the room (one at a time) first strip completely, then step off a balcony into the levitation field to float. After a prescribed time, the basher's

fished out with a rope. Doesn't sound too active, does it? Thing is, time in this chamber helps a Cipher get in touch with the Cadence of the Planes, the mystical rhythm a basher can only feel, not hear. The transcendental pulse moves through a basher's spirit, mind, and body, echoing the heartbeats of folks on all the planes. This chamber removes distractions, making it easier for a body to feel the Cadence of the Planes. It's important to the Ciphers. One can't unite body and mind without knowing how one fits into the multiverse.

IN THE GYMNASIUM,
YOU DON'T JUST TRAIN, BERK —
YOU FIND YOURSELF.
YOU PRACTICE HARMONY OF BODY AND MIND
AND MULTIVERSE.
HERE, A CIPHER
LETS THE CADENCE OF THE PLANES
DRUM THROUGH HIS VERY BEING.
— OVERHEARD AT THE
PORCH OF LEARNING



◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

The Transcendent Order has a very loose hierarchy — every Cipher basically has power equal to every other Cipher. Respect, though, is another matter. Namers don't get any more respect in the Transcendent Order than they do in other factions. When factioneers find the key to "action minus thought," that's when they gain respect.

(Just because Ciphers act without thought doesn't mean they act all the time, though. A Cipher, especially a master, knows there's a time to act and a time to be still. Inaction is a form of action, after all. — Ed.)

ROLE-PLAYING THE CIPHERS

Members of the Order do act self-centered, but not because they're selfish, like the Takers and some Signers. They just want to find their own unity with the cosmos before worrying about how others're doing. This introspection makes 'em appear aloof and unfathomable.

It's a cinch the Ciphers are an independent bunch, too. Sure, they all agree to make the body govern the mind, but members differ in their approaches to the philosophy. Some see the body as a temple, others as a tool. The former tend to advocate healthy lifestyles and eat only the most nutritious foods. They keep their bodies in good enough

shape to act reflexively, but they don't push it. Quite a different story from those who view the body as a tool; they push it to the limit, and sometimes beyond, in search of the perfect biological machine. 'Course, these differences don't seem apparent to outsiders.

ALIGNMENT: The Transcendent Order has only one stipulation for joining: A body has to be at least partly neutral. Oddly enough, the faction always seems to maintain an alignment balance without ever devoting any effort to it: Whenever a neutral good member joins, a neutral evil member joins soon, or another neutral good member slides over to true neutral. Anyway, the faction maintains its balance. Most Ciphers become true neutral, eventually; as long as they progress toward the new alignment slowly as they come to grasp faction philosophy, they suffer no penalty for changing.

CLASS: Folks of all classes come to the Transcendent Order, though most members belong to the more action-oriented professions. Thus, most Ciphers are fighters. Paladins never seem interested, 'cause of alignment problems and, while an occasional ranger joins, he either eventually loses his status as a ranger (because he becomes true neutral) or he never advances past the first rank of master. (See "Cipher Membership." — Ed.)

Wizards, rogues, and priests join the Ciphers in about equal numbers. Though wizards aren't always the most active folks in the world, some spellcasters' study of magic leads them naturally to a study of self; Cipher rogues usually started thieving either from need or as a search for thrills. Priests in the Order frequently channel powers that serve the Athar's Great Unknown power-behind-the-powers. Some even say they revere Cipher ex-factols. (See "The DM's Dark," page 149. — Ed.)

RACE: The Ciphers welcome all races to their ranks. A lot of tieflings find homes here, because they tend to trust themselves far more than they do others — very much in keeping with the Order's philosophy. The Ciphers also let a body keep to himself and do as he likes without any interference, which tieflings also appreciate. 'Course, the large number of tiefling members, known for individualism, makes the conformist Harmonium members peery about the Ciphers.

Half-elves tend to join the faction for the same reasons as tieflings and in about the same numbers. Since half-elves often have trouble knowing themselves, the Ciphers provide good direction for them. Not only do humans share this need to find inner harmony, they also love to get things done. Bariaur and githzerai seldom join the ranks, though githzerai that do generally become some of the faction's most successful members.

CIPHER MEMBERSHIP

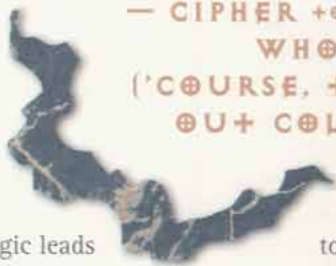
The Ciphers have pretty easy entrance requirements: A cutter goes up to a member and says, "I'd like to join your fine faction," or somesuch, expressing a desire to seek harmony of body and mind. See, to the members of the Transcendent Order, expressing the desire to join is sign enough that a cutter knows what they're about and has accepted that the Ciphers've got the right of things.

Once in, Ciphers do their own thing. 'Course, namers too often take this attitude to mean they can run about acting on every impulse. Like the worst Sensate namers, some are thrill-seekers, acting for the sake of acting, not to seek a deeper oneness with the multiverse.

Ciphers their peers declare to be on their way to uniting body and mind are hailed as masters. The faction unconsciously follows the Rule of Three by recognizing three ranks of master: master of the heart, master of the mind, and master of the spirit.

NEED +@ WORK @N +H@SE REFLEXES.
BERK.

— CIPHER +@ A KNIGHT+ @F +HE POST+
WHO +RIED +@ BOB HIM.
('COURSE, +HE POST+-MAN,
@U+ C@LD, DIDN'+ HEAR A +HING.)



To become a *master of the heart* (a factotum), a Cipher must reach at least 3rd level and achieve recognition from his peers. A master of the heart no longer needs to think before he acts — at least, in the short term. See, a Cipher of this rank learns how to invoke an "action trance," the state of pure action.

A heart master of at least 7th level can spend three to four months in solitary training to become a *master of the mind* (a factor, to other groups). A group of all the Order's masters promotes a basher to mind master when the masters think he's honed his reflexes to the extent that his body and mind have become one, subject only to the movements of the multiverse. Masters of the mind stay in action trances for gradually longer periods.

The next level, *master of the spirit*, gains a basher a lot of respect — and not only from faction members, either. These cutters have found their places in the multiverse and can act at any time without the clutter of unnecessary thoughts. The factol's the only one with this rank. There's no specific point when faction members normally reach this level — it just happens. (The DM makes the call based on quick decision-making in role-playing. — Ed.) As with the previous rank, the transition to spirit master requires three to four months of special training.

A Cipher who transcends this level supposedly rises above mere mortal status. The faction claims that most

factols who don't die in office leave their posts due to this sort of transcendence. In any case, when a new factol needs to be chosen, the first two levels of master all decide on a new one. No meetings, no arguments, no lobbying – they just decide. A master of the spirit suddenly feels compelled to become the new factol. Never have the masters decided upon a candidate who did not feel the urge to become factol, and never have two masters of the spirit had the compulsion at the same time – the instincts of everyone concerned lead them all to the same conclusion.

FACTION ABILITIES:

Because they always try to act without thought, all Ciphers – namers included – gain –1 modifiers to their initiative rolls.

Masters can place themselves in an action trance, where they can act on reflex alone. Such a state begins with the start of an encounter, when a player first rolls initiative. From then until the end of the encounter, a master of the heart gains a +1 bonus to saving throws vs. mind-affecting spells and spell-like effects (like *charm person*, dragon fear, a harpy's song, etc.). If the spell or effect normally allows no saving throw, a master of the heart gets one anyway, but without a bonus. It's tough to control the mind of a cutter who ain't thinking.

A master of the mind increases his initiative bonus to a –2 modifier and receives a +2 bonus to saving throws against mind-affecting spells and effects. In addition, this cutter can initiate the action trance at will; however, the trance lasts no more than a turn, unless an encounter requires an initiative roll before that time expires. The action trance lasts through any encounter that may occur.

Masters of the spirit receive –3 modifiers to initiative and +3 bonuses to saving throws vs. mind-affecting spells and spell-like effects. Like the mind master, the spirit master can initiate the action trance at will and stay in it for up to one turn or through an encounter, if one occurs before the end of the turn. Masters of the spirit automatically enter action trances one round *before* an encounter begins.

◆ THE CHANT ◆

Folks love to talk about the Ciphers, in vain attempts to figure 'em out. A common story claims that the members of the Order work directly for the Lady of Pain. The chant

has some elements of truth. While the Ciphers don't act directly on the Lady's behalf, they wind up doing her bidding anyway. As a balancing force in the Cage, they soothe the wounds where the other factions've rubbed each other raw. Sure, the Hardheads might set out to enforce peace directly, but only addlecoves think they're any good at it. The subtle Rhys, and others like her, on the other hand, gravitate toward the support of harmony instinctively – they can't really help themselves. Thus, possibly more than any other faction, the Transcendent Order supports the Lady by bringing something like real harmony to Sigil.

Most factions feel pretty neutral toward the Transcendent Order. The only group that really has a problem with them, the Harmonium, is just peery by nature. 'Course, their suspicions seem ironic in light of the factions' shared goal: harmony. It's just that the Ciphers look within to produce it, while the Hardheads try to bludgeon others into an external harmony.

◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

Though the Ciphers really don't care to keep things about themselves dark, there's still one thing bashers don't know about the Order.

See, most folks just laugh when they hear Ciphers say that some of their former factols have achieved the faction's ultimate goal: Union of thought and action led to a self-enlightenment that allowed them to transcend the bonds of mortality for something greater.

Many Ciphers believe several of their former factols now form a pantheon of powers representing Oneness: powers that channel the Great Unknown. This belief seems to mirror that of the Godsmen, who think normal bashers can become powers. Are these figures actual gods, or do some Cipher priests devote themselves merely to the channels for a great force? No one knows. Maybe powers're just folks whose unity of mind and body has advanced to an almost unimaginable degree.

The dark of it is, though, Cipher priests who revere the group's ex-factols get their spells from somewhere. If the magic doesn't come from the Order's former factols-turned-powers, it must come from some other primal force. A few Cipher priests devote themselves to the Cadence of the Planes – they get spells, too.

A few members of the Order go a step further and assume that every power in the multiverse used to be a Cipher, or at least followed their philosophy. That belief seems a bit hard to swallow – then again, a body can never tell.

EMPT+Y YΘURSELF

ΘF +HΘUGH+.

ALLΘW +HE MUL+IVERSE

+Θ AC+

+HROUGH YΘU.

— MASTER ΘF +HE SPIR+

+Θ A NEW RECRUIT+

THE Xaositects

THEY'RE NOT
JUST MASTERS
OF CHAOS THEORY —
THEY WRITE
THE BOOK
ON IT.
— THE EDITOR



So, you want to join up? *Okay, you're in.*

What? Tell you what the Xaositects are about? Well, I guess I could. Let's see.

We support — no, I'm sorry, that's someone else. We don't support anything. That's what we're about.

Have you ever eaten ~~X~~ at Vander's? Good variety. I ate there today and had an owlbear-egg omelet. I don't know where they got the owlbear egg. The dog ~~X~~ I had as a kid looked a lot like an owlbear. Except *smaller*. And no beak. I talked to a vrock last week. Or last month? He seemed a little **MEAN** at first, but I left him alone, and he left me alone. That's what the Xaositects are all about after all, leaving a cutter alone to do his own thing.

Have you ever been anywhere with a moon? •

Seen place is when eyes of a wonderful, ~~7~~ through the ~~o~~ multiverse the **chaos**.

Did I mention **chaos**? Everything is **chaos**, berk, so live with it. Be a part of it. A part of it be. *Part a be of it. It a be part of. A of be part it. Part it, be of a.* Know what I mean?

And that's what we're all about.

I have an **itch**, and it sounds like a **purple**. The next time I see that berk, it's over for him. Be one with **chaos**. A rat ran down ~~A~~ the clock. Or be two with it, I don't care. Dooni went to see a ~~o~~ juggler ~~7~~. I'm ~~not~~ getting another sword until I need one, by the powers! Which brings me to my next point.

Who are you? Join what? Oh.

Basher, berk, CUTTER, CLERK.

Chaos is the only way.

DUSTMAN, BLEAKER, *Doomguard*, sod.

That is where I'll go tonight.

Over here, under there, down to one, up to him.

Guvner, *Signer*, *Cipher*, Harmonium.

Become a myriad one.

That's what the Xaositects are all about. I think I'll quit. Of course it doesn't *rhyme!* Haven't you been listening?

Whenever you want to do something, do it. And tell some of the rest of us about it, because we want to do it too. If it's *quick*. The more you plan, the more the multiverse unplans.

Order just ain't natural.

Chaos gazing by upon of learning it appreciate randomness to the, its intricacies understanding sublime and of the multiverse secrets learn we the.

Revel in **chaos**. Play and be played.

The the, the the THE the the.

And when I'm done here, the bard will be in the soup, you'll see. Mask of the bone. Gone, going, and own a drum. I used to think rocks were eggs for earth elementals. And I still wonder once in a while, but not about that.

When the **CHAOTIC** get going, the Hardheads try to stop them. Under the light a ~~o~~ fire ~~o~~ when you see the whites of their eyes on you ~~can't~~ walk on the grass stains on my breeches in the wall of ice to cool a drink of water ~~7~~ fall down on your knees ache in bad weather ~~o~~ the storm the castle ~~7~~.

Who cares about the Bleakers?

How many cutters *cut* CUTTERS *cutting* cuts?

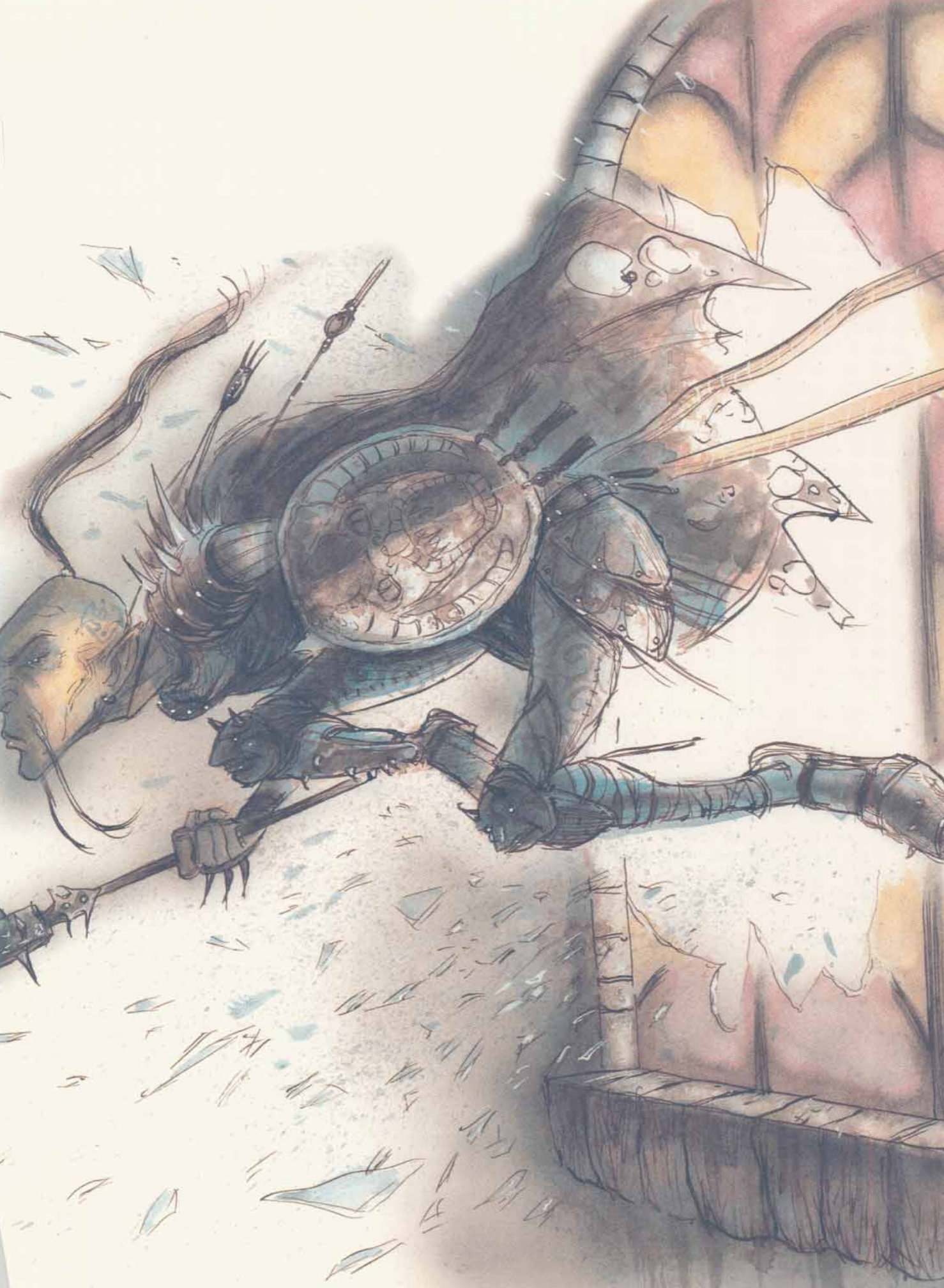
Live for the moment. ~~7~~ Carp the dame.

Whatever. What do you think I am, a crystal ball? One of its legs are both the same. Same as downtown. You don't always get what you want. ~~o~~ Sometimes it gets you ~~7~~.

So, now that you understand what we're about, because I'm done.

You **don't** want to join? Suit yourself. *Stupid Clueless*.

— Factol Karan of the Xaositects



SANDS THREW ◆ AN HOURGLASS ◆

The Xaositects — now there's a weird lot. Their history's a little odd too. As near as anyone can tell, the Xaositects showed up in Sigil quite some time after the Great Upheaval: about 150 years ago — at least under their current name. A body bored enough to check records could find some very old references to groups like the Xaositects. The chant says the barmies've been around as long as any faction, though — under one name or another. Various documents talk about Xaosophiles, the Discordant Opposition, the Ochlocrats, and dozens more, some with even sillier names. It might be that the same group changes its name every once in a while, or all these different groups could really have been unrelated.

See, that's one of the problems with the Xaositects: They don't write things down. They don't have a real headquarters, and they don't keep histories. So, a body's got to glean an account of the Xaositects from the records of other factions. And that doesn't come to much. These accounts all do paint the same picture of the group, though: They're trouble. Well, at least most of them.

Most of the time.

The Xaositects never start any movements that last very long, and they rarely do anything of historical significance, 'cause historically significant events usually require a level of planning that's beyond them. 'Course, a basher can't even make *that* rule about the Xaositects. There are a few exceptions.

- ◆ While the Hardheads were still pretty new to the Cage a couple of centuries ago, a few Xaositects got lucky and managed to assassinate the factol by hitting him in the head with an hourglass.
- ◆ A gaggle of Xaositects went into The Lady's Ward 20 years ago and messed around in a bunch of the local manors' courtyards; some owners woke up the next morning to find only ragged ground, while others found beautiful rock gardens.
- ◆ A decade or so ago they arranged an alliance with every single faction at the same time. 'Course, it lasted only about 12 minutes because, when the other factions realized what was going on, they broke the alliances quick.
- ◆ And just a few weeks ago, a lot of 'em got together and painted a mural on the Great Gymnasium, a mural most folks consider one of the most beautiful works of art in the planes.

All that might sound pretty benign, or at least harmless. (*Except for the assassination.* — Ed.) But the Xaositects can take credit for a few other memorable incidents; even though they seem almost incapable of planning major operations, accidents happen. For instance, take the time the Sensates threw a party and invited the Chaosmen.

See, the more Xaositects a body's got in one place, the greater the chance for trouble — and there were maybe a thousand there that night. Mix in a few Anarchists, and what happens? One of the biggest riots ever to shake the planes spreads through the city, that's what. Mobs of Xaositects swept all the wards, causing vandalism and mass destruction. (*A few Sensates went along for the ride, and a few Anarchists directed.* — Ed.)

After the first day of the riot, some Doomguards and Bleakers moved in. More Xaositects got wind of it and joined the fun, as did a handful of Indeps. A few more cells of Anarchists showed up to keep things rolling. The Harmonium tried to contain it at first, and then the Mercykillers joined the peacekeeping effort, along with some Ciphers and whatever Guvners could hit the streets. For about a week, a meaningless war raged in Sigil, and thousands died. Some thought the Lady'd intervene and "remove" the leaders of the strife, but by the time things had gotten really out of hand, there weren't any leaders. The City Court burned for a few hours, the Hall of Records nearly collapsed, and a fire swept through the Hive. Some bashers'll tell a body that the Shattered Temple got ruined during these Days of Xaos, or that the Hive was a nice place before the riots, but only an addle-cove'd believe it.

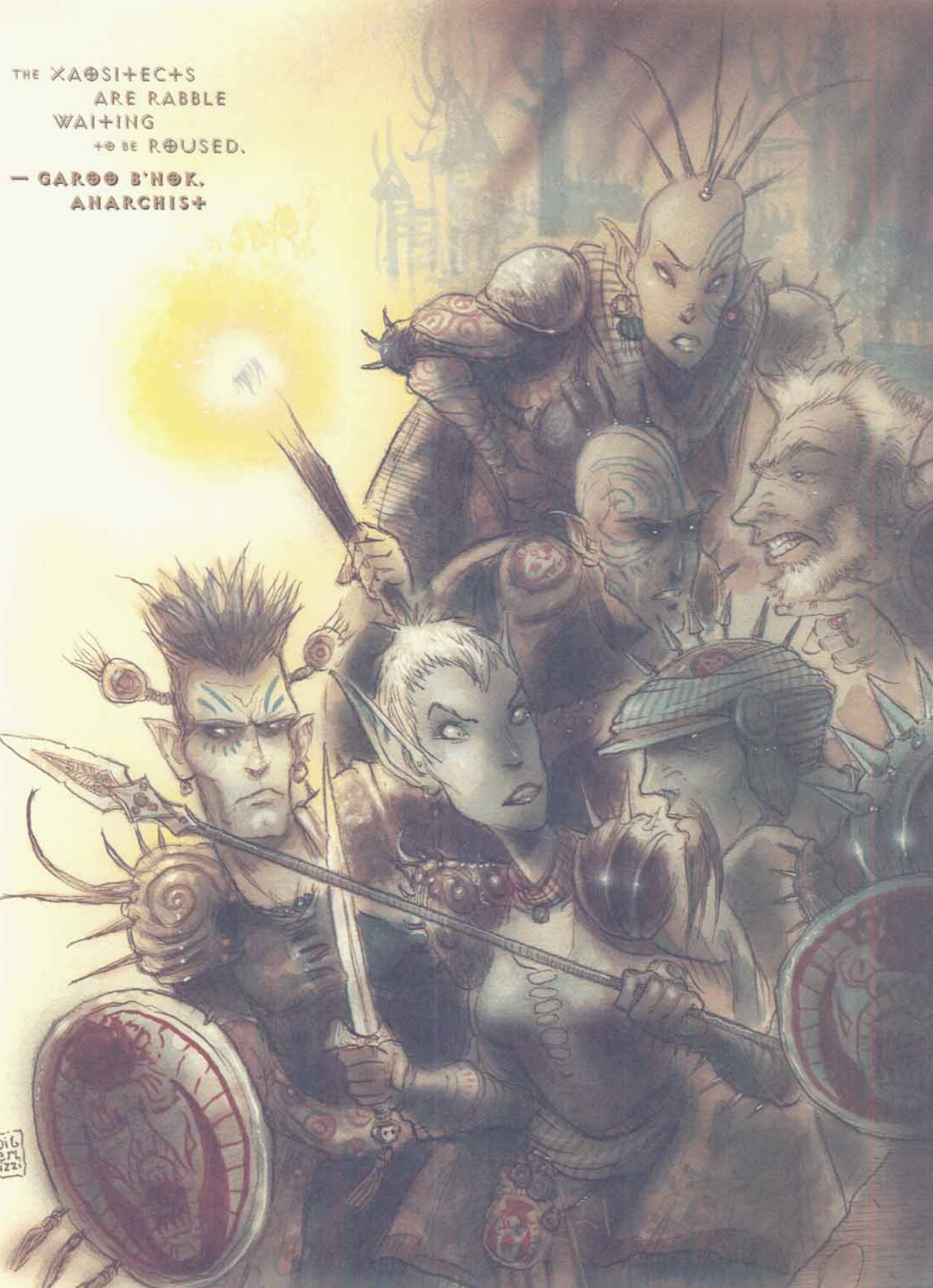
Sure, there's the time the Xaositects painted the Armory pink. (*The Mercykillers were not pleased.* — Ed.) And the time a Xaosman, as a lark, infiltrated the Revolutionary League, getting three cells deep before he couldn't take it any more and quit. But don't forget the time a mob of Chaosmen went around putting Clueless into the dead-book, just for being stupid. See, the Xaositects ride the winds of whimsy — winds that can blow a lot of innocent sods right into the blinds.

Some will say the Xaositects don't have a history. 'Course, other factions' records say different, but the Chaosmen don't remember what they did in the past — and if they did, it wouldn't matter. So they more or less have a blank slate. No one can beat 'em at living in the present, with ties to neither past nor future. Some Sensates tell folks to "seize the day." Take advantage of the present to do things you can't do later. Chaosmen go a few steps further: They "seize the moment." They live in the now, doing whatever seems like a good idea. It's a cinch they'll keep right on doing it, too.

Thing is, why does the Lady let the Xaositects stick around when they can be so disruptive? Why'd she allow the faction in the first place? Well, that question has a lot of possible answers, none of them good. Some jokers say the Lady brought in the Xaositects herself, to handle the problem of too many modrons showing up in Sigil. Others say the Xaositects create things the Lady of Pain wants. It's like the old saying: If you put enough red slaadi in a room with enough paint, they'll eventually paint a masterpiece. Just by chance, the Xaositects will do everything eventually. Who knows what masterpiece the Lady's waiting for them to paint?

THE XAOSITECS
ARE RABBLE
WAITING
TO BE ROUSED.

— GAROO B'NOK,
ANARCHIST



016
274
1221

◆ FAC+OL KARAN ◆

Male githzerai planar
9th-level fighter, Xaositects (factol)
Chaotic neutral

STR	17	INT	16	HP	89
DEX	17	WIS	15	AC	5 (varies)
CON	18	CHA	17	THACO	12

EQUIPMENT: Whatever armor he feels like wearing (usually something equivalent to chain mail), a handful of weapons (two or more of the following: long sword, great scimitar, dagger, horseman's mace, or voulge).

SPECIAL: Karan has normal githzerai, fighter, and Xaositect abilities, including the *major creation* spell-like power. (See the section below. — Ed.)

Karan ain't the typical factol. Fact is, he's *not* factol all the time — only when he wants to be. See, when he gets tired of the job, he stops for a while — he quits two or three times a day, sometimes. So far, he keeps coming back to the job, 'cause it suits him most of the time.

'Course, there's a small bunch of other Xaositects, each of whom'll tell a body he's the factol. Sometimes one of 'em is — whenever Karan's not in a "factol mood" for more than a few hours, another Xaositect jumps in for a bit, but steps aside when Karan wants the job back.

Why do other Xaositects follow this githzerai? It's sure not because Karan's impressed them with his past

accomplishments. (They don't know anything about his background. Then again, Karan doesn't remember anything about it, either. — Ed.) Still, faction members clearly have a few reasons for letting Karan lead them. For one, he wants to do it, and not many others want the headache of governing the Chaosmen for longer than a day or so. Also, Karan's about as chaotic as they come, and other Xaositects respect that. Finally, the charismatic factol has some good ideas. As surprising as it sounds about a Xaositect, Karan is a great leader — he just doesn't necessarily lead others to great things.

See, Karan leads by example. More active than any other factol, Karan himself goes among his ranks and stirs them up. A handful of Xaositects (seldom the same handful from day to day) follows him around most of the time, waiting for him to have a good idea — and he does, pretty often. Sometimes the factol keeps the idea to himself and acts on it alone. Other times, he tells a few followers, and they go off, like eddies from a whirlpool, to create smaller whirlpools of chaos. He might even start gathering dozens of Xaositects together to act on an idea — but only for a time.

Karan can come off as a surly basher, a brave cutter, or the barmiest of the barmy. It depends on his mood, as mercurial as the winds of Limbo. One thing, though: He's got a magnetism about him, something that compels folks to follow him. He'll turn this magnetism to intimidation when simple persuasion fails him.

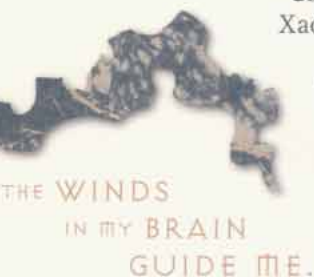
The factol's appearance changes occasionally, within certain parameters. He's a githzerai — that never changes. He generally wears a beard and a topknot, but these get longer or shorter, messier or neater, depending on the factol's whim. His clothes usually look tattered, and he tends toward a disheveled appearance. Folks frequently see him in a motley collection of plates and pieces that form the equivalent of chain mail. Once in a while, the factol really cleans up and gets some nice clothes — but then he wears 'em until they literally fall apart. Karan almost always remains heavily armed, but he never specialized in the use of his favorite weapons; he doesn't have the concentration.

That's something folks usually notice about Karan pretty quick: his short attention span. He leaps from topic to topic without hesitation. He'll talk normally for a bit, then break into babble, then launch into a speech that sounds like it should be understandable, but isn't. He's a unique one, Karan is, just like every member of his faction.

The factol also has a unique ability — leastwise a body'd hope it's unique. This power resembles the wizard spell *major creation*; Karan doesn't use it very often, and, when he does, he hides it. His ability lets him call up pure chaos as raw material for his creations, rather than reaching into the Demiplane of Shadow as wizards do. The spell-like power, which requires no casting time and no components, creates an object that lasts up to one round per experience level — nine rounds, in Karan's case. He can use the power three times a day.

◆ HIVE SWEET+ HIVE ◆

The Xaositects don't have an official headquarters. They don't even have an unofficial headquarters. Oh, there are places they hang out, where a body can always find a few Chaosmen. 'Course, it likely won't be the same Chaosmen who were there yesterday. If asked, though, most Xaositects claim the Hive as their headquarters. They don't mean the whole Hive Ward, but the section within the Hive Ward called the Hive. The sprawling slum boasts decaying hovels and nameless streets, tenements as crowded as rat dens, and taverns and flophouses that the word "sleazy" doesn't even begin to describe. In this ever-changing place, buildings fall daily, only to be replaced later by new temporary structures. Some businesses have operated there for years, often changing owners without notice, and more than a few bashers conduct business there every day, always on a different corner from the day before. Corpses decompose in the reeking Ditch. The Hive's a chaotic jumble, a place where a body can easily get lost.



— FAC+OL KARAN

In other words, it's perfect for the Xaositects.

Chaosmen wander the area in groups, doing what they will, but generally avoiding Harmonium patrols that strut through from time to time. A basher can always find a Xaositect in the Hive, whether he wants to or not. Karan and the big bosses wander the area, talking to people, checking on things. *(Even they don't seem to know exactly what. — Ed.)* They keep food and supplies in empty tenements there and sometimes light purple-flamed torches to announce a gathering. Basically, they do whatever they want, ultimately maintaining the Hive in its state of disorder. Until the Hardheads figure out how to handle them, the Xaositects rule here. *(Harmonium Factol Sarin has more than once rejected the idea of burning down the Hive. — Ed.)*

'Course, it's an easy rule, one without laws. Either a body belongs or he doesn't, and a cutter that doesn't belong (like a Hardhead, an annoying Clueless, or just anybody the Chaosmen don't like at the time) might pay the music for a trip to the Hive. Though not malicious, most Xaositects by their very nature prove dangerous.

Faction members do venture into the rest of the Hive Ward sometimes, singly or in groups, and it seldom takes

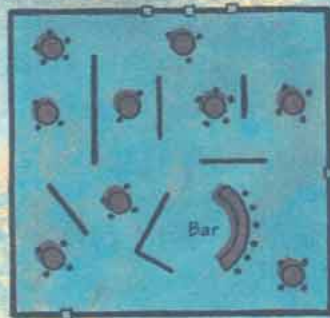
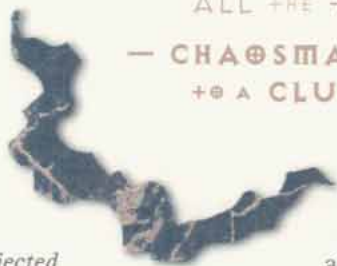
more than a minute or two to find some Chaosmen there. The rest of the Hive Ward, though also a slum, seems much less chaotic and degenerate than the center that gave the ward its name.

The Hive holds several main houses where Xaositects sleep and various taverns where they congregate. One place in particular, run by Quake Lavender, has a steady clientele of Xaositects. That might sound surprising, 'cept for the way the tavern's laid out. See, the place is built of light walls and furnished only sparsely. Every few days, Quake and her employees rearrange the walls, often repainting them or replacing furniture inside. They like to change the name, too — but not necessarily at the same time that they alter the place physically or move it to a new location.

Quake is a Xaositect herself, a big boss (factor), and she knows that to keep Xaositects coming to her place — herself included — she's got to keep it fresh. That means changing it whenever the mood strikes her.

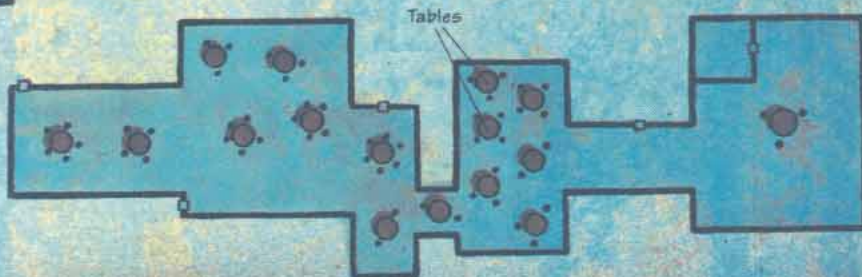
A body never can tell what Quake's place'll look like from day to day, or what it'll be called. At least it always stays in the same block. A body can't predict when Quake'll remodel, either; recently, during a party with more than 100 revelers crowded into the hovel she was using, Quake decided to move to another building. Most of the party went with her.

WHY WOULD WE WANT
+ @ GO + @ + HE SAME PLACE
ALL + HE + TIME?
— CHAOSMAN
+ @ A CLUELESS



QUAKE'S
PLACE

Sample Configurations



QUAKE LAVENDER

Female half-elf planar
9th-level wild mage, Xaositect (factor)
Chaotic neutral

STR	13	INT	17	HP	26
DEX	16	WIS	13	AC	2
CON	16	CHA	15	THACO	18

EQUIPMENT: Bracers of defense AC 2, dagger, sling and 32 bullets.

SPELLS/LEVEL: 5/4/4/3/2.

SPECIAL: At least one spell of each level Quake can cast must be a wild magic spell. Besides her standard wizard and half-elf abilities and the powers of a Xaositect of her level and position, Quake has another ability. Once per day, she can throw a magical effect as if she were wielding a *wand of wonder*. While a wild mage has some chance of controlling an actual *wand of wonder*, the half-elf woman has no such control over this ability. In addition, Quake has a fairly impressive spellbook. (An asterisk [*] indicates a spell found in the Tome of Magic. — Ed.)

1st level — *alarm*, *audible glamer*, *change self*, *charm person*, *color spray*, *dancing lights*, *grease*, *Hornung's guess**, *jump*, *magic missile*, *Nahal's reckless dweomer**, *patternweave**, *spider climb*, *unseen servant*.

2nd level — *alter self*, *blur*, *chaos shield**, *glitterdust*, *Hornung's baneful deflector**, *levitate*, *mirror image*, *Nahal's nonsensical nullifier**, *pyrotechnics*, *shatter*, *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter*, *whispering wind*.

3rd level — *alternate reality**, *blink*, *fireflow**, *fly**, *fool's speech**, *gust of wind*, *haste*, *lightning bolt*, *suggestion*.

4th level — *confusion*, *fire charm*, *fumble*, *Otiluke's resilient sphere*, *polymorph self*, *there/not there**, *turn pebble to boulder**, *unluck**.

5th level — *chaos*, *major creation*, *stone shape*, *vortex**, *waveform**.

Quake's a wild mage of the first order. According to the chant around the Cage, she received her training from the famed mage Hornung the Anarch (*Whom she recruited into the Xaositects a year or so ago.* — Ed.) and by Hornung's former apprentice, Nahal the Incurable. With her magic, she renovates her tavern, sometimes just throwing a spell into the middle of things to see what happens.

The half-elf has short, dark hair and wears layers of different-colored clothes. A long scar on the right side of her face mars her prettiness. She uses makeup occasionally just to draw a design on her cheek.



Quake can look pretty surly when she wants to (which means most of the time), and she talks tough, refusing to tolerate bothersome customers. She walks away and ignores those who displease her — at least, when she doesn't throw a spell. Some folks've seen her cast *confusion* in her tavern just for fun. She loves chaos all right, but doesn't seem to care for much else.

The tavern manages to hold Quake's interest pretty steadily, though she leaves for days at a time when she feels like it. She never hires Xaositects, knowing how unreliable they can be. (*Quake does allow Xaositects to work part time voluntarily, though.* — Ed.) Most employees are Clueless, newly arrived in Sigil.

◆ WITHIN THE RANKS ◆

How does one recognize a Chaosman? The most obvious method is to look for the faction symbol on the basher's clothing. A more patient cutter might observe the character: Eventually, a Xaositect'll do something disorderly. 'Course, just because someone acts chaotic or disobeys a law doesn't mean he's a Xaositect. A body might also figure it out by talking to a Xaositect; lots of 'em scramble their syntax once in a while, and others do it all the time.

Finally, a Xaositect might come right out and admit he belongs to the faction. Few others, even barmies, would go around falsely claiming membership. See, the Harmonium doesn't like the Chaosmen. Siding with chaos violates their rules — so the act could really place a berk in a blind. The Xaositects don't like pretenders, either, and more than one sod has wound up in care of the Dustmen for impersonating a member.

ROLE-PLAYING THE XAOSITECTS

Every basher's got a story about the weird things Xaositects do or say. Then there's the time a couple of years ago when all the Xaositects acted "normal" for about a week. That really shook some bashers, 'cause no one could figure what the Chaosmen were up to. Turns out they weren't up to anything, things just happened that way.

See, the Xaositects figure that if they acted chaotic all the time, they'd become predictable. Namers, smashing things just for havoc's sake, miss the point. Being chaotic ain't an excuse to kill wantonly. The object ain't to cause chaos, but to observe it and be a part of it.

A lot of cutters talk about the Chaosmen like they know 'em. Ain't true. Nobody really *knows* the Xaositects — not even other Xaositects. Members of this faction do share a few common traits, though.

ALIGNMENT. Hardly needs saying, but a Xaositect's got to be chaotic. Actions always reveal a faction member's moral tendency, eventually. Evil Chaosmen still act cruel and selfish, just more randomly than most. Good ones leave haphazard beauty and chance kindnesses in their wakes. A truly chaotic cutter might commit an evil act one day and a good one the next, then seem pretty neutral for a couple of weeks. Most in the faction act chaotic neutral; even those that start out good or evil find themselves slipping away from those ethics, which only distract them from the sublime joy of chaos.

XAOSITECT+ WARRIORS

I CAN HANDLE —

THEY'RE AS CRAZED AS ANY BARBARIAN.

IT'S THE XAOSITECT+ MAGES

THAT SCARE ME.

— DALTIM FLAMEFIST,

VISING PRIME MAGE

CLASS. As a body might expect, the Xaositects attract a variety of different professions. Alignment keeps out some, like druids and paladins, but the ranks of chaos include at least a few of almost anything else. Quite a lot of warriors join, since — as any mage'll say — brawling doesn't take much concentration. *(By the same token, few Xaositect warriors have the single-mindedness needed to learn a weapon specialization. — Ed.)* Simple fighters seem the most common, though a few solitary ranger types belong as well. Expect to see a high proportion of rogues, too, since they're usually the selfish types that like a faction that lets a body do whatever he wants. A lot of prime thieves can accept the Xaositects, 'cause it doesn't demand much from 'em.

Chaosman priests, though uncommon, always devote themselves to a chaotic power. Chant says some of the major Xaositect priests are proxies of those powers. Thankfully, the Xaositects don't have too many wizards, either, because studying magic takes a lot of concentration, which most Chaosmen can't manage. However, since magic can add so much chaos to the cosmos, more than a few Xaositects become wild mages. The faction includes a few illusionists, transmuters, and invokers as well, but not many other specialists. A body's well-advised to stay away from any of these spellcasters. A Xaositect with a sword is one thing, but one who can toss fireballs is another matter.

RACE. Not only do the Xaositects not have a human majority, the group hasn't got a majority of anything — just a lot of humans and githzerai, and bariaur, tieflings, and half-elves. The faction also welcomes members from a few dozen other races, from minotaurs to slaadi. A group with no rules to speak of doesn't leave anyone out.

XAOSITECT+ MEMBERSHIP

Joining even this chaotic faction requires following a procedure of sorts. Naturally, this procedure varies. But the one detail that always stays the same is that bashers wanting to join first have to be sponsored by a member.

Usually, the faction member recommending new recruits is a Xaositect high-up, the equivalent to a factor, or the factol. Sure, sometimes a mere namer accepts someone into the faction and no one blinks; other times, a factor gives the go-ahead, and nobody else accepts the new sod, as though in unvoiced accord. There's not much rhyme nor reason to this method, but folks say Chaosmen can sense the chaos (or lack of it) in a new member. A basher who fits in with them just fits, and everybody in the faction knows it instinctively. *(The chant whispers that nobody even had to let Karan in; one day he just showed up in Sigil calling himself a Xaositect, and six weeks later, he was the factol. — Ed.)*

Sometimes a basher has to take a test to join, and sometimes a Xaositect sponsor just says "okay." Some new members had to go through a waiting period or an interview with a few Chaosmen; others had to pay dues or sign statements of intent. One sponsor makes prospective members dress up funny and do barmy stunts. 'Course, a basher who wants to join doesn't necessarily have to do what he's told — sometimes the Xaositect sponsor really wants a refusal.

Once an "official" member, a cutter usually starts wearing the faction symbol, so everyone knows his affiliation. The symbol tells other Chaosmen, "I want to know when someone has a bright idea, so I can get in on the act." 'Course, any faction member can always approach a handful of comrades in chaos and give 'em an idea for something new and interesting to try — but if he doesn't wear the symbol himself, another Xaositect might not know to include him in the fun.

Do Chaosmen have ranks? Well, as usual, the answer is "sometimes." Xaositects form a spontaneous, spastic sort of organization, its members always working at a half-dozen different tasks at once, and ready to drop them all when a new brainstorm hits.

New Chaosmen, or namers, just like to cause chaos and act barmy. Everybody's seen 'em: They make their affiliation an excuse for bizarre actions, seem willing to try literally anything, and can't stick with one thing for more than five minutes. They'll work for themselves or anybody with an interesting idea, regardless of its consequences. Thing is, namers try to be chaos, rather than be a part of chaos. Though they wear their faction symbols like badges, namers don't get much respect.

Once in a while, a namer'll catch a clue and advance to the equivalent of a factotum, sometimes called a boss. To become a boss, a basher must win the acceptance of other bosses (as determined by the DM). It's an unstated acceptance, given when a group of bosses latches onto a

namer's notion (like racing around The Lady's Ward tickling folks with an erinyes feather) and run with it. See, any berk can unite a group of namers behind a goal, but only a basher of boss material can motivate higher-ups. A cutter from another faction can recognize bosses by their air of leadership, as well as by their small groups of followers. Some will stick with a boss for quite a while, happily caught in the eddies of someone else's chaos, but others come and go.

As they grow more and more attuned to the chaos around them, some bosses eventually move up in the ranks. (Again, the DM decides whether to promote a character, an advance not necessarily related to level. — Ed.) These folks become *big bosses*: more or less the equivalent of factors in other factions. Big bosses really marshal the chaos around them. They act a lot like regular bosses, bringing groups of Xaositects together for specific purposes. But a perceptive cutter might tell that big bosses work with more skill in chaos than mere bosses, and that they can gather bigger groups of followers. Fact is, big bosses get regular bosses to go out and gather groups together for particular tasks. The best compliment a basher can pay a big boss is calling him a "mobile center of disorder."

Maybe a half-dozen big bosses live in Sigil and elsewhere, like the town of Xaos on the edge of the Outlands. Some have held factor rank for months or years; others last only an hour or a week. Some prominent ones fill in when Karan gets bored as factol. One well-known big boss is Mordrigaarz Antill. (First detailed in the adventure *The Eternal Boundary*. — Ed.)



MORDRIGAARZ AN+ILL

Male human planar

5th-level fighter, Xaositect (factor)

Chaotic neutral

STR	18/39	INT	10	HP	36
DEX	11	WIS	9	AC	2
CON	15	CHA	12	THACO	16

EQUIPMENT: Field plate armor, two-handed sword +1, dagger, light crossbow, 12 bolts, a bolt +2.

SPECIAL: Mordrigaarz has specialized in the two-handed sword and in punching. In addition to his other fighter and faction abilities, Mordrigaarz can use *item*, as the 3rd-level wizard spell, once per day.

The muscle-bound Mordrigaarz grew up in the town of Xaos. He came to Sigil in his teens, less than a decade ago, looking for adventure. He found some — he joined the Chaosmen. Before two weeks had passed, he was a boss. The faction recognized him as a big boss recently, after he rounded up Chaosmen in the Hive to defend their turf when a lot of local barmies and bubbers were being kidnapped. (When Hivers started goin' missing in *Eternal*

Boundary, Mordrigaarz decided nobody but the Xaositects had the right to mess with 'em. — Ed.)

WE DÖN'T HAVE
INTERNAL CÖNFLIC+.

WE ARE CÖNFLIC+.

— MORDRIGAARZ AN+ILL,
BIG BOSS

The fighter

figured that if he randomly thrashed anyone he didn't know, eventually he'd find the one responsible. It worked well enough for other Xaositects to start paying him more attention.

While not a bad guy, Mordrigaarz, like most in his faction, tends to leap before he looks. He enjoys brawling and goes out of his way to start fights. He seems to get involved in quite a lot of them, too; he makes good use of his brawling skill to protect the

Hive from non-Xaositects. He leads "patrols" whenever he feels like it, recruiting new members and harassing those who don't belong in the area. (Determined by whatever criteria he happens to be using at the time. — Ed.)

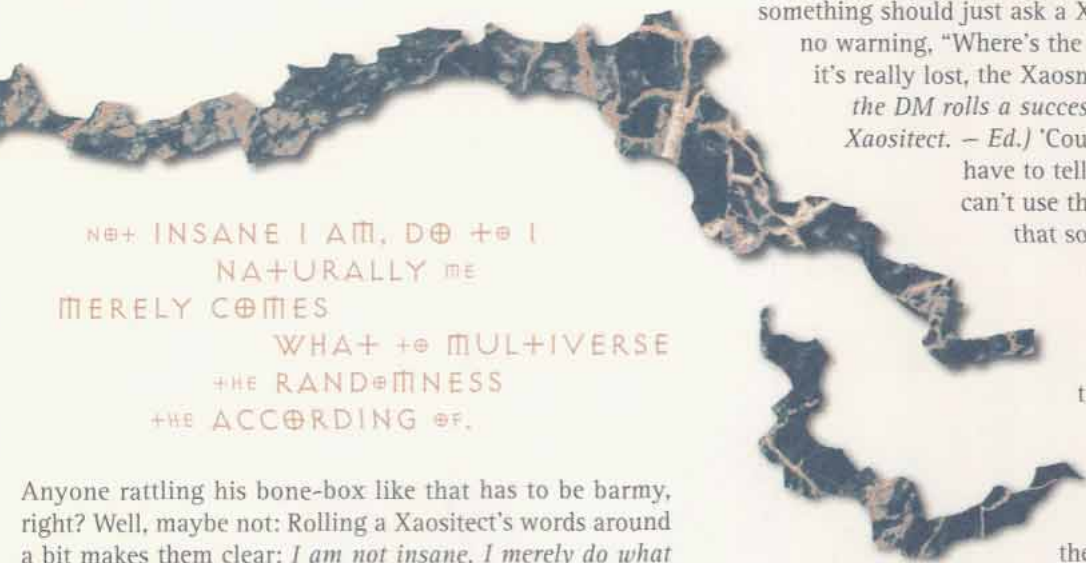
The blood has bulging eyes and unsightly, patchy tufts of dirty blond hair.

FACTION ABILITIES. All Xaositects can use *babble* (the reverse of the wizard spell *tongues*) once a week to confuse all verbal communication within 30 feet. Namers use this ability every chance they get, whether they need to or not.

Boss status gives a blood extra abilities related to chaos. A boss of 5th level or higher always enjoys the protection of *nondetection* (as the wizard spell) from spells cast by lawful wizards or priests. Upon reaching 9th level, a boss can radiate *confusion*, like the wizard spell, once per day in a 20-foot radius. The effects last 2d6 rounds; any lawful characters in the area of effect receive -2 penalties to their saving throws.

Big bosses gain special abilities beyond those of regular bosses. The DM determines this ability: The cutter might have the power of a *wand of wonder* once a day, find himself able to *alter self* three times a day, or even become subject to *alter self* at random times with no control. He might suddenly discover he can use a power similar to the spell *item* or *minor creation* three times a day or gain a constant *unseen servant* (per the wizard spell). DMs should base abilities on a character's personality and skills, taking care not to make the PC the center of power in a campaign. And change the ability from time to time. That's the way chaos works: Nothing stays the same for long.

All faction members also enjoy a couple of other powers, to varying degrees.



NB+ INSANE I AM, DΘ +Θ I
NATURALLY ME
MERELY COMES
WHAT +Θ MUL+IVERSE
+HE RANDΘMNESS
+HE ACCORDING ΘF.

Anyone rattling his bone-box like that has to be barmy, right? Well, maybe not: Rolling a Xaositect's words around a bit makes them clear: *I am not insane, I merely do what comes naturally to me, according to the randomness of the multiverse*. When Xaositects use this scramblespeak, they twist all the words of a sentence out of order. Another Xaositect can understand the talk if he makes a successful Intelligence check. Most cutters just muddle through, but, to interpreters of scramblespeak, Xaositect bloods can sound downright erudite.

Namers try to use the Xaositects' scrambled syntax ability, but they ain't too good at it; they can reverse a few sentences, or mix up a short one. Still, they keep trying. A lot. A boss can use strings of full sentences of scramble-speak — but only part of the time. If he used it all the time, namers couldn't understand him. (But if he never scrambled his syntax, namers'd understand him all the time, and either good no, that's.) 'Course, big bosses speak scrambled whenever they want.

YES+ERDAY, I WAS WALKING
ΘU+ ΘF +HIS HIVE +AVERN.
COMPLAINING +HA+ I'D
LΘS+ MY FAVORITE RING.
THEN, +HIS XAΘSI+ECT+
ACROSS THE S+REET+
YELLS +Θ ME,
"IT'S BEHIND YΘUR WASHBASIN!"
WHEN I GΘ+ HΘME, I CHECKED.
IT WAS +HERE.

One odd thing about the Xaositects: They know where things are. Some folks have a disorderly living area but know exactly where they keep everything. Xaositects, with their inner sense of chaos, know where the whole multiverse keeps everything. If a body loses something, he could do worse than ask a Xaositect where it is.

'Course, Chaosmen who *try* to find something doom themselves to failure. They aren't any good at searching, only at knowing. Here's how it works: A basher who lost something should just ask a Xaositect straight out, with no warning, "Where's the sword I lost last week?" If it's really lost, the Xaosman might know where. (If the DM rolls a successful Wisdom check for the Xaositect. — Ed.) 'Course, the Chaosman doesn't have to tell anyone. Also, a character can't use this ability to find an object that someone deliberately placed somewhere. See, that ain't really lost. The only way the player character can find a stolen item is if the thief himself lost it.

Xaositects with the best such instincts are the ones closest to achieving oneness with the force of disorder. The DM should modify the Xaositect's ability check based on the character's rank in the faction. (A namer might suffer a -3 penalty to his Wisdom score for the check, while a big boss gets a +3 bonus. — Ed.) DMs also might modify the roll based on effective role-playing.

Still, characters seeking information on lost items might not get exactly the answers they expect from a Chaosman. Sometimes, a faction member rattles off an object's exact location: "It's five feet directly in front of the side door of the Black Sails, in the Lower Ward in Sigil." Other times, the Xaositect gives only the amount of detail needed ("It's behind your washbasin") or offers just a general answer ("It's near a tree"). The Xaositect can decide himself how accurate to make his response, or the DM might base the accuracy and depth of the answer on the character's rank in the faction.

◆ THE CHANT ◆

Some bashers feed folks the chant that all Xaositects are barmy. See, most berks can't tell the difference between loony and chaotic. A chaotic basher doesn't see or hear things that aren't there – but he might suddenly remember something from an hour, a day, or a year ago, and comment on it. A Xaositect won't have more than one personality – but he might seem to change with the time of day. And truth is, both barmies and Xaositects speak in rhyme, say things that don't make sense, or sit and laugh for an hour. A real loon at his tavern job might seem completely normal one moment, then leap up among the dishes and start to howl the next – and so might a Chaosman. Sometimes it's tough to tell the difference between 'em, and sometimes there *ain't* a difference; a Xaositect can go barmy like anyone else, 'cept it'd take longer for anyone to notice.

Xaositects *know* they seem crazy to other people, and they use it to their advantage. Most knights of the cross-trade, given the choice, would rather bob a strong warrior than a skinny barmy, because at least they can guess how the warrior will react; barmies and Xaositects are unpredictable. If a Harmonium patrol comes by to pick up the chant, will the Hardheads ask a Xaositect? Not likely, 'cause they know the Xaositect won't make sense. Smart Xaositects don't make sense any more than they need to.

One of the faction's latest bits of craziness is the ongoing painting campaign. A while back, a Chaosman up and decided she wanted to paint. She *really* wanted to paint. For weeks she went quietly along decorating anything in the Cage that caught her fancy: sides of inns, trees, roads, anything. Some days she produced beautiful representational works, and others she'd frantically spatter pigment in a colorful rain. It didn't take long for a few other faction members to catch on to this hobby of hers: Soon she was leading a whole platoon of artists. Their most recent work was the grand

mural on the wall of the Great Gymnasium. 'Course, the Ciphers loved the result, but another faction might not be so receptive to Xaositect art. Word is The Painter (PI/♀ tiefling/B3/Xaositect/CG) and her troops plan on visiting the Hall of Speakers next, to do a little "touching up" to that big statue in front of the Hall.

◆ THE DM'S DARK ◆

A group of Chaosmen following a big boss named Kalvis-talk (PI/♂ minotaur/F8/Xaositect/CN) has hit on the idea of pretending to recruit new members, with the dark intent of driving 'em barmy with chaos. Seems they go about in small groups, attracting normal sods to join the faction. They lure their victims off to a quiet place for "initiation," then they rattle their bone-boxes at 'em for hours, infecting them with chaos until they're barmy. Then the bloods run off, laughing riotously. They don't always make themselves out as Xaositects, either; fact is, they love making their victims think they're about to join the Sensates or Harmonium. 'Course, if a body questions the faction members involved in this peel, some of 'em deny it, and some say they did it. Most of them change their answers the next time they're asked.

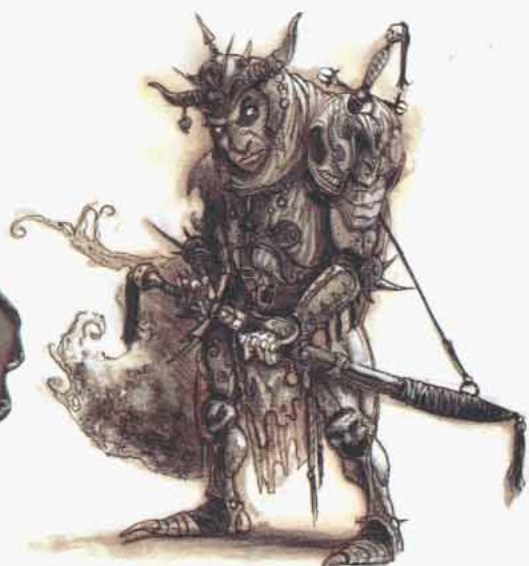
One phenomenon has proved true over and over again regarding the Xaositects: The more of 'em that get together, the greater the likelihood of some unexpected event happening. As a rule of thumb, each Xaositect present in a given situation adds 5% to the chance of an event occurring – and usually a violent one. The Xaositects might start a skirmish among themselves, or a handful of them might pick a fight with a squad of Hardheads. They could even decide to tear out the walls of whatever room they happen to occupy at the time.

Or they might take up finger painting for an afternoon. Who knows?



ake his own fate.
eak sod's crutch.

— Rowan Darkwood,
Factol of the Fated



ning of the multiverse — it doesn't
omes and look within for truth;
e'll just drive you barmy.

— Lihar,
Factol of the Bleak Cabal

Factols are for fascists. Crush the factions
— they're all corrupt. Break 'em and rebuild.
That's the only way to find the truth.
— Anonymous Member of the Revolutionary League



...ace is our goal. But if it takes a little war
...get others to see things our way, so be it.
...at's how we'll reach the golden age of
...iversal harmony.

— Sarin,
Factol of the Harmonium

When min
action an

Factol op



Eh? I ain't no factol and this ain't no t
only a soddin' idiot shackles himself to
blind ideology. Nobody's got a key to th
truth, and nobody tells me what to do. Got it
— Zordo,
So-called Member of the Free League



The multiverse is a mortuary
Everybody's dead. Some are just
dead than others.





Laws define the multiverse. Most are dark, of course, and some may seem unjust. But laws are laws, and a blood who understands them will gain ultimate power.

— Hashkar,
Factol of the Fraternity of Order



T₀ ERR IS SHAMEFUL,
T₀ PUNISH DIVINE.

— ALISON NILESIA,
FACTOL OF THE MERCYKILLERS





Entropy is ecstasy. The multiverse is supposed to fall apart. We're just here to keep leatherheads from interfering.

— Pentar,
Factol of the Doomguard



A body's got to n
Mercy is just a v

The gods are frauds. The unknowable
truth—perhaps even the one true power
—lies beyond the veil.

—Terrance,
Factol of the Athar



Quit looking for the m
exist. Accept what
everything e



— Darius,
factol of the Sign of One

Welcome to my multiverse.
You're everything I imagined
you'd be.



Chaos is truth, order a delusion. A body's got to embrace
the true randomness of the multiverse to learn its secrets.

— Karam,
factol of the Xaositects
(As Translated by a Gunner)



WE SENTIENTS ALL COME FROM THE SAME
DIVINE CLAY, SHAPED AND RESHAPED AS WE
ASCEND TOWARD GODHOOD. 'COURSE, IF YOU
FAIL THE TESTS, NEXT THING YOU KNOW YOU'RE
AN ABYSSAL FLATCAKE.

— AMBAR VERGROVE,
FACTOL OF THE BELIEVERS OF THE SOURCE

Inhale it. Savor it. Drink with your eyes and
listen with every fiber of your flesh.
Revelations come through experience.

— Erin Montgomery,
Factol of the Society of Sensation



and body are one,
and thought are one.

— Rhys,
the Transcendent Order



action!
come

more

Skall,

between





ACCESSORY

THE FACTOL'S MANIFESTO

by

Tim Beach, Dori Jean Hein, and J.M. Salsbury

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