

PLANESCAPE CAMPAIGN SETTING

CHAPTER 3: FAC+IONS

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The coins hit the table loudly, snapping Tethin from his doze. "Sold! To the man chewing on his feet..." muttered the middle-aged human that was his companion for the evening, a Xaositect called Barking Wilder. Tethin glanced around the tavern and frowned at the indications of its closing. He had spent most of the day with the Xaositect, who had been given high recommendations from his contacts in the Cage. Barking Wilder supposedly had a knack for finding the dark of things, even prophecies, from whatever madness he lived in. Tethin had carried out the instructions exactly as he was told, approaching the strange man with a bowl of clean water, dropping three copper pieces into the bowl, and placing it before the Xaositect while asking his question. The odd human seemed to acknowledge Tethin's request, nodding as he dipped his fingers into the water and began tracing lines across the wooden table. Thinking the Xaositect meant to communicate through the trails of water, Tethin had quickly sat at the table, taking out his writing instruments and sketching the patterns down. Several hours later, Tethin had long ago given up attempts to decipher any meaning from the "writings", and the Xaositect seemed to have lost interest in his bowl, now nearly empty. Tethin was considering why the man was called Barking Wilder when he hadn't made a single bark, hardly a noise at all in fact, the entire day as the sound of clattering coins broke him from his musing.

Tethin sat up in his chair and leaned over the table, taking in the array of coins scattered across the table. Nearly two dozen in number, each of the silver coins bore the symbol of a faction, and Tethin mentally noted that one coin depicted the Lady, and a few bore symbols he did not recognize. Muttering to himself, Barking Wilder began pushing the coins around with a long finger, staring at the display intently. Just as Tethin thought to pick up his notebook again, the Xaositect scowled and swiped his arms across the table, picking the coins up and dropping them back into a small leather pouch. Tethin sighed and sat back in his chair. His colleagues had extensively studied the properties of Sigil for years with little conclusive results. Having similarly failed in his attempts, Tethin was now certain understanding of the city's wards, which seemed to defy all known magical and natural laws, could only be obtained through study of the chaotic energies that flowed through the city. Thus his research had led him to believe Barking Wilder, who was said to be one of the oldest Xaositects in the city (though that hardly said much, Tethin thought wryly), might make a good lead. Now he was beginning to question his "reliable sources".

Once again he was disrupted from his thoughts as Barking Wilder overturned the pouch, sending the coins dancing across the table. Tethin watched carefully as the coins bounced and swirled, the spinning coins mesmerizing him as he unconsciously calculated their speeds and angles. Something seemed wrong with how the coins moved, but try as he might he couldn't figure it out. The very notion of the coins' randomness irritated him...there was a pattern to their fall, just as there was a pattern to everything. It was only a matter of finding it... Realizing that the coins had ceased their motion, he scrawled their positions into his notebook, silently noting that they vaguely formed a ring...

Barking Wilder swept up the coins and immediately dropped them onto the table again. Tethin watched the coins carefully, leaving his hands to scribe his train of thought. The coins' movement wasn't right at all; they seemed to bounce higher and produce more noise than an object of their apparent size and weight should. He rapidly calculated their velocities, rate of attraction, and numerous other factors. Formulas flowed through his mind, filling his vision and causing him to forget completely about the Xaositect next to him. The answer was just out of his reach, an underlying principle obscured by meaningless variables. Algorithms stretched across the table like strands of silk, tying the faction symbols together, a web of action and reaction, an endless pattern of lies. It was all there, laid out before him in strings of acronyms and numbers. All leading to the same conclusion, all leading to the...Tethin jumped to his feet, stumbling back over his seat, hurriedly pouring his thoughts into his notebook lest they be forgotten in his haste. Wait until his peers on Mechanus saw his work! They'd promote him directly to factor...maybe even factol! What would be his first



proclamation? Bah, enough time for that later, just need to get back to that portal. He still had that portal key in his coat somewhere...

Tethin was halted suddenly as someone grabbed his arm. He swung around in alarm, instinctively jerking his arm away. Barking Wilder slunk back, shook his head, and said "To dark meant not some spilled be". Tethin scowled at the babbling, unruffled his sleeves, and turned out the tavern, madly scribbling notes down. He didn't bother to watch where he was going, trusting his feet to lead him home. He didn't notice the unusual silence in the streets of Sigil at this hour, only vaguely saw the large shadow fall over him.

Back at in the tavern, Barking Wilder smiled serenely, drinking the last of the water from the bowl.

Understanding the Factions

Newcomers to the planes often view the factions as planar-based organizations. A canny prime might call them cults, and they're not far off. Factions are formed around some widely held belief - some philosophy alluring enough to unite people across multiple planes. Especially in the Outer Planes, where belief is often a tangible force, factions hold a significant amount of power due largely to their size and the strength of their ideals. The beliefs of a large group can influence reality, changing the multiverse to suit their mindset, after all. Fervent believers gain abilities related to their perspective and a profound action by a great number of like minds could cause the nature of an entire plane to change. Thus, most factions espouse a viewpoint that is also a path to either power, understanding of the multiverse, or simply the meaning of life. Of course, most of the factions aren't content to sit back and argue the finer points of belief; rather, they are devoted to convincing the rest of the multiverse to see things their way. Planars that have some grievance against the factions might call them "philosophers with clubs", and the truth of that statement is many of the factions are willing to do whatever it takes to prove that they're right. None have made a decisive victory, but competition for the hearts and minds of the planes has always been fierce, and those that stop trying are often lost under the weight of more infectious viewpoints.

Most factions act as a network of people to support those that hold the same ideals, providing strongholds or hangouts that any faction member can call home. This provides members with contacts, resources, and even protection they likely couldn't achieve on their own. Individual members are likewise expected to provide mutual support for fellow factioneers. After all, the multiverse has always been filled with forces that want their viewpoint universally accepted. There isn't much room for factions that can't hold their own in the quiet war for the minds of the planes; if a faction can't stand up and spread the word or fight for what they stand for, their days are numbered. Not all factions have had to battle for their existence, however. Some simply have goals, ideas, or beliefs that are so universally appealing across the planes that they fail to vanish, even if their members seem apathetic to their cause.

Over time, the number of factions and even the very definition of the word "faction" have changed drastically, much to the frustration of those that seek to define these planar groups. What you'll find here is the most recent description of what a faction is and what it means to be a member of one. Until recently, the center of faction activity and recruiting was in Sigil. Even now, the majority of Cagers are faction members of some sort, and planars across the multiverse are beginning to sign up in increasing numbers as the factions strengthen their influence abroad. Joining a faction normally equates to improvement in a body's life, but the web of politics and intrigue the factions spin across the multiverse is enough to catch anyone in the mix. Proper understanding of the extent of faction conflict can only be truly understood by examining their history.

Brief History of the Factions



Many factions are quite old - dating back centuries or even millennia. If there's folk that can remember a time that they didn't shake the planes, they haven't been doing a lot of talking. Over time, various factions have come and gone, splintered and merged, risen to fame and fallen to infamy. The primary target of most factions' influence has been Sigil, due to its access to virtually every corner of the multiverse. If one could control the City of Doors, they would then be in a position to influence all of the planes at once. Failing that, Sigil still enabled the factions to spread their message to the numerous planars and primes moving through the city every day.

Over six hundred years ago, there were roughly fifty-two factions in Sigil. Few were as organized or as large as the factions today, but they were powerful enough to engage in the *kriegstanz*. The *kriegstanz* was a war, both overt and covert, to undermine every other faction and influence the minds of Sigil. The conflict was so intense that fierce battles became common in the streets, catching both factioneers and bystanders in the crossfire. With several factions espousing fanatical or opposing viewpoints, it seemed the war wouldn't end until one side managed to wipe out all the opposition. However, it was Sigil's overseer, the Lady of Pain, that brought an abrupt end to the conflict, making her will known by sending her servants, the dabus, to each faction with a message:

“By the order of the Lady of Pain, there will be but fifteen factions in Sigil. Organize thy colors in a fortnight - or die.”

After two weeks of turmoil the number of factions within Sigil had dropped to fifteen. Some fled Sigil, while others dissolved entirely. The stubborn died horribly, presumably at the hand of the Lady of Pain, indirectly or otherwise. Over ten thousand died, and it seemed the *kriegstanz* had finally ended with what would become known as the Great Upheaval. It had simply entered a new phase, however, as the remaining factions gradually took control of Sigil's institutions and competed for control of the city.

Veterans of the Upheaval

The fifteen factions widely believed to have survived the Great Upheaval include the Athar, Believers of the Source, Bleak Cabal, Discordant Opposition, Doomguard, Dustmen, Fated, Fraternity of Order, Free League, Revolutionary League, Sign of One, Society of Sensation, and the Transcendent Order. The Mercykillers would form from the unification of two other factions during the Upheaval - the Sodkillers and the Sons of Mercy. The Discordant Opposition would eventually become known as the Xaositects, and the Harmonium later moved to Sigil from the Prime Material Plane. The more paranoid recorders of Sigil history, however, often question this list. After all, the exact events of the Great Upheaval were poorly recorded at best, as the chaos and panic that occurred prevented anyone from gaining a clear perspective of what transpired. Some claim a few factions, such as the Fated, Sign of One, or Society of Sensation were actually more recent than is popularly believed, and that they displaced other factions after the Upheaval itself. Others think the Harmonium existed on the planes long before its recorded arrival, and engineered the downfall of some predecessor. Though it seems unlikely, these rumors and suppositions help underpin the skepticism regarding the accuracy of even more reliable sources such as the Fraternity of Order or the Society of Sensation.

Many died during the Great Upheaval, but even more died afterwards, some by the initial conflicts between the surviving factions, and others through more mysterious causes such as diseases and disappearances. Many of the now displaced factions (thereafter called “sects”) struck out against the entrenched factions within the city, making the city's already difficult transition more so. Though it's widely agreed that the original *kriegstanz* was worse, some revisionists believe that the Great Upheaval actually caused more deaths than it supposedly saved. Whatever the case, it's unanimously agreed that, for good or ill, the Great Upheaval



occurred in line with the Lady's wishes, and that whatever goal she had was fulfilled. Indeed, Sigil would become much more stable over the next century, gaining a structure that both served the needs of the city and enabled the factions to continue the *kriegstanz*, albeit more covertly. However, this new order would only last for a little over six hundred years. Though the current state of affairs would come to be taken for granted, tension was steadily building and things were in for a change - and in a big way.

The Faction War

Roughly five years ago, the factions had devolved to the point where they could no longer exist in harmony. Though Sigil had been running efficiently for centuries, hatred fueled by the never-ending cycle of quiet conflict had set the scene for another full-blown war. Some factions were forcefully undermining other factions, while others broke Sigil's laws on a daily basis. What was once idealism had become well-honed fanaticism, and the balance of power shifted back and forth like a swinging pendulum. Old grudges had simmered for centuries, and it was only a matter of time before people stopped being civil and decided to settle things the bloody way. It wouldn't have taken much to spark a war, but what Sigil got was *several* such sparks only days apart, and soon Sigil was gripped in a civil war that rocked its very foundations.

Everything started with the Harmonium and Doomguard, as both groups suspected each other of preparing an attack. What truth there was to the rumors is hard to say, even today, but the tension such hearsay caused was quite real. When Pentar, the factol of the Doomguard, suddenly vanished, the Doomguard blamed the Harmonium and Society of Sensation, shouting accusations loudly across Sigil. The Harmonium in turn accused the Doomguard of violating their ancient edict against sparking a war, and demanded the Doomguard relinquish the Armory to the Harmonium. Naturally, the Doomguard balked, but it would be weeks later before the conflict would come to arms.

Soon thereafter, the varied leaders of the Free League and Revolutionary League would come together and accused the Harmonium of wrongdoing, though the Anarchists also added the Mercykillers and Fraternity of Order to their accusations. At the request of Nilesia, the Mercykillers were put under the control of Duke Rowan Darkwood, factol of the Fated, for reasons that remain a mystery. Most agree that Nilesia was somehow duped, though the exact circumstances are still hotly debated. In any case, Nilesia vanished soon thereafter. Many Mercykillers refused to serve Darkwood, while others were simply bewildered by the turn of events. The faction began to splinter, falling into disarray, and within only days it would cease to be an effective force in planar politics. Meanwhile the Doomguard began to gather allies, distributing weapons in order to build an army against the Harmonium.

Factols kept vanishing - both Ambar Vergrove and Darius "ascended" shortly thereafter, at least according to the Godsmen and Signers at the time. Terrance of the Athar also disappeared, and that faction brought suspicion against both the Sign of One and the local churches. Karan would be captured by the Harmonium and subsequently vanish, bringing the Xaositects to the side of the "Enemies of Peace" as the Harmonium called them. Shortly thereafter the Hardheads' factol, Sarin, would die in an Anarchist assassination. Only levelheaded leadership in the Harmonium prevented a riot, and the Hardheads began to plan an attack on the Doomguard. Finally, the Mercykillers split into its two predecessors, becoming the Sons of Mercy and the Sodkillers. A few diehard Mercykillers remained, but they failed to reorganize into a faction proper. The Sons of Mercy would go on to release those they thought unjustly imprisoned in Sigil's prisons. It's said that a number of those released were killers or worse, though the Martyrs have protested that they were not responsible for their release to this day. That same day, Anarchists performed a vicious attack on a Sensate bar that prompted the Sensates to swiftly ally with the "Oppressors of Sigil". Meanwhile, the Doomguard sought allies with the Bleak Cabal. The Bleakers, true to their nature, refused and opted for neutrality

in the upcoming conflict. The Free League, on the other hand, eagerly jumped at the chance for an alliance against the Harmonium, seeking revenge for years of oppression. Eventually the Sons of Mercy allied with the Sensates and the Harmonium, while the Sodkillers, looking for an excuse to fight someone, sided with the Doomguard. Open war was imminent. The final catalyst hit when a Xaositect slew Factol Hashkar of the Fraternity of Order.

The first battle of the war was known as the Battle of the Armory. Giving no formal warning, the "Oppressors of Sigil" staged an assault on the Armory. The "Enemies of Peace" mounted a defense, but were eventually overwhelmed due to their lack of organization. Several backfiring Doomguard weapons ended up destroying the Armory, and the Sinkers suffered massive losses in the ensuing destruction. Still, it was far from a decisive victory, and sizable losses occurred on both side. Soon thereafter, the Fraternity of Order, Sign of One, and Believers of the Source allied with the Harmonium and the other "Oppressors of Sigil", while the Athar joined the Doomguard and the other "Enemies of Peace".

Things rapidly deteriorated as the Indeps and the Chaosmen staged a counterattack on the Civic Festhall. However, upon receiving prior warning, the Hardheads, Martyrs, and Sensates were able to build their defenses in the Lower Ward. The battle that ensued there remained a stalemate until tanar'ri forces began pouring into the city, believing this was their chance to take Sigil finally. Almost immediately, a baatezu force arrived to fight the tanar'ri in response. There was no victor of this conflict - all of the forces simply lost numbers, with no appreciable gain or loss, the only exception being a surprise attack by Sodkillers and some tanar'ri on the Festhall, which led to the slaughter of many holed up inside. Similarly, a much smaller conflict erupted between the Lost and the Signers, which resulted in the destruction of the Shattered Temple, but the Athar were nonetheless able to drive the Signers from their base.

Suddenly, at the height of the chaos, Sigil's portals ceased working. Riots for food and water immediately began. The less stable threw themselves off the edges of Sigil, tumbling away to destinations unknown. While the fiendish invasion was cutoff, it almost seemed that the panic and fury of Sigil's citizenry would destroy the city anyway. However, the sudden appearance of nearly every member of the Transcendent Order brought relative peace to the city as they worked to calm the populace and aid them in their time of need. Anarchists, however, in one final act of retribution against the Bleak Cabal for remaining neutral, infiltrated the Gatehouse and freed many of the inmates there.

The war ended without any more ado, with no real winners, no new rulers of Sigil. Too spent to continue fighting, and not driven enough to truly consider mutual destruction, the factions signed a truce. It was another bold step by the Lady of Pain, however, that truly ended the Faction War. Once again, her dabus issued an ultimatum:

"This city tolerates your faction no longer. Abandon it or die."

Though vague, there was no disputing Her Serenity's words. The factions left the city's institutions they had maintained for centuries, leaving private and public organizations to rise to take their place. Some buildings that once served as faction headquarters were taken by private entrepreneurs, while others were made public facilities. The Athar, Doomguard, Fated, Fraternity of Order, Harmonium, and the Revolutionary League all chose to leave Sigil and regroup on their respective planes. Meanwhile the Bleak Cabal, Dustmen, Free League, Society of Sensation, Transcendent Order, and the Xaositects simply renounced their faction status while changing little about their beliefs or activities. The Believers of the Source and the Sign of One decided to merge into the Mind's Eye, and moved the majority of their faction to the Outlands. Finally, the Sodkillers and the Sons of Mercy, under the guise of guilds, both took it upon themselves to fill the void in Sigil's law enforcement. The portals reopened, but with their destinations and keys changed entirely. This became known as the Tempest of Portals, and with it, the factions left Sigil.



In the aftermath, it became abundantly clear that more factols were missing than previously assumed - in fact, Factol Rhys of the Transcendent Order is the only survivor. Rumors began spreading that factol Rowan Darkwood of the Fated's manipulations were responsible for starting the war. Much of the city became consumed with "faction fever" as Cagers tried to gather as much information on the departed factions as possible. Various conspiracy theories began to circulate blaming different forces for the disappearances of the factols, including Darkwood, Rhys, the Daughters of Light, the Eschaton, and the Lady of Pain herself. In retrospect, most assume the Lady to be the most likely suspect. After all, she's the only one with enough power and seeming reason to have done so, but ultimately there's no real evidence to support this theory. The disappearance of the factols remains, for the most part, a mystery.

Faction Mechanics

"After the Faction War, a lot of bashers assumed that because the factions were banished from Sigil, they weren't going to have influence on the planes anymore. Of course, today we know this to be entirely false - by forcing the factions out of Sigil, they retreated back to places suitable to their beliefs and concentrated their efforts there, where they grew far faster than they ever did in Sigil. All of this seems obvious in retrospect, but bear in mind the factions were relatively quiet as they healed their wounds compared to before the Faction War. By the time the factions started to gain real power in the Outer Planes, enough that they actually started infringing on the powers' spheres of influence, it was already too late.

"Greybeards always wonder how the Blood War started; I think what we're looking at now is the potential beginning of a similar conflict, but this time I don't think any of the planes will be safe from it. Of course, things had begun to unfold some five years after the Faction War..."

- Portiale, zenythri scholar, four years hence

Aside from the myriad advantages granted in game by being a member of a faction, characters have the option of training in and developing abilities specific to each faction. *The Planescape Campaign Setting* uses feats and prestige classes to represent the various paths faction members take. These can be gained by the standard rules with the additional condition that the character must currently be a member of one of the prerequisite factions. During character creation players may choose to start in any faction. Otherwise, players cannot simply join or leave a faction. The process must be role-played in game as described below.

A character may only be a member of one faction at a time and may only take feats from one faction - if for some reason a character should end up a member of two factions (such as if they are a spy), only one membership counts for purposes of feat and prestige class selection. Furthermore, even if a character is a member of a faction, they aren't considered a true member of a faction unless they back up that membership with belief. A DM is in their right to restrict faction membership or abilities based on a character's actions, and provide repercussions for those that go "against the grain" in a faction. Should a character lose membership in a faction, or otherwise indicate to the DM that their character has completely lost faith in the ideals of the faction, any feats or abilities granted by prestige classes that are indicated to be Faction-Dependent cease to function. Other class features, such as base attack and increased saving throws, remain. The character may regain lost abilities by rejoining the faction (almost always a difficult process) or joining another faction that also offers those abilities.

One additional perk of being a faction member is that factioneers look after their own and react well to those of like-mind. Thus, faction members gain a +2 circumstance bonus on any Charisma-based skill check when interacting with members of the same faction. This only



applies if both parties are aware of each other's faction membership.

Joining a Faction

For some factions, joining isn't very hard - just put on the faction symbol and walk around pretending like you belong. That won't work out well with the more lawful groups like the Harmonium or Fraternity of Order, but factions like the Free League don't mind. Truly belonging, however, requires two things: belief and recognition of that belief. The only real way to prove one's belief is through actions, and so most factions take into account the doings of any would-be member. If they don't seem to be in accord with their credo, they may set additional requirements. This could be an induction ritual, a mission to prove one's loyalty, or even a hazing of one sort or another. Ultimately, most factions will watch a new member closely after joining. If they don't seem suited to the beliefs and activities of the faction, or if they embody the beliefs in an improper manner, chances are they'll be kicked out unless they're lucky or know someone important.

Most of the time, gaining membership in a faction is the task of the would-be member, and it's up to a factotum of the faction to recognize that fact. Often that factotum becomes a mentor to the new namer, guiding them and bringing them closer into the fold. In some factions, recruitment is extremely informal. For example, a Transcendent Order factotum will simply watch a would-be Cipher and make a personal judgment as to whether the person can follow their path. On the other hand, joining the Harmonium requires showing up for several recruitment meetings, and if judged worthy, going on to eight weeks of training in Arcadia. On occasion a faction will seek out an individual they think is suited to their ideals. This typically only happens when a faction notices someone they think essentially complements their belief system already or a faction has some definite gain to be made by courting a would-be member.

This isn't to say the factions don't recruit - it's just rare that they target an individual. Indeed, recruitment flyers, posters, and criers can be seen throughout the gate-towns and planar cities, particularly close to various factions' spheres of influence. Recruiters wander the Great Ring, trying to win the allegiance of the unaligned through words or deeds, whichever seems likely to work at the time. Where Sigil was once the center of such activity, most recruiters keep their activities quiet in the Cage these days, relying on subtle hints and suggestions to get their message across. Few are brave enough to test the Lady's word, even five years after the fact. There's always the occasional disappearance that could be attributed to pushing Her too far. However a faction goes about it, the *kriegstanz* continues, make no mistake. Almost every faction wants your mind on their side, and the war for belief needs soldiers.

Faction Ranks

Despite their extreme differences in activities and outlook, most factions ascribe to largely the same ranking system. Of course, how rank is achieved and what it means is entirely different from faction to faction. Higher rank may or may not confer authority, but it always confers increased responsibility to the faction. In general, higher rank means one will be sent on more important missions for the faction, oversee the activities of lesser-ranking members, and act as a worthy example for those seeking to advance in the faction's philosophy.

The initial rank for everybody new to a faction is **namer**. Namers are typically uninvolved in the day-to-day operations of a faction, but provide grassroots support for the movement. The simple act of namers believing is enough for most factions, though they often help pass relevant tidbits of information on to more dedicated factioneers, or provide small services like a subtle discount or a place for other faction members to rest. They also serve as mouthpieces, spreading the word of their faction and occasionally even recruiting. Though namers might be called upon for the occasional mission, they are well within their rights to refuse direct orders



or requests from high-ups, even among the lawful factions. Of course, refusing is a sure-fire way to remain a namer. Typically, only by helping advance the interests of the faction directly does one advance to the next rank.

Once a namer has proven themselves and has a willingness to work full-time for the faction, the faction may promote a namer to **factotum**. The biggest difference in being a factotum is that one works directly for the faction itself. A number wander the planes, attempting to recruit others into their faction. However, they also fulfill necessary roles in the faction's structure such as guards, spies, record-keepers, soldiers, mages, and so on depending on their skills and the faction's needs. Unlike namers, they're expected to follow orders largely without question, but chances are they'll also be well-provided for. Similarly, faction leaders are unlikely to send them into life-or-death situations (at least unprepared) due to the inherent value in a dedicated believer.

A rare few within a faction advance to the rank of **factor**. Factors serve as the administrators of a given faction, directing factotums, overseeing faction strongholds, and ensuring that the faction's policies are carried out. Groups of factors generally deal with the day-to-day business of running a faction and advancing its ideals. Most factors are based out of the faction's home plane, though a few between all the factions remain in Sigil to direct their factions' subtle presence there. In some factions, it may not be clear as to who the factors are; the Revolutionary League, for example, doesn't advertise their leadership, while the Cipher factors lead by example but rarely give actual orders.

Finally, the top rank in any faction is that of **factol**. Most of the time these are former factors, but rarely a factotum will become popular (or lucky) enough to make the jump from factotum straight to factol. These are the direct and often unquestioned leaders of their respective factions. They direct the entire faction's direction, outlook, and plans. Often they embody the faction's beliefs, serving as examples to namers and factotums alike as to the direction and desires of their faction.

It's important to note that some factions have additional ranks in between. The Harmonium has five levels of ranking, while the Fraternity of Order seems to have a different title and rank for every member. Others have much looser structures, and may or may not have a factol. Notably the Revolutionary League and the Free League traditionally have no factol, and rank has never played a large role among the Transcendent Order or the Xaositects. Still, most folk are inclined to classify faction members by these ranks - it's as much a matter of perception as actual authority.

Changing Factions

Occasionally, someone will decide a faction doesn't really suit them anymore, and leave a given faction. Most that do so are seen as burnouts, folks who either can't make up their mind or can't be trusted to dedicate themselves to anything. They receive both pity and distrust from members of nearly any faction, and it's difficult to join a new faction after abandoning another. Furthermore, many are wary that former faction members might still be serving as spies for their former faction. More fanatical factioneers might reject those that have belonged to other factions on the simple suspicion that others might be "corrupted" by their former beliefs.

A lot of importance is placed in belief, particularly in the Outer Planes, and those that casually discard it are seen as throwing away about the only thing of universal worth on the planes. Those that do change factions typically do so because of some profound experience; rarely does someone set out to change their own beliefs. Most of the time the change stems from some trauma or revelation that changes the person's outlook or ideals deeply. That being said, most movement between factions are done between the more chaotic groups. An embittered



Sensate might join the Bleak Cabal, or a Revolutionary League member that becomes a rebel without a cause might have a better home in the Xaositects. The Free League is about the only faction that regularly welcomes individuals that formerly belonged to another faction.

The Current State of the Factions

While the number of "true factions" is hotly debated - with words in the parlors of the planes, and with fists in the drinking halls - sixteen major factions remain post-Faction War. Now that the factions have been expelled, it remains to be seen whether that number will grow or shrink in time. Of the sixteen, twelve formerly held power in Sigil. New or old, all the factions have been forced to reconsider their position and purpose in the multiverse. Sigil is no longer the objective of every faction, at least for the time being. Many of the factions have been forced to look inward for the first time in centuries, questioning both their goals and their methods, as well how they fit in the rest of planar society. A synopsis of the major factions is included below:

The Athar are most commonly found around the Great Spire in the Outlands, but members also travel with relative frequency to the Astral Plane. They believe the deities are unworthy of worship, and to do so reinforces their subjugation of mortals. To the Lost, deities are just incredibly powerful individuals, but are just as flawed as lesser beings and should not be idolized.

The Bleak Cabal is most commonly found in Pandemonium and its gate-town, Bedlam. It's members believe the multiverse has no purpose or deeper meaning, and every individual must find their own reasons and motivation from within. Though largely humanist in nature, the Bleakers often fall prey to depression and madness due to the implications of their beliefs. They can often be found supporting soup kitchens and other works of relief across the gate-towns and Sigil.

The Doomguard calls the negative Quasielemental Planes its home, though wild rumors place some Sinkers as fortifying in the Abyss as well. Their philosophy revolves around entropy, the force of decay that they believe to be the only constant on the planes. Whether that entropy needs to be assisted or stymied varies from member to member, but they have developed reputation as destruction-mongers.

The Dustmen have their outpost upon the Negative Energy Plane, though a number of them are still active in Sigil's mortuary. They believe that this life is a shadow of real existence, and that everyone has already died and transitioned to this poor substitute. Seeing no value in this life, the Dustmen accept death, and work to prepare themselves for True Death and whatever stage of existence exists beyond it.

The Fated are often found in Ysgard and its gate-town, Glorium. The Takers accept that life is tough, but assert that it's survival of the fittest, and that each individual has the right to do whatever it takes to survive and prosper. The multiverse exists for those that can take it, and those who won't fight for their piece deserve to be shoved aside. The Fated weren't much loved before the Faction War, and now that their former factol is blamed for beginning the war, many across the planes intensely distrust them.

The Fraternity of Order is centered on Mechanus and its gate-town, Automata. Understanding the laws of the multiverse provides influence over it, the Guvners say, and those that learn to exploit these rules will have true power. Their hunger for power is well known, and most folks are watchful of them despite their relatively inoffensive nature.

The Free League is spread evenly around the Outlands and gate-towns, spreading its philosophy of individual independence from the dictates of others. The Indeps believe the



minds of the planes should be free from the thought police of the factions, and allowed to develop their own beliefs. While not advocates of revolution like the Revolutionary League, the Free League has often been persecuted by various groups because of its resistance to authority.

The Harmonium is mainly found in Arcadia and the Upper Planes, enforcing its belief in a unified, planes-wide organization. Peace, the Hardheads say, can only be achieved by getting every person across the planes to believe in the same ideals. Naturally, their beliefs are best suited for the task, so peace requires enlisting everyone into being a member of the Harmonium. While seemingly well meaning, the Hardheads have clearly gotten out of hand on a number of occasions, and people across the planes are often polarized between seeing them as saviors or thugs.

The Mind's Eye is a neophyte organization, largely spread evenly across the Hinterlands of the Outlands. Also known as Seekers or Visionaries, they see the multiverse as a testing ground, a place designed to help one pursue self-discovery and personal growth. Only through this path can individuals move up the latter of existence. The catch is, they tend to perceive their surroundings as their personal playground, and their self-centered quality rivals that of their forebears, the Sign of One and the Believers of the Source.

The Revolutionary League is a loosely knit alliance of various anti-authoritarian cells spread across the planes, with its central holdings in Carceri. The Anarchs seek freedom from authority, and the total liberation of the planes from high-ups and hierarchies. Only once the chains of society are cast down will everyone be free to find the truth of the multiverse. Anarchists to a fault, they are rarely trusted. On the other hand, they often find alliances with the oppressed and dispossessed.

The Ring-Givers are a rapidly growing faction from Ysgard and now based in Sigil. Focused on freeing themselves from debt and reliance, the Bargainers believe that by coveting material possessions and convincing ourselves they are necessary, we become beholden to them. True freedom, they say, can only be found by giving everything up. Likewise, by giving everything you've got to the multiverse, the multiverse will be persuaded to act in kind. Though most folks laugh at the idea of tossing power or riches away, it can't be denied that they often seem to end up on top of many deals.

The Society of Sensation is based out of Arborea, where it demonstrates its philosophy that experience equals power. That doesn't mean simply length or depth of experience (though those are nice), but breadth. The Sensates believe experiencing something is the only way to understand it, and so to understand the multiverse one must expose oneself to as much of its experiences as possible.

The Sodkillers are based out of Acheron, and believe firmly that violence is the solution to all life's problems. Whatever the trouble, a suitable amount of force properly utilized will resolve the matter. While not exactly popular, they've come to gain a significant amount of respect and power in Sigil because of the obvious effectiveness of their tactics.

The Sons of Mercy are a well-meaning group of white knights hailing from Bytopia, traveling across the planes on a mission to demonstrate the best qualities of good. While recognizing the role of laws in protecting the well-being of a community, the Martyrs feel that because law is corruptible, it should not be a hindrance in achieving the greater good. Likewise, they realize evil is counterproductive to peace in the multiverse, but believe that the best way to promote good is by living as an example and helping individuals reform. While noble, a gentle approach isn't always an effective one, and this has earned them a reputation as idealistic fumbler.

The Transcendent Order centers in the serene locale of Elysium, seeking to attain unity of mind and thought. Deliberation and hesitation are flaws from the standpoint of their members,



and the Ciphers believe that by purifying action into instinct one can discover their role in the multiverse. That role often brings them into the center of conflicts as a mediating force, bringing balance and calm to otherwise unstable situations.

The Xaositects are everywhere, but find their natural home is Limbo. Chaotic in the extreme, they think that disorder is the true state of the multiverse, and the only state worth seeking. True freedom and strength can only be found by loosing the shackles of reason and conformity according to their example, if not precisely their teachings. Most people simply think them mad, and often the Xaositects only back that up with their bizarre actions and schemes.

THE ATHAR

Jaya hugged Hobard, who squirmed with discomfort. "Take care of yourself, and keep in touch," she said, holding forth the portal key. A low humming filled the air as a shimmering field of blue energy encompassed the doorway.

The wizened githzerai snorted, a combination of amusement and disgust. "And how am I supposed to do that, with you cowerin' at the base o' the Spire?" Jaya tucked a stray hair behind one ear and looked straight into Hobard's eyes. He could see her compassion and determination, so much like Terrance's.

"There will come a time when the Lost can return to Sigil, Hobard, but our brethren are confused and scared and need a place to feel safe. I can understand your reasons for not coming with us -- please understand why we must go." With a smile and a wink, she vanished through the portal.

Hobard proceeded back along the alley and stopped to stare at the place where the Shattered Temple once stood. Swarms of workers hauled building materials to and fro, the foundation nearly ready for its new temple. The githzerai's eyes narrowed, and crackles of energy danced between his fingertips as he clenched his fists.

"We'll just see how far that fat friar gets with his temple."

The Athar believe that the gods are frauds, unworthy of worship, no matter how powerful they may be. While possessing awesome might and near-limitless resources, gods are not the all-knowing, all-powerful progenitors of the multiverse - they are beings that make mistakes, and they can be killed. The false hierarchy of worshipper and deity serves only to bolster a power's ego and reinforce the inferiority of a worshipper. No, the gods are beyond the understanding of mortals, if they exist at all. What exists now is nothing more than an elaborate scheme that ends up with worshippers getting the short end of the stick. There is enough hardship in a person's life without the need to cater to a power's whims, and the Athar believe it is their duty to inform everyone they don't have to.

Philosophy: The gods are all frauds.

Nicknames: Defiers, the Lost.

Headquarters: The Spire.

Major Races: Bariaur, chaond, half-elves, humans, tieflings, zenythri.

Favored Classes: Ex-clerics, monks, ex-paladins, rangers, druids.

Factol: Jaya Forlorn (NG female human ex-Clr7/Ftr2/Defier5).

Prominent Members: Caylean (CG male tiefling Rgr6), Hobard (CN male githzerai Wiz11/Fist of Divinity2).

Alignment: Any, with chaotic tendencies.

Symbol: Profile of the Spire crowned by a black torus.



Philosophy

The gods are frauds, not because they aren't powerful – they are; there is no denying it – but because they present themselves as more important than all other things in the multiverse. They demand worship and obedience, but they grant only a tiny measure of power to a select group of worshippers, mainly clerics, in exchange for a lifetime of devotion and service. The bulk of the population receives no acknowledgement, let alone benefit, for their piety. Most creatures live and die without knowing if their god truly existed. Such deception is unconscionable and inexcusable, and must cease.

The Athar belief is simple: the powers are not “true” deities. A deity should be above the necessity of mortal worship, should be above all mortal mistakes, and most of all should be above death. If they suffer from these flaws, if they are truly so limited, how can they be the absolute forces that created and guided the multiverse? It simply can't be true. The powers that exist on the Outer Planes (and the few that live elsewhere) must therefore not be gods at all. Of course the Athar aren't blind, deaf, or dumb; they fully acknowledge the strength and ability of the powers. They just don't believe any amount of power short of true godhood is worthy of worship, and they refuse to participate in any act that reinforces their sham.

There is ample evidence the gods are frauds. Druids, paladins, and rangers can duplicate the divine abilities of clerics without swearing fealty to a power, and more and more clerics are surfacing with spell abilities that spring from ideals, philosophies, and other less tangible sources. Indeed, the Athar have clerics within their ranks that draw upon the Great Unknown, a force they believe is beyond the ken of mortals and gods alike. On the Outer Planes the difference between a power and a mortal is even less defined, for everyone with sufficient belief can alter their reality to meet their expectations. Sure, they may not be able to do it with the dazzle of a power, but the process is the same.

Why, then, is the message so hard to deliver? The Outer Planes are home to the gods, and nobody likes being called a liar to their face. While the Athar do their best to not directly provoke the powers (they're not suicidal, after all), sometimes there is no easy way to tell the truth, and the messenger suffers as a result. This is the current state of the Athar, and a great concern for the faction's members. How can one shed light on the truth of the powers, when the powers themselves wish it to remain hidden?

Before the tumultuous events of the Faction War, the Athar used the very nature of Sigil as a buffer between themselves and those they disparaged. *Whispering runes* – talking leaflets that delivered the Athar message to the illiterate – were a main weapon in the faction's war against deific oppression, with the multitude of portals providing a ready means of distribution. Gods could not enter Sigil, and their agents were easy to track and eliminate, so the Lost were secure in their position.

Brief History

History recounts the meeting of two men, Dunn and Ciro, who encountered each other at the location of the Shattered Temple in Sigil and formed a friendship based on their mutual disregard for the powers. The two parted with a solemn vow to find like-minded individuals and bring them back to the ravaged temple, forming the basis for the Athar as they are known today. Disillusioned clerics, dishonored paladins, and discontent commoners swelled the ranks of the Lost, eventually attracting the attention of the Harmonium. A war between the factions ensued, stopped only by the intervention of the Lady of Pain.

This conflict actually served to cement the Athar's factionhood. The reaction of the Harmonium showed the message of fraudulent gods carried weight, and the support of the Lady was seen as an affirmation of that message. The fact that she was extremely powerful and



actively discouraged worship of herself was also a boon to the Lost. Of course, more than just the Harmonium disliked the stance of the Athar; the Fated and the Mercykillers also opposed them. The Takers believed that since the gods could get the worship of mortals, they should be able to; the Red Death simply wanted to avoid adding ultra-powerful beings to a growing list of those deserving of justice.

The Faction War in Sigil dealt the Athar two heavy blows: first, when Factol Terrance disappeared near the beginning of the war, and second, when the Shattered Temple was razed in the war's aftermath. Leaderless and homeless, the Athar rallied around Jaya Forlorn, a young protégée of Terrance's and a cleric of the Great Unknown. Her calming influence coupled with the wisdom of Hobard, an ancient githzerai wizard, helped organize the group for a mass exodus from Sigil when the Lady's decree became known. The factions were no longer allowed to officially operate within the City of Doors, and the Athar could think of only one other place in the multiverse where the gods could not destroy them at their leisure – the base of the Spire. There, all magic would be suppressed, even that of the powers.

The bulk of the faction migrated to the base of the Spire. Hobard and a small group of militant Athar remained in Sigil and moved underground – literally – to plot the return of the faction to strength. One problem that immediately became apparent for the emigrants was the isolation. There was no longer the convenience of a plethora of portals; indeed, the dispossessed Athar had only their feet as reliable transportation for countless miles until the Spire's influence waned. They were secure from their enemies, but they no longer had the means to deliver their message. This both frightened and frustrated many members, and only the leadership of Jaya Forlorn kept the faction from dissolving altogether. The faction has since adopted a new symbol – a profile of the Spire crowned by a black torus – symbolizing the Athar journey from Sigil to the Outlands and their hope to one day return to the City of Doors. Members bear the mark as a tattoo or on an amulet but keep it secret, fearing the wrath of the gods and their servants.

Goals

The current goals of the Athar are twofold. First, they must find some means of continuing to deliver their message that gods are frauds, and second, take back that which was theirs – namely, the Shattered Temple. Jaya concentrates on the first while Hobard focuses on the second, and the two hope to reunite the faction when either goal has been accomplished.

Jaya's attention is currently focused on the Athar's new neighbors, the rilmani. Of particular interest is the Mirrored Library in the city Sum of All; if information on how to accomplish the Athar's goals cannot be found within, then a thorough study of the "mirror magic" might help solve communication and transportation problems. The rilmani are not forthcoming with any information, but they do not bar the Lost from entering the city or the library, so Jaya continues along this line.

Meanwhile Hobard plans a campaign of guerilla warfare aimed at both the Garianis family and the temple of Hades now being constructed where the Shattered Temple once stood. Friar Murlov Garianis, a local crimelord and cleric of Hades, immediately took possession of the Shattered Temple and its surroundings when the Faction War ended, intending to build a grand temple that would elevate his own status and bring the glory of Hades to the masses of Sigil. The Athar consider this action a declaration of war, and no one involved with the temple's construction is safe from the vengeance of the Lost.

Of course, both these lofty goals have little impact on the average Athar member. Membership in the Athar these days involves work, and lots of it. Food and supplies must be carted to the base of the Spire on a daily basis, messages must be delivered to those Lost still lurking in Sigil, and allies must be sought among the planes if the Athar hope to return to their former power. Magic is of little use where the Lost currently lair, so skilled craftsmen and professionals are in

high demand. Heavily armed parties escort the caravans necessary to keep the Athar alive, and the most trusted of agents act as go-betweens for Jaya and Hobard, sworn to take their own lives before revealing the faction's plans.

No one in the organization is idle; everyone has a part to play. Wizards are dispatched to the Mirrored Library in Sum of All to study the texts and unlock the secrets of mirror magic. Combat-oriented members act as escorts for all Athar, defending fellow members from the proxies and petitioners of the powers.

Allies

The Athar have no allies among the former factions, but they also don't have any enemies left with the strength to take action. While Jaya Forlorn courts the rilmani, there is little hope that enigmatic race will lend true support. Whatever the Athar hope to accomplish, they must do so on their own.

Enemies

The gods themselves consider the Athar a threat, for the faction's words poison the faithful and leech away their power. The church of Hades and the Garianis crime syndicate are both targets of the Athar's wrath, although neither as yet knows of the enmity. As for the factions, each has its own concerns and no time to worry about the doings of the Lost. The Mercykillers and the Sign of One no longer exist; the latter merged with the Believers of the Source into a new organization called the Mind's Eye, and it has no hostility towards the Athar. The Harmonium and the Fated both relocated to other planes and are no longer in such close quarters with the Athar; the Lost remain cautious around members of both factions, but neither group has the time or resources to mount a campaign against the Athar.

THE BLEAK CABAL

"Pike it. He's a barmy and that's that."

Ghren sighed despondently, and regarded the old aasimar in Bleaker colors sitting on the dirty Hive streets, dejected and mute, with a knowing look. The bariaur picked at his horns absent-mindedly and sighed again, "He's not just a barmy, he's a fellow Bleaker. I have to help him, especially in this time of need...he doesn't have any cutters like you and Ferno to take care of him...we can't just leave him here; he needs to be in the Gatehouse."

Sareth snorted derisively. "What does it matter? You ain't in a faction any more than I am. You don't hafta help if it don't benefit you." Sareth started shifting back and forth on his hooves, something he did when he was getting impatient. Ferno's surprisingly stocky and muscular half-elf form sauntered over to Ghren.

"Nothing...nothing...pointless...empty...futile...why?! There is no hope, no mercy, nothing..."

"I guess you have a point..."

Ghren gave one last sigh of despair and wandered away, trailing after his friends, thinking that there was nothing he really could have done, because nothing he could have done would have meant anything.

Life doesn't make sense. That sums up the Bleak Cabal's philosophy, and no further elaboration is required. They do not believe that nothing is the meaning, like the Doomguard, but instead that there isn't even any meaning in the first place. The closest thing to meaning is what's inside you, and when nothing means everything and everything means nothing, the inside looks dreary and anything but sane. Bleakers constantly struggle with their own sanity while trying to

find inner purpose, most choosing to find meaning in life through charity, giving people reprieve from the mad merciless multiverse.

Philosophy: The multiverse doesn't make sense, nor is it supposed to.

Nicknames: Bleakers, the Cabal, Madmen.

Headquarters: The Madhouse in Pandemonium.

Majority Races: Half-elves, humans, tieflings.

Favored Classes: Bards, sorcerers, wizards.

Factol: Tyvold (CG male grey elf Clr6/Ftr5/Wiz7 Bleak Cabal)

Prominent Members: Tessali (CG male grey elf Ftr5/Rog6/Wiz7 Bleak Cabal) and Ezra (NG male bariaur Exp1 Bleak Cabal)

Alignment: Any non-lawful.

Symbol: A helm with a black blaze behind it.

Philosophy

To most people the idea that there isn't any meaning to the multiverse is madness, but to a Bleaker, the idea that there *is* meaning to anything is what's really mad. What proof of some greater purpose has their ever been? What makes people so sure life makes sense anyways? None, nil. For all the searching, no one can truly make sense of everything, not the petitioners, the proxies, or the powers themselves. The Bleakers know the truth: there is no answer, no grand design, no reason. Nothing. They find peace in accepting the state of things for what they are; it's what allows them to face the multiverse and themselves. They look down at those who try to force meaning on the multiverse with pity, and can only sigh when others say *they* are mad.

The Bleak Cabal believe that since there is no meaning on the outside, then all they can do is try to find meaning on the inside. See, the multiverse is cruel and merciless, all madness and noise. However, being used to that, a Bleaker tends to be more understanding of such a condition, and more willing to dole out the mercy that is not inherently in the multiverse. They figure if there isn't any mercy in the multiverse, then mercy comes from within, and if mercy comes from within, then maybe, just maybe, they can find their own meaning through it. Even the evil among the Cabal try to do charitable acts, not because they care one way or the other, but because the act helps battle the insanity of having no purpose.

While the Cabal would like to shape people with their point of view, they don't force it on others. They don't even actively recruit members. Indeed, when someone approaches a Bleaker for membership, they just ignore them, even more so now that the Lady of Pain has seen fit to ban the factions from Sigil. Once the potential Bleaker realizes that all of the questions they've been asking have not been answered because that *is* the answer, they are accepted. Most of the time potential recruits are members of other factions who've lost faith in their creeds, and no longer see the point of their faction, its allies, or its enemies. It just ceases to make sense. And when you can't find anything to believe in, not believing in anything at all is rather appealing.

The Bleak Cabal are a group of depressed, and oftentimes mentally disturbed, humanitarians. If that doesn't convince people that the multiverse is insane and without meaning, then perhaps nothing will.

Brief History

Around nine centuries ago, the Bleak Cabal sprung into being. Their philosophy of no philosophy appealed to a great many people, but confused a lot more, especially at first. When belief can shape everything round you, a belief in absence doesn't seem too out of place, but an absence of belief is outright insane. No one understands it until they don't understand anything anymore, at which point they can either choose to accept the harsh reality or go mad from the

strain. Nothing makes any sense, so why keep on trying to force it? Instead, just focus on yourself, and see if you can find meaning there.

Naturally, this appealed to the cynical planars that were tired of the factions and their philosophical wars, or those who found their own beliefs failing them. Thus the Cabal attracted those who had become lost in the clash of ideals, who felt abandoned for one reason or another by their faction or powers, those who were ready to give up. Most other factions never appreciated how the Bleak Cabal seemed to “steal” their members, even when it was clear the factions weren’t doing enough to keep them. Still, with all the factions that have existed over the course of Sigil’s history to oppose them, you’d think that the Cabal would’ve have been squashed...but there was always someone who saw that much opposition as a sign they were doing something right. Even at their all-time lows, the Cabal knew that when one faction or another got too big for their own good members would become disenchanted, and their own ranks would swell. This cycle has repeated throughout history, with their memberships rising and falling, and providing the Madmen a chance to be too big for their britches as well...often far too big, which caused some notable problems.

When a Bleaker talks about the Grim Retreat, most people just think they’re talking about a Bleak Cabal vacation. In a way, they’re right. The Bleakers, constantly striving against that insanity inside of them, finally give up in large numbers and go on a little trip of the mind that often lasts them the rest of their lives. This happens, oddly enough, whenever the ranks expand too much. The overwhelming loss of belief causes insanity, which can’t be dealt with efficiently by the few elders who truly understand it. This strange mental disease seems to start at the top and work its way down, with the factol usually the first to go. As it spreads through the ranks, the inexperienced new recruits are left behind, forced to drive the faction themselves while attempting to tend those Bleakers that came before them.

They’ve gotten smart over the years, however. They’ve learned quite a bit about medicine and treatment, and now the recovery rate for its members is very high. And though there are still individual cases, the Bleak Cabal has not suffered a mass Grim Retreat in the past three decades, mostly due to the fact that their ex-factol Lhar made a point of keeping their membership at a stable number. Now, with the disbanding of the factions, they aren’t even sure if one will happen again. They aren’t even really a faction anymore, just a bunch of like-minded individuals accustomed to dealing with madness. This doesn’t stop them from tending to the insane and the needy, and they continue to do so, now unofficially instead of officially.

Many of the Madmen decided to make a trek to Pandemonium after the Lady declared factions against the law, and most of those never returned. Some are staying at or around the Madhouse, their faction headquarters on the first layer, to ward off any trouble from the lawful folks who have been sniffing around recently, asking about an artifact reputed to be able to bring back dead Powers. Some decided to settle in Windglum, a town on the third layer of Pandemonium. But whatever the reasons, it’s reduced the amount of Bleakers in the Cage, but not by too much. It’s not like things like this didn’t happen all the time over the course of Bleaker history.

Most people continue to view the Bleak Cabal as a “bunch of barmies” who are perpetually depressed. No one cared before to look at the intricacies of the Bleak Cabal philosophy, and now the only people who might care are those who have been swept up in the “Faction Fever” of learning everything about every faction and every factol. It’s all over the place that ex-factol Lhar was always seeking his parents, but the Bleakers don’t care, and neither does anyone else really. Apathy breeds apathy, and the Bleak Cabal is one of the few factions that didn’t generate too much interest when Faction Fever started up.



Goals

The Bleak Cabal does not have a unified front or a common objective. Each member is expected to grapple with the implications of accepting the multiverse for what it is. In the meantime, the majority of the Cabal work together and with other organizations to help the poor, the lost, and the insane, running food courts, shelters, and asylums as needed. These acts of charity are considered the faction's main "responsibility", and their principal method of finding some purpose to their lives. A few Bleakers take up the life of planewalkers, either to promote the "truth" to those who haven't heard it or to find meaning in the personal growth that comes with the adventuring lifestyle.

Allies

While the Bleak Cabal has no real official allies, the Dustmen, Doomguard, Sons of Mercy, Revolutionary League, and Xaositects are all well disposed towards them. Now that the Doomguard and the Revolutionary League have moved their main operations out of Sigil, the handful that are left aren't very strong allies. Relations are perhaps strongest with the Dustmen, as both of the morose factions continue to carry out their duties solemnly side by side in Sigil, Bleakers helping the poor, sick and dying, and Dustmen carrying away those who the Bleakers couldn't help.

Enemies

The Bleaker's principal "enemies", the Sign of One and the Mercykillers, are gone, with the former joined with the Believers of the Source to form the Mind's Eye, and the latter splintered. The Bleak Cabal still don't really like the Signers for thinking one of their old factols to death, but they don't hold it against the Mind's Eye, so the Bleakers have purged themselves of the bitterness and turned towards their work and themselves. While the Sons of Mercy are being quite cordial and even a little helpful, any Sodkiller that comes along is bound to crack a few skulls if the Bleaker doesn't get out of their way. Overall, most other factions are content to ignore the Madmen and leave them to their madhouses.

THE DΘΘM GUARD

Ely Cromlich stood aboard the ship. It screamed in pain, its living and demonic nature betrayed by the injury. Though the ship swayed, his grip on it was tight despite his single arm. But the vision of emptiness tempted him. Ever since pure annihilation had touched him, he had dreamed of falling apart... of Pentar... and he realized that this would be his only chance to be nothing at all. Taking a step off the ship as his allies cried out, he knew that the enormous field of blackness that stood before him was more than simply a weapon.

It was the beginning of the end.

The Doomguard pay homage to entropy, believing it to be the only constant in the universe. Some guard against the doom, while others guard the doom against those that would stop it. But they are together in their belief of a constant descent, that the universe reached its peak with creation and is now purely a downhill trip. Many Sinkers are mercenaries and warriors, finding roles that engage in destruction on a daily basis, but some take a less obvious approach using magic, piety, or other means.

Philosophy: Entropy is the only truth. Everything falls apart.

Headquarters: Negative Quasielemental Planes.

Nickname: Sinkers (Ashers, Dusters, Salties, Voids)

Majority Races: Humans, tieflings, zenythri.

Majority Classes: Fighters, rogues, wizards.



Factol: None

Prominent Members: Devland (LN male half-elf Ftr16 Doomguard (Asher)), Nagaul (NG female dwarf Clr12 Doomguard (Voids)), Pereid (LN female human Rog20 Doomguard (Dusters)), Roth (CN male tiefling Ftr15 Doomguard (Salties)), Spragg (LG male human Expert10/Ftr5 Doomguard)

Alignment: Any.

Symbol: A horned, spined animal skull on a blue field surrounded by a yellow ring.

Philosophy

A single belief fuels the Doomguard: everything is falling apart. The only truth of the multiverse is that it will end. In fact, it's ending every minute of every day, with every flake of rust, every aging body, and every waning power. It's happening on a mass scale. Nobody could stop it, even if everybody tried together. For every finger you stick in the dam to halt a leak, another leak will spring from the pressure. Most people rage against entropy, or at least try to. The Doomguard takes the opposite tack - why wait? Why not help it along?

It's their take on entropy that has led most folks to think the Sinkers are insane or worse. Truth is the reasons one might hasten the end are varied and not always malevolent. Some think the multiverse is less than perfect, and the slate has to be cleared for a better order. Others think the powers and mortals alike have a tendency to lengthen the lifespan of the planes beyond their natural age, and that the Sinkers have to work to undo the harm this "preservation" does. Some just want to see the multiverse end in their lifetime, and play a part in the biggest and final event in the history of the planes. Others are simply inspired by the despair and chaos entropy brings, and let it take permanent root in their souls. Whatever their reasons, they are united in the belief that eventually the multiverse is going to crumble, and defying this end is denying its purpose.

The Doomguard, however, in keeping with their tendency to break and disperse other things, have broken and dispersed themselves. Currently four major sects call themselves Doomguard, each representing a particular interpretation of their philosophy. Before the Faction War, there had only been three subfactions, supposedly in keeping with the Rule of Threes. But any Sinker can tell you that it's easy enough for three pieces to become four, and tradition be damned.

The fastest growing splinter group is the Doomguard of Ash. A number of Doomguard led by Spragg have embraced the belief that things are falling apart too fast, pointing to the Faction War as a wake-up call to those Sinkers that think otherwise. Perhaps shaken by the destruction unleashed during the war, the Ashers don't view rapid decay with as much love as they used to. Believing wholeheartedly that the multiverse has its own path to destruction, they think it is wrong to accelerate its end, and perhaps cause unnecessary harm to the planes. One of their older members, Devland, would simply gesture to the ash that surrounds their citadel, and point out that there's more than enough entropy already. Furthermore, if their faction falls apart, who's going to help entropy along when it does need help? While most of their efforts right now are being put towards healing their own wounds and unifying their faction, they seek to curb the more excessive members of their faction, as well as slow the hemorrhaging of the planes they believe the Faction War has begun.

While they were once the largest group, entropy has taken hold on the group now known as the Doomguard of Salt, and their numbers dwindle due to their own destructive actions. These folks believe that entropy has to be accelerated as fast as feasibly possible. They follow the vision of their missing leader, Pentar, who previously led them, and Roth, the inheritor of her legacy. While partial to accelerating natural cycles of decay, they have taken a more active role by feeding weapons and information to both sides of the Blood War in an attempt to intensify it. They also seem to believe that any Sinker that doesn't subscribe to their view is a pale mockery of the Doomguard as it once existed. Right now, this makes their main opponent the Ashers, and they've come quite close to wiping Spragg's faction out. Though they're seen as



dangerous maniacs by many of the other faction members, few can fault their dedication... as well as the fact that they seem to have the largest stockpile of weapons, most of which were "liberated" from the Armory of Sigil.

The more moderate view is taken by the Doomguard of Vacuum, who think that entropy is right on schedule, and that Doomguard should act to speed or slow it on a case-by-case basis... if at all. Led by Neraul, and the second-largest group of Doomguard, they have been allying themselves with the Ashers in the interest of restoring the faction's strength. Indeed, were it not for their efforts, the faction might have fallen apart entirely by now. Of course, in a decade, they might be working to halt the growth of the faction... if it survives that long.

Doomguard of Dust seem to be a more eclectic lot, not seeming to partake in one view on entropy. Rather, they are unified by the fact that entropy has taken root in their souls. Led by Pereid, and the largest current faction of Doomguard, many come across as chaotic as a Xaositect, and some are undeniably mad. Others have been wounded during the Faction War and other conflicts, and sport disfigured or scarred bodies. A growing belief in this citadel is that entropy should be internalized - that only those that bear its mark, in one way or another, can have a perspective on it. They are split between those that think entropy is moving too fast, those that think it's moving at a sufficient pace, and those that think that it isn't moving fast enough, but their belief in internal entropy is what has brought them together.

Brief History

Few know the history of the Doomguard as it predates the Great Upheaval. Pereid, the Doomlord of Dust, has been heard to hint that the Doomguard actually predate the multiverse, and that they were instrumental in putting the last one to its rest... "for its own good," Pereid might add. Of course, popular belief holds that she's a lunatic among lunatics, but the idea seems to have spread amongst the Doomguard to some extent. They believe that the belief of their predecessors was somehow preserved and continues on through them, that they are simply the purveyor of a multiversal law.

More accurate records point, instead, to a seemingly spontaneous formation of the group during the Great Upheaval itself. It seems, from Guvner records of the time, that the Doomguard originated from a half-dozen apocalyptic cults that saw the Great Upheaval as a sign that the universe was due for destruction quite soon. United by their belief in impending doom, they survived to become one of the fifteen factions that would control Sigil. Becoming more organized in the aftermath, they took up the role of city guard, patrolling the city against "doom".

Centuries later, a charismatic body by the name of Molluus within the faction would spark a change within the faction. He claimed that it was "doom" that needed protection, that entropy was falling by the wayside in the light of the Lady's new order. He attracted a number of smaller sects and those few long-lived individuals who had been alienated by the Great Upheaval, some of whom were deeply embittered over the loss of their own factions. A common thread in their goals was revenge against the factions and the destruction of Sigil as a whole. The Doomguard split, and it became clear to groups such as the Harmonium and the Fraternity of Order that the Doomguard were no longer suited to be the guardians of Sigil. Certainly, the actions of Molluus' sect supported this, as his followers engaged on rampages and strikes against what they called the "Lapdogs of the Lady". The Lady, surprisingly, took no apparent action against the folk that railed against her.

War broke out between the Doomguard and the Harmonium, with other groups throwing support either way. Still, the Harmonium had numbers, and were able to force the Doomguard into the Armory, where the Doomguard holed up for months. Even those who had previously guarded against the doom were marked as members of Molluus' faction by the Harmonium, and were forced to side with Molluus or perish at the hands of the Hardheads. For months the



Doomguard struck against the institutions of Sigil, until a vote of the other factols in the House of Speakers threatened to revoke the Doomguard's status as a faction. While Molluus threatened to continue the battle without his faction status, he and many of his followers suddenly vanished. With this threat hanging over them and cooler heads coming to lead them, the Doomguard was forced to sign a blood pact that they would never instigate a war within Sigil again.

Afterwards, the Doomguard took up the duty of creating and distributing weapons in Sigil, a task their developing philosophy was suited to. The faction was still divided, however, and would never truly find a unified base again. The older members believed that entropy was something to be slowed, prevented, for it was moving too fast, while the newer members instead believed that Molluus was on to something... even if he might have gone about it the wrong way. They took up the role of speeding doom and hastening its end a bit more subtly than Molluus had. Lastly, a few believed that both sides were wrong, and that the multiverse was falling apart just fine, and that it would be better to study it, and prune where entropy was lacking and preserve where entropy had grown too rampant. They came to serve a balance within the faction in accordance with the rule of threes, one that went undisrupted until relatively recently.

The Doomguard's last factol, Pentar, fell into much the same camp Molluus had. Voted by the Doomlords into leadership due to her fanaticism and talent for destruction, she supported the speed of entropy by any means. To this end, she supported those that agreed with her ends solely, recruited the half-tanar'ri Ely Cromlich, supported the creation of the Ships of Chaos (a tanar'ri/Doomguard invention of mass destruction), and made war upon the Great Modron March. Her stoking of her sect within the faction made it the majority within a surprisingly brief time. Many were inspired by her "devotion", and she made sure any opposition met a bad end. Most of her grander plans were cut short when she was Mazed by the Lady of Pain just before the Faction War, however.

The Doomguard blamed the Harmonium and Sensates for Pentar's disappearance, and the threat of brewing conflict would make the Harmonium demand the Doomguard turn over the Armory and all of its weapons. The Doomguard refused, and a battle broke out between the Sinkers and Anarchists against the Hardheads and Martyrs. The Armory was destroyed, Ely Cromlich - then leading the Doomguard - would be crippled by the escape of the Armory's spheres of annihilation... and the following war saw them suffering the largest losses of any faction.

Most of the Doomguard, after the Faction War, planned to flee back to the faction's citadels. They weren't much liked in Sigil, and they lacked a cohesive leadership outside of the Doomlords themselves. Of course, without their portals in the Armory, they would have to go back to the citadels the long way... and not all agreed on which Doomlord deserved to be informed first. Still, where there's a will, there's a way, and many found themselves painfully cashing in their beloved weapons and armor in order to buy passage on a genie exploratory vessel... or dying trying to make it there the hard way.

The Doomlords were expected to make decisions about the faction's future, and make decisions they did - just not the same ones. Roth, Doomlord of Salt, who had already been making deals with fiends for quite some time, had no interest in a "new direction" for the Doomguard. Most of the old guard fell in with him, including the now-crippled Ely Cromlich. Neraul, Doomlord of Vacuum, ended up hosting Spragg and those who followed him. Spragg offered his direction - one of counter-entropy - to the Doomlord, and was rejected after a long deliberation. Making their way to Pereid's citadel, Spragg and his followers discussed their proposal with her at great length. Just when they thought they had won her over, another group of Doomguard arrived and spoke with her privately, after which Spragg and his group were forced out at sword point. It wasn't until they spoke with Devland, Doomlord of Ash, that they found an ally.



This split the Doomguard along two lines: those that fell in with Spragg and those that fell in with Ely. Conflict was inevitable (and quick), with Roth and Ely - and a horde of tanar'ri manning their Ship of Chaos - showing up on the doorstep of Citadel Exhalus in the interest of wiping out their "traitorous" brethren. The assault on the Crumbling Citadel was fierce, and the "Ashers" had little choice but to flee. As the Ship of Chaos tore apart the Citadel, the secret of the Crumbling Citadel's entropic qualities was revealed - it was home to a sphere of annihilation far larger than any that's been recorded. For reasons known only to himself, Ely Cromlich leaped from the ship and into the sphere. Furthermore, the sphere brushed against the Ship, crippling it and killing the majority of the invading Salties. With both the Ashers and Salties crippled, it seems the Doomguard has once again reached a stable condition ... though an uneasy one at best. The Doomguard of Ash have since retreated to Citadel Cavitius, where they seem to have found a new home despite the undead spirits that reside there.

Though the Doomguard have not emerged with a clear leader, Spragg has grown from the conflict and responsibility he's shouldered over the past few years. Far from what he once was - Ely's quivering assistant - he's grown into the closest thing the Doomguard have to a new factol. Though he doesn't have control of the entire faction - far from it - he has strong allies in Devland and Neraul, and it seems more often than not Pereid is throwing in her lot with him (though she's fickle at best). However, Roth remains firmly and violently opposed to him.

Goals

The Doomguard have finally started to gain influence on the Outer Planes once again, as the four sects seek out new members, alliances, and things that need breaking. Talks have begun with what's left of their former allies, and several strikes on the Harmonium by the "Salties" have solidified Hardhead-Sinker hatreds once again, much to the dismay of the more liberal and moderate Doomguard members. Still, it's clear that the Doomguard are making noise across the planes - and even Sigil - once more.

Largely, the Ashers have been consumed with ensuring their own survival, but it's said that they're finally getting the chance to look outward at the planes and ponder their more long-term plans. Many have wondered as to how they have managed to settle into Citadel Cavitius - a place tainted with dark spirits and necromantic magic - with relative ease. However, the secret of it seems closed to all but Spragg, Devland, and their closest supporters.

The Salties have thrown their weight into making sure the damage from the Faction War never heals. Whether they're working to support the Blood War in faction-held locales or striking against groups like the Harmonium directly, they seem dedicated to making sure the other factions remain destabilized and dispersed.

The Voids are focused on preserving the Doomguard, divided views and all. Serving as the conservators of the Doomguard cause, they have worked to offer support and insight to the other groups, seeing themselves as enlightened in regards to perceiving entropy.

Finally, the Dusters seem to lack any real unified goal other than spreading the word of their "new path". They have begun to filter into places like Sigil, spreading their philosophy of enlightenment through self-destruction. Some more fanatical members are said to be going around scarring people - physically or mentally - to spread their word in a more direct fashion, but if such is the case, reputable reports have substantiated it. Certainly, it would go against the entire point of the idea of *self*-destruction.

Allies

Separated as they are from much of planar politics now, the Doomguard have had difficulty maintaining contact with their former allies. Since few of them save Pereid's group are



numerous enough to see their goals furthered alone, many have looked to others they can influence or gather support from.

A close alliance with the Dustmen may not seem unusual initially, but is stranger when you note that they've sided exclusively with the Doomguard of Ash. Some say the secret of it is that some timely assistance on the part of the Dustmen is the only reason the Ashers have been able to squat in Cavitius, and that Spragg or Devland is now beholden to an undead of one sort or another. Others say that some dark of the place allowed them to settle there, and that their alliance with the Dustmen is due to something they had to offer the Dead.

As for the Salties, rumor has it they've been working with fiends to take up a presence and secondary headquarters somewhere on the Lower Planes, a position that they can then use to more comfortably spread entropy across the multiverse. Some say they've been indirectly supporting the splinter cells of the Revolutionary League, hoping that the Anarchists will strike the decisive blow against groups like the Hardheads once and for all.

The Voids seem to have sought few allies outside the faction, instead just working to find key allies within the Doomguard itself. It is said, though, that they are closely allied with, or possibly even the originators of, this newly formed Cult of Sferus. The cult worships the giant sphere of annihilation that erupted from the Crumbling Citadel, believing it to be a power of its own. Granted, there's no way to communicate with it, and it doesn't have any proxies, but the members seem to be getting spells from their worship regardless.

The Xaositects have come into close alliance with the Dusters, though this seems to be a purely informal affair. The line between chaos and entropy is a thin one, and a number of Chaosmen have gone over the Duster cause and vice versa. Furthermore, they have cooperated several times on goals either one faction or the other might normally seem to have no interest in. The exact nature of this symbiotic relationship is unclear, however, and most expect it to end any time now, with Chaosmen turning on Pereid's Doomguard.

Enemies

The Harmonium is largely unaware of the Doomguard's ideological split, and recent events have caused them to consider most members of the Doomguard enemies by association if nothing else. In turn, many Doomguard blame the Harmonium for the sorry state of their faction. The anger between the two groups is one of the fiercest on the planes, despite the desire of the more level-headed Doomguard to avoid reviving old hostilities during this fragile time.

Still, the enmity between the Doomguard and the Fraternity of Order has yet to be revived. The Dusters haven't struck against them yet, feeling that the Guvners are relatively inoffensive and can be dealt with when they turn their attention to Mechanus. Thankfully for the Dusters, the Guvners consider the Doomguard sufficiently broken as to not prove a true threat to their studies and power.

THE DUSTMEN

"Tsalak?"

The older Dustman glanced at his companion as the youth hefted another corpse onto the wagon, but said nothing.

"What do you think comes after True Death?" the young aasimar asked.



Tsalak shook his head, maneuvering the corpse into a stable position on the pile so it wouldn't fall off when the wagon started moving. "Ah, Marn. Curiosity. You're going to have to rid yourself of that if you ever want to reach True Death."

"But what comes after True Death? Lynia says we are reborn into Life. Horkozie says there's nothing, that we're gone forever. Raan says -"

Tsalak climbed on the front of the wagon, and motioned for Marn to get on. "And Tsalak says if you'd spend more time trying to rid yourself of curiosity and other passions and less time trying to indulge them you could reach True Death yourself and find out."

As Marn leapt onto the back of the wagon and steadied his perch atop the corpses, Tsalak shook the reins, and the Arcadian ponies started forward.

"But - what if what comes after True Death isn't something I want to get to?"

The old genasi sighed and stopped the wagon. "Marn. Look down. Look at those corpses you're standing on. Look at their faces. Look well."

"Do they look fulfilled? Do they look like they've reached peace? No? That's because they haven't. That's because deep down, they know there was more they had to do. Our belief in True Death isn't something unique to the Dustmen, Marn. Everyone knows it, deep down. It's just that most sods are too blinded by their passions to admit it to themselves."

"Strive to eliminate your passions, Marn. Strive to become ready for True Death. Because deep down, you know that's the next step you need to take. And because if you don't, then when you do die, you'll end up like them. Unfulfilled. Frustrated. And then you'll just have to start all over. Do you want that?"

Marn didn't answer, and Tsalak started the wagon forward again. The clip-clop of the ponies' hooves echoed through the dark.

Stoic, calm, dead expressions... their nickname "The Dead" describes the Dustmen best. Believing that this life has no meaning and that everyone is already dead, they come off as a little bit creepy. They run the mortuary of Sigil, and have always done so as far back as anyone can remember. The Dustmen try to eliminate their emotions, and many succeed to the point that it is nearly impossible to get a rise out of them; even insulting or threatening one of the Dead makes no difference. If a basher manages to rid himself of all emotion, the Dustmen believe, then he can finally reach True Death - for everyone in this multiverse is dead, and this multiverse is only a shadowy afterlife.

Philosophy: No one is truly alive; all there is to do is strive for True Death.

Nicknames: The Dead, Dusties.

Headquarters: The Mortuary of Sigil, with outposts on the Negative Energy Plane.

Majority Races: Half-elves, humans, and tieflings.

Majority Classes: Clerics, monks, and wizards.

Factol: Currently none

Prominent Members: Iunne (CN male asuras Dustmen), Komosahl Trevant (NE male human Wiz13 Dustmen), Oridi Malefin (N female tiefling Cle19 Dustmen), Silidath (NE female shad Wiz5/Rog5 Dustmen)

Alignment: Any, with evil and neutral tendencies.

Symbol: An elongated skull, front view, with a collarbone, over a field of purple.



Philosophy

The world is a miserable place, an endless cycle of death and sadness. Cruelty, brutishness, and greed are common throughout the multiverse, and even expected in some places. The quality of "life" is in the gutter. But of course, that's because this isn't "life" at all. It's the afterlife, and it's not a pleasant one.

The Dead believe that we've all lived and died already, and this is what comes next. Life is about joy and celebration, after all, yet the multiverse is filled with conflict and suffering. Instead of positive feelings, there is pain. Instead of growth, there is only death. No, this cannot be life. This is a twisted mockery, a shadow of what life really is.

The only goal now is to achieve True Death and pass beyond this miserable stage of existence. What comes after True Death? Well, that's up for debate. Some believe that after True Death, a body comes back into True Life, and has a chance to live again where he lived before, a place far more vibrant and real than this pale post-mortal shadow. Others believe that it's not True Life that comes after True Death, but a true *afterlife*, where joy and real happiness are the only things there are, and pain is unknown. Still others believe that True Death is oblivion; that what it brings is a permanent end to the soul and to consciousness. What all the Dustmen agree on, however, is that whatever comes after True Death, it has to be better than this.

That doesn't mean that they go around looking for death. Just dying ain't enough; a body's got to have prepared himself right to get to the next stage after True Death. One has to truly understand this stage of existence, its trials and its hardships, before being ready to move on. Otherwise, well, he'll probably just end up right back here and have to go through this painful afterlife all over again - and wouldn't *that* be a waste of time? So Dustmen don't really want to die until they're ready for it, nor do most go about rushing others to - if they aren't ready for True Death, then putting them in the dead-book won't do anyone any good. Even of those who think they *are* ready for it, many want to stick around to help shepherd others to the right paths. Thus the Dustmen feature an odd mix of apathy and altruism, though very few appreciate their generosity.

Stoicism is a common trait among the Dustmen: this is only an afterlife, and anything that happens here doesn't really matter except insofar as it brings a body closer to True Death. So why bother caring? And as far as cares are concerned, the Dead don't have them. A sense of aloof pity is common; the Dustmen feel sorry for those who don't see the big picture. But then, pity is a feeling, and so even that is something of which the really advanced Dustmen try to divest themselves.

Sometimes, though, some of the Dead get a bit overzealous in their striving against passion. That may seem like a contradiction in terms, but the resulting condition, called the Apathy, is very real. Those afflicted become so detached and apathetic that they don't even care about eating and other basic tasks. Now, elimination of all passion and desire is one thing, but not even caring about day-to-day existence... well, that's not going to get a body any closer to True Death. Fact is, many Dustmen call the Apathy "False Death", because it's superficially similar to death in some ways but ultimately it's something a body's going to have to shake off if he wants to advance. Some do - there have been cases of recovery from the Apathy. But far too many who fall victim to the Apathy end up just withering away and dying, or losing their drive to find True Death and joining the Bleakers.

As far as the Dead are concerned, primes are only beginning the path of True Death; they are too caught up in trying to live in this existence to understand the stages of death. Planars are wiser about the multiverse, knowing more about the processes and ends of "death" here in the afterlife, but only some recognize that it *is* an afterlife, and that it's True Death they need to reach. Petitioners and proxies are both in dead-end positions, even if they are closer to True Death than most. The petitioners are focused on merging with their plane, and proxies on



serving their powers, when both should be looking toward True Death. Perhaps the closest beings to True Death are the undead. Purged of passion and attachment to "life", they have a purity few can know. Ironically, unintelligent undead may be devoid of emotion, but they lack the sentience to appreciate their nearness to True Death. The free-willed undead, on the other hand, should be most able to appreciate their position - and yet even they tend to cling too fiercely to "life" to be ready for True Death.

Brief History

No one knows when the Dustmen were founded; they've been around as long as anyone remembers. Most believe the faction was founded by Skall, the former factol, about 600 years before the Great Upheaval, but this seems to have been only when certain details of the faction's structure were formalized; they'd been around in some form long before then - maybe for thousands of years before then. How had Skall been around so long? Well, stories differ about that. Maybe he was just a powerful wizard, and able to prolong his life indefinitely - but the opinion is becoming increasingly popular that Skall was actually undead himself, probably a lich or maybe a vampire. Skall only ever seemed to interact with other Dustmen by *project image*, so it's not as if anyone really knows for sure what he looked like. Anyway, whenever it was that the Dustmen were founded, they've remained pretty quiet since. They don't tend to bother people, although their ideas anger factions with more positive outlooks on the multiverse.

During the Faction War, the Dustmen lost Skall's leadership. At first, most of the Dead assumed that he found the secret of True Death and ascended, but later after the War when it turned out that other factols had also vanished it became clear that he had probably shared the same fate as the others, presumably banished to the Mazes. The Dead remained neutral during the War, tending the dead of both sides equally. After the War, though, the Dustmen had to come to terms with Skall's disappearance. For most other factions, the disappearance of the factol wasn't all that important; there were plenty of others who could fill the vanished factol's role. But Skall wasn't only the factol of the Dustmen; he was the founder, and in a sense in many Dustmen's minds he was the faction. It seemed hard to see how the faction could continue without them.

And for a time, it didn't. After the Faction War, the Dustmen officially disbanded. Individual Dustmen continued to work to clear the dead from the streets, and privately they continued to believe as they had and to strive for True Death, but they didn't associate with each other or have any sort of hierarchy. It didn't take long, though, to realize that this was foolish - worse, it smacked of sentimentalism, which is something the Dustmen should do their best to avoid. So gradually, and without any sort of official purpose, the faction reunited. They haven't gotten around to choosing a new factol, and maybe they never will, as they work well enough without one.

Goals

The Dustmen have never been a goal-oriented faction. Mostly, they're just doing what they've always done - tending the dead and working towards True Death. There are always rumors that the Dustmen are trying to start a mass "conversion" of everyone to their way of thinking, but nothing has been proven.

There are, though, a few things the Dustmen do want to do - well, not so much *want*, as think may be useful for their work. Maybe the biggest one right now is to find a new place with enough portals to serve as a funerary center, like the Mortuary used to be. There was some chant shortly after the War that the Dustmen were going to buy the Hall of Speakers from Harys Hatchis, but nothing ever came of that; either they decided it didn't have enough portals, or the story was just rumors to begin with. In any case, the Dustmen don't seem to



have found another building that will serve their purposes, at least not one with an owner willing to sell it.

So far, the Dead have chosen to try to solve this problem in at least two different ways - and the faction's current lack of centralized leadership means that there's no one to say which way is officially preferred. Some Dustmen just use what few portals there still are in the Mortuary, not bothering to try to customize the corpse's disposal to the individual as much as they did before. Others use portals not in the Mortuary; it's a fairly common sight now to see Dustmen conducting a funeral service on some street corner or in some tavern that happens to have a portal to the right plane. Still, even though the Mortuary doesn't have all the portals that used to make it so convenient, it remains the Dustmen's headquarters. They've got too much invested there to make it easy to pull up stakes and move. Besides, why should they? Sure, another place with more portals might be more convenient - but a desire for convenience is... well, you know the rest.

Another interesting development of late is the possible reappearance of Skall. A number of Dustmen have reported seeing Skall himself in the Mortuary recently. Has Skall escaped from the Maze he was cast into? Or has he found a way to project an image *from* the Maze? No one's sure, but there are those who are convinced he's back, and are working to try to get things ready for his return as factol. Others, though, ain't so sure. Not that they think all those who said they saw him return are lying or barmy, of course, but... if Skall was only projecting an image anyway, what's to prevent someone else from projecting a similar image and *pretending* to be him? The fact is, though, that Skall's important enough to the faction that most of the Dustmen high-ups think any reports of his possible return need to be investigated. Maybe he's really back; more probably it's an impostor; but either way they need to find out for sure.

Allies

The Dustmen don't have any "allies", per se; they tend to work alone, and try to avoid getting caught up in the matters of other factions one way or the other. In practice, though, they do get along better with some factions than others. They share with the Bleak Cabal and the Doomguard a certain sort of nihilism, and often find common cause with both of those two factions. To a lesser degree, the Dustmen also find some things to like about the Athar and the Xaositects, who do seem to see through some of the veils of meaning on the false life they're in. They likewise respect the Guvners, Indeps, and Ciphers, who have some respect for learning and progress; but all of those factions remain too wedded to their passions and desires to find True Death.

Enemies

Just as the Dustmen have no true allies, they have no true enemies, either. However, some factions keep a cautious eye on them. The Harmonium and the Sons of Mercy tend to watch the Dustmen, not interfering, but suspicious. The Anarchists... well, they seem opposed to everyone, and the Dustmen see little to admire in their zeal and passion for their work. The Fated also seem too focused on desire to get along well with the Dustmen philosophy. The Sensates are far too intent on savoring the supposed pleasures of this "life", and are blind to its emptiness and unreality - or, from the Sensates' point of view, the Dustmen are too intent on *ignoring* what's beautiful about life. And as for the Mind's Eye... well, it don't take a genius to realize that their ideal of progression through successive incarnations runs directly counter to the Dustmen's desire to find True Death and *end* their time in this multiverse.

THE FATED

We must regroup; we must survive. And we will; we always have. Darkwood's actions have shone a harsh, unblinking light on us all. It will be years, maybe decades, before we are able



to leave behind his crimes, before we are no longer held responsible for what has happened. But we are strong, and we will overcome any obstacle. The Sanctuary's halls burn with the energy of our fellows, brighter in these troubled times than they ever have before. Wanderers from across the vast planes return with tales of their exploits, and a spirit of cooperation once lost has returned to our beleaguered faction. Even as we hold our individuality and pride in our hearts we come together in the face of adversity. Here, in the golden fields of Ysgard, where each strives for his or her own excellence, our faction begins anew.

- From The Secret History of Sigil, as penned by Brigitte Gunnarsmoon.

The Fated are possibly one of the most distrusted groups in the multiverse. Their leader was responsible for the calamity of the Faction War, and everyone knows it. Although the members of the Fated weren't aware of their factol's true ambitions at the time, they were wise to scarper out of Sigil when they did. Now, they make their way the best they can in the planes of the Great Ring, and they find it just as unforgiving as any cold-blooded Taker.

See, the Fated don't believe in pity. They recognize the multiverse is a tough place, but they say everyone's the master of their own destiny, and there's no one else to blame. Everyone has the potential to make it big, but only those who are really work for it are going to get anywhere. The multiverse belongs to those who can hold it, and if you fail along the way, it's because you weren't trying hard enough.

Philosophy: Everyone's responsible for themselves. For good or bad, you carve out your own fate.

Nicknames: Survivors, Takers, the Heartless.

Headquarters: Ysgard.

Majority Races: Bariaurs, dwarves, halflings, humans, tieflings.

Majority Classes: Barbarians, rangers, rogues.

Factol: Aram Oakwright (CN male dwarf Ftr 6 Fated)

Prominent Members: Rayl Whitespoon (CN female githzerai Ftr4/Wiz6 Fated), Brigitte Gunnarsmoon (CN female frost giant Expert4 Fated), Shorash Ambergrove (LN male aasimar Rog16 Fated)

Alignment: Any except lawful good.

Symbol: A hand gripping a golden walking stick against a purple background. It has been adopted to highlight the faction's change of emphasis, but detractors claim the stick's actually a cudgel.

Philosophy

The Fated believe that the multiverse and everything in it is up for grabs. Those who are strong enough to hold on to something deserve it. This covers everything from material wealth, to land, to the abstract ideals that make up the multiverse. A body needs to pull himself up by his own strength in the end, and if they fall, it's no one's fault but his own. Luck, chance, fate, those are all shams. A true Fated grabs the woven threads of the Norns, and snaps 'em in twain. Then he moves on, and does what he needs to do to make the future *he* wants. Sure, there's all sorts of names thrown at the Fated, like heartless and cold-blooded. Just the squalling of babes, who are too weak to stand on their own two feet. Instead of doing something about it, they try to bring down the successful with words like knives. Well, the Fated have a nice, thick skin.

And truth is, those poor fools have got it all wrong. The Fated aren't petty thieves and thugs (at least not for the most part). They're individuals first and foremost. Most are the fair-minded, upstanding sort. Being a Taker doesn't mean grabbing everything in sight, and it doesn't mean you can't give someone a fair shake. But when you want something, you make it yours with everything you can muster. All but the dimmest realize not everything can be won



by force. But even finding love and happiness takes force of will, an inner strength that too many lack.

Never show weakness or softness. Never be a coward. It's courage to stand up for what you want and what you believe that'll get you places. Anytime you see someone in the gutter, just remember whose fault that is. Any self-respecting body wouldn't wallow about in the mud there, asking for handouts. A body has to be self-sufficient. 'Cause when it comes down to it, there's no one else looking out for you. The only one with your best interests at heart is your own self.

Brief History

The Fated keep the truth of their early days close to their chests. They were banging about the Cage for quite some time, having had the foresight and wherewithal to set up the Hall of Records and become Sigil's tax collectors. The Hall of Records contained files on almost every transaction and title of ownership that had any importance in Sigil. Birth, marriage, and death certificates were kept in the Hall, along with histories and census records. The basement held the extensive archives acquired when the Fated foreclosed on the original owners of the Hall, Bigby's College of Academic Arts. These archives came in very useful indeed, and became the basis for *The Secret History of Sigil*, the Fated's greatest collection of information on the factions. This research project was continuously added to, and also contained the history of the Fated itself.

Not much else is known about the history of the faction. They have always had a presence on several other planes, most notably Ysgard, where a large number of the inhabitants belong to the faction. The strong thrive in the fields of Ysgard, and the relationship was natural. The Fated seem to have begun there, having learned valuable lessons of survival and self-sufficiency. From there, the faction spread throughout the planes, learning how to cope with the various conditions on the Great Ring, finding ways to survive, and even thrive. As time passed, they turned their attentions to more than merely getting by, especially when they came to Sigil. Many Fated came to hold positions of power throughout the planes, sometimes as rulers, but more often as right hands or other powers behind the thrones. The Fated tend towards subtlety and manipulation, and staying behind the curtain gives their power more longevity than if they were out in the open.

Duke Rowan Darkwood became factol by getting the dirt on Emma Oakwright, the factol before him. Darkwood had only been in the Cage for a short time, but he was a quick study. Ambitious enough to put most Fated to shame, he set his eyes on nothing less than Sigil itself. He made plenty of enemies along the way, from his own faction as well as the rest. His plans all came together when he finally got hold of something to use against the Lady herself. That's when he set the Faction War in motion.

Of course, Darkwood's plans didn't work out the way he'd planned, and he was sent to the Mazes with the rest of the factols. The whole power structure of the factions came tumbling down, and the Lady blew the pieces to the winds. When the ragged factions started comparing notes, they figured out that Darkwood had played the lot of them, manipulating events and bringing about this whole sorry state of affairs. The Fated made themselves real scarce when that came to light, with most of them scurrying back to Ysgard. Their headquarters there used to be called Rowan's Hall, in honor of their leader, but now it's simply known as the Sanctuary. Any Fated's welcome to make it their home whenever need be. Naturally they have to work for the privilege, but it's better than being out in the cold. Although they've lost the Hall of Records (and the Hall's lost the records), Darkwood had *The Secret History of Sigil* moved here shortly before the War. The information contained in the history may be the key to the Fated's return to Sigil. Historian Brigitte Gunnarsmoon has been put in charge of maintaining the archives, and incorporating new information.



Recently, the Ring-Givers abandoned Skeinheim, their headquarters in Ysgard. This used to be the headquarters of the Fated, but it fell into the Ring-Givers' hands. The Takers claimed that they were tricked, and have never forgiven the upstart Ring-Givers. The Fated tried to take the town back several times over the years, but the Ring-Givers beat 'em back each time. Since the Ring-Givers pulled up stakes, a number of the Takers have moved back in. Many of the Fated are sure it's some sort of ploy, and they still give Skeinheim a wide berth.

Aram Oakwright, Darkwood's former right hand at the Hall of Records, has shoved his way to control of the faction. He'd been eyeing the top spot since Darkwood took it from his cousin. Oakwright is a master at trading and selling information, and with *The Secret History of Sigil* at his fingertips, he's been able to keep most competitors at bay. His position is still precarious, though. The other ambitious sorts are looking for any way to topple him they can, while a good number of Fated aren't looking to replace Darkwood with another power-hungry bastard. To the more forward-looking Survivors, Oakwright is a dangerous anachronism, the sort of conniver that made them pariahs in the first place. Some of 'em have simply chosen to ignore him for now; they're too busy forging their own paths to bother with him.

Goals

Just getting by in these times is a pretty big goal in and of itself for the faction. Although none of 'em were privy to their former factol's plans, the members of the Fated are even less popular than they used to be. One of the things they need to accomplish is brightening their image, and there are several ways they're going about accomplishing this.

The Fated are trying to at least pretend they're friendly folks, and if not offering outright charity, at least offer a helping hand here and there. They expect to be paid for their help in some fashion, but they usually cut a fair deal. They also try to show a body that their driving philosophy ain't so bad, after all. They point out the fact that anyone's welcome to join (unless they're paladins or some such). They may be elitists, but it's not because they stop anyone else from trying to be the best they can be. The best example of this campaign is Shorash Ambergrove, an aasimar with a personality as bright as his skin. Shorash travels the Great Ring, offering seminars (for a fee) on how to reach a person's full potential. He also sells a book containing all sorts of advice and little phrases a body can repeat to himself to keep a positive attitude. A lot of folks have joined up with the faction after going to a seminar or two. Shorash hasn't made it to the Cage, yet, but it's only a matter of time. The Fated, by and large, are working hard to regain respect, and try to show themselves as self-reliant cutters to be admired, not feared and despised.

Many of the Takers are scrambling for any plot of land they can get hold of in the planes, especially the Outlands. Even in the infinite multiverse, territory is a valuable commodity. Oakwright is especially interested in Glorium, Ysgard's gate-town. The town's chieftain, Flatnose Grim of the Free League, has always resisted the Fated's attempts to gain a foothold here. Oakwright figures he'll take Glorium by force of arms if it comes to it. Rayl Whitespoon, who used to run the Rowan Academy of Training, has distinguished herself in several sorties across the planes, particularly in the battle for Kra'thinkar, a githyanki fortress built on the corpse of some nameless deity. While this has given the Fated a base on the Astral Plane, it's whispered that the real reason for the dangerous assault lay in a long-standing grudge between Whitespoon and H'r'kai, a prominent githyanki knight of Kra'thinkar. Some people wonder how Darkwood could have ever had the guts to spurn Whitespoon for Factol Nilesia.

Many of the less militant Takers have taken control of caravan lines, or have otherwise opened or maintained existing merchant ventures. Several caravan routes across the Outlands and throughout the Outer Planes bring goods to gate-towns, realms, and the Great Bazaar of Sigil. Some of them quietly support Oakwright's plans for Glorium, hoping they can gain access to Yggdrasil's pathways.



In general, the Fated have fallen back on the skills that made them special in the first place. When a Survivor sets his mind to knowing a plane, few can approach his skill. The Fated know how to endure the unforgiving nature of the Great Ring, and some note with pride their forays into the inimical Inner Planes and the like. Many Fated have taken up the job of guide, for individuals or caravans. The Survivors operate way stations, inns, and toll bridges, and offer places to hire guides, even along a number of caravan routes they do not explicitly control.

Allies

The Fated never had many friends to begin with, and that isn't changing since Faction War. They still tend to get along with the Free League, as long as their individual goals don't clash and the Fated bring a lot of goods to the Great Bazaar of Sigil, or help protect the routes. The Fated used to have some tenuous links with the Mercykillers. Of the two splinter groups born of that dead faction, the Sons of Mercy don't think much of the Fated (and the feeling's mutual). The Sodkillers have quite a bit in common with the Fated though, and sometimes they work together with the Takers, while other times it comes to blows, depending on the situation.

Enemies

Pretty much everyone else qualifies as an enemy. Most bodies are still wary of the Fated, and none of the factions seems interested in forgiving them for the war. The Fated still holds grudges against the other big group in Ysgard, the Ring-Givers. Their philosophies don't mix well, and that's caused quite a bit of strife over the years.

THE FRATERNITY OF ORDER

"What is it with that racket?" The old man slowly shifted, pulling himself out of his chair. "I'd have found the dark of the gears by now if it weren't for these infernal interruptions!" Making his way out of his lab and wandering down to the foyer, he followed the shouts, mechanical buzzing sounds, and noises of war erupting from the supposed sanctuary of the Fraternity. He barely blinked as a whirling blade slid in front of his face, giving his mustache a neat, if uncalled for, trimming. Other Guvners, bearing weapons both ancient and modern, moved about in a symphony of order that might seem like chaos to an outsider. But they responded in an organized manner, perfectly in line with local protocol, to ward off the hostile creatures in their midst.

"Dear. What seems to be going on?"

A younger, unshaven Guvner cried out, "We brought it back from Acheron!"

More voices added to the chorus, shouting over the clangs of steel and the crackling of bizarre devices, "They called it a 'clockwork horror'!"... "It seems to have originated on Baritus, a prime world where there are..."... "You leatherhead! You think a prime could come up with something like this?!"

The old man watched as the adamantite insect sawed one of his fellows cleanly in half, without even flinching. "My. I don't suppose any of you would mind if I took some notes...?"

The Fraternity of Order isn't what a body might think. First of all, they aren't concerned with keeping the order - that's the Harmonium. Secondly, they just aren't as... well... orderly as they used to be. Getting booted out of Sigil by the Lady shook them up but good, and inserted a bit more chaos into the stagnant mix that the Guvners used to be. But their core philosophy still revolves entirely around laws and the order therein. See, according to them, it's very important to understand laws... whether they're the local statutes or the universal axioms all creatures are forced to live by. To them, understanding the laws - the *Orders* - things work by

is vital to manipulating things to be the way people want them and need them. Of course, the sort of power that information grants isn't bad, either. And it's no secret that the Guvners are looking to be in charge of it all, sooner or later.

Of course, if you listen to them long enough, you just might think that they *are* in charge. And if their theories are correct, that just might be the case...

Philosophy: Learn the laws that govern the multiverse and gain power through them.

Nickname: Guvners.

Headquarters: The Fortress of Disciplined Enlightenment in Mechanus.

Majority Races: Dwarves, humans, gnomes, zenythri.

Majority Classes: Psions, wizards.

Factol: Jamis (LG female human Clr12 (Oghma) Fraternity of Order)

Prominent Members: Nancias Garabutos (LN female human Wiz11 Fraternity of Order)

Alignment: Any non-chaotic.

Symbol: A dagger with a blue handle, pointed upwards. Blue curls over from the top, branching and splitting as it falls down - as if being cut by the dagger itself. The blade of knowledge reveals the truth.

Philosophy

Knowing the law is one thing, and relatively uncomplicated, even if it can be taxing and time-consuming to study it. But knowledge of how to use laws is where real power comes from. Think of it this way: a man might not know he can use a boulder as a weapon until he understands that the law of gravity will let him push it off a ledge, or, even better, the law of action and reaction that lets him construct a catapult that flings the boulder as far as he needs it. Imagine that on a multiversal scale, and you've got an inkling of what the Guvners are aiming for.

The Fraternity of Order believes there are three types of Orders. The first are called *Rules*, created by sentient beings to govern themselves and resolve disputes. The second are called *Laws*, which derive from the powers. Most Laws are the natural laws of a given plane - the cycle of time in the Outlands, for example. The third are known as *Axioms*. Axioms are laws all things - inanimate or alive, divine or mortal, planar or prime - must adhere to. Some Axioms are referred to as Great Axioms, which it's said only the powers can really understand. However, if by some chance a mortal does come to fully understand one, one might move on to an existence more capable of withstanding that knowledge. Whether this means becoming a power or something else is entirely theoretical.

Another trick to laws is discovering loopholes. By using loopholes in Orders, one can win court battles, devise a device that boils tea nicely, or even bend Axioms to perform actions that might otherwise be impossible. With loopholes, it's possible to do anything... a body's just got to uncover the secret to it. The loopholes of Rules are useful in the court, the loopholes of Laws are useful in the lab, and the loopholes of Axioms... well, they're useful anywhere, though one can only cheat the universe itself so many times before it wises up.

Some Guvners argue that Rules are not created by mortals, nor are Laws created by powers. Rather, they are discovered, and the truth is that there's a universal set of such Orders, and that some may become lost or misunderstood, while others simply haven't been discovered yet. People may think they've written a new law, or a power may think its edict is its own, but they're just introducing (or rediscovering) a previously unknown Order. While some may argue that there is no such thing as universal Rules and Orders due to the seemingly varied laws of different planes and realms, such Guvners would counter with the idea that Rules and Orders can be different between places and times. In their mind, that simple fact doesn't mean there isn't an underlying order behind their variations of absolutes.



Though they may seem monolithic and homogenous to outsiders, the Fraternity of Order is often divided between different viewpoints. While they're all undeniably dedicated to law, they have varying viewpoints on what those laws might be. Even what is considered to be "known" is somewhat self-contradictory, and the Guvners realize it's hard for them to see the whole picture. Therefore, different bureaus have been devised to help solve this problem. Sometimes they are formed to devise a solution to a problem, or other times simply to perform dedicated study of a single piece of the multiverse. A handful of the bureaus are described below, but there are literally hundreds of different bureaus both defunct and active in Guvner records.

One group within the Fraternity of Order, the Mathematicians, focuses solely on discovering the Orders of Mechanus itself. After all, the theory goes, Mechanus embodies every law, everywhere in the multiverse. So a full understanding of Mechanus' laws would allow you to use those discoveries across all planes. In addition, it's said that somebody that pins down every bit of law about the gears would gain enough insight to rule Mechanus... and from there, the rest of creation shortly afterward. Furthermore, they believe the plane of ultimate law has a "perfect" version of anything else in the universe. So by studying Mechanus, one can find anything one might desire. Formerly a separate sect, they have been subsumed into the Bureau of Native Mathematics, a subdivision of the Fraternity of Order.

On the other, more down-to-earth side, some newer members are claiming that folks within their faction were and are going too fast, too soon. They argue that the understanding of Rules and Laws is incomplete at best, and that to try and uncover Axioms before mastering the basics is dangerous, if not outright mad. Focusing on bringing the information they have into more physical endeavors, many of these younger Guvners are explorers, investigators, and inventors, seeking out knowledge and putting it into more practical pursuits, such as golems and clockwork oddities designed to perform tasks of labor and the like. Surprisingly, though Jamis has not joined in with her rhetoric, many of those returning with her to Sigil are of this group. Officially, they're organized under the new Bureau of Timekeepers, even if many of their endeavors deal in more than just watches.

Finally, another new theory that's controversial at best, and considered outright heresy at worst, posits that the Fraternity of Order is looking in the wrong place entirely to discover law. An outgrowth of attempts to study the elements which made up the Faction War, these scholars believe that only in attempting to discover the patterns of chaos can one uncover the truth of the multiverse. They believe that if one can find the patterns and rules even in the most seemingly disorderly of all forces, that those rules will be the ultimate Orders... those that exist even in the face of seemingly total chaos. There is no official bureau for them as of yet; most of them exist under the Bureau of Extraplanar Exploration and Development, or as the Bureau of Xenophilosophical Studies. While considered a bunch of fools by the majority of Guvners, they have mounted expeditions to Limbo. Right now they're particularly interested in trying to discover the dark of the inhabitants' ability to influence the raw matter of the plane itself, though much to the relief of Limbo's inhabitants, they haven't stumbled onto it yet.

Brief History

Being the gluttons for knowledge the Guvners are, they've recorded nearly everything they can about their own history. Their own records stretch back roughly a millennium - or maybe more - in millions of volumes that sprawl across their libraries in Mechanus. Some of their records get into minutiae that might test the patience of even their own... from the clothes somebody wore on a given day to how many dribblings of mucus came down a orc's nose at a given trial. But to the Guvners, no detail is worth missing. Anything could be a greater piece of the puzzle that, day by day, they're working to uncover. Consequently, few of their records are interesting from an artistic or emotional perspective. They have no great heroes... no epic tales... no climactic disasters... at least by the reckoning of most people's viewpoints. Of course, with the amount of mundane details in Guvner works, even vast clashes like the Faction War might be so deeply

analyzed that they hardly seem any more interesting than their factol's dinner records for the past year. The thing is, they're good at the details, but there just isn't much passion in their written works. After all, passion distorts, and they can't have anything but the ungarnished facts.

The actual history of the Fraternity of Order begins with a bunch of magically-inclined sages in Sigil that had gravitated there from various prime planes. Back then, they were what a prime would call a "college of magic", picking their numbers from various worlds - from Toril to Cerilia and so on. Of course, having to reconcile the magical traditions of dozens of worlds was quite a feat, and so they worked on developing theories that would uncover the basic laws that underpinned wizardly magic. Forget that "born to power" heritage sorcerers work with... they were working on what let pure training and knowledge allow a wizard to harness one of the strongest forces in the universe, perhaps even *the* strongest force.

It's a cinch for anybody that knows how the Fraternity operates now to see how that developed. Once they had a theory for that down, they started looking for ways to "cheat" magic. Though they didn't consider it more than spell research, it was what a modern Guvner would consider primitive study of what they now call "loopholes". Their research succeeded beyond their wildest beliefs, and some started theorizing that the laws of magic weren't alone in their malleability. Their search led them naturally to Mechanus, where they set up a secondary fortress to complement their home in Sigil. From there, they slowly gravitated away from a pure study of magic to a study of the multiverse as a whole.

They took the name "Fraternity of Order" not too long prior to the Great Upheaval to replace "The Planar Order of Magic". Their orderly ways allowed them to weather the Lady's new edict without even blinking for the most part, only restructuring their activities slightly. Becoming a part of Sigil's rule by the factions, they took up the role of record keepers, keeping track of laws, statistics, events, and so forth. But laws became their *métier*, since there was always somebody needing to know what the laws were, thanks to the constant power struggles - both small and large - in Sigil. And needless to say, the Guvners used this to their own benefit, interpreting and using the laws in their favor. Of course, the fact that they ran the courts, often playing judge, prosecutor, defender, recorder, and more, also helped them quite a bit. Though they were unable to create new laws on their own, they were able to bury laws they didn't care for occasionally.

Over time, the faction got more complacent. Influence and power took its toll; though empowered by order, they were also trapped by it. More members joined with no inclination towards studying law past Sigil's books... sloppiness crept in, something that would have been anathema during their origins, when they picked only the mightiest minds from across the planes. The faction became a haven for the unimaginative and rigid, and their original ideal of exploration was lost between a mountain of bureaucratic paperwork and a maze of internal regulations. A number of older Guvners, disgusted with the situation, traveled back to Mechanus to try to pick up where they believe their faction left off. Particularly taken by studying Mechanus once more, they joined with some of the disillusioned Guvners there, breaking from the faction and becoming the sect known as the Mathematicians. They went on to study Mechanus solely, though they would often share notes and efforts with the Guvners of Mechanus.

Somewhat recently, the factol of the Fraternity by the name of Lariset the Inescapable locked herself up, only explaining during her occasional outings that she was on the verge of a new discovery. One day, she vanished, and it's assumed by most Guvners that she'd ascended somehow to a higher power, having discovered a Great Axiom. Her successor was Hashkar, a planar dwarf. His single-minded quest for knowledge seemed to define him, and he was an easy choice to lead the faction. While he wasn't exactly a interesting fellow, he seemed to know anything about everything, and that was enough for the Guvners. Shortly before the Faction



War, though, he was revealed to be a petitioner, with the rumors being his “faith” in life was one for Sigil itself, and he was somehow reborn as a petitioner in the City of Doors! Even though the concept seems impossible, it's not unthinkable, considering the facts. Hashkar wasn't Mazed like the other factols, and rumors were spread that he had some sort of agreement with the Lady of Pain. Of course, none of that saved him from the blade of a Xaositect, inflaming the already natural enmity between the factions of law and chaos. The fact that attempts to raise or resurrect Hashkar magically after the War were completely abortive didn't help the Guvners refute matters, either. After this disaster, the Guvners then joined with the rest of the “Guardians of Peace” during the War, weathering the chaos afterwards just as they did the Great Upheaval centuries ago. However, when the dust was cleared, they could no longer be the keepers of law in Sigil. Though they still had their knowledge, much of their power was lost.

Afterwards, the Fraternity of Order retreated from Sigil, joining with their fellows on the plane of Mechanus. A flurry of talks followed on a variety of subjects, with most centering on the central question of “where did we go wrong?” Most agreed that while their organizational structure was able to weather the chaos rather well, the fact remained that plans and theories centering around Sigil, some of them hundreds of years in development, had been put on indefinite hold. Quite quickly, a small power struggle erupted between Jamis, a high-ranking Guvner from Sigil and cleric of Oghma, and Nancias Garabutos, the wizardly head of the Fortress of Disciplined Enlightenment. Jamis was the obvious choice to succeed Hashkar, but Nancias was already head of Guvner doings in Mechanus. At the same time, a grand restructuring of the Fraternity was taking place. “For everything a place, and a place for everything” became the tagline that marked many speeches and talks during this time. The Mathematicians were reabsorbed into the organization, with the promise of a new direction for the faction luring them back.

Jamis, after many debates, was elected - though many Mechanus natives resent the fact that it was probably due more to her charming presence and divine favor than to intellectual ability. Still, Jamis softened the conflict by announcing that she would be leading an expedition to form a safe house and library in Sigil again (so as to avoid threatening Nancias' authority). Also, the structure of bureaus was greatly expanded with the interest of exploring previously neglected studies and widening the scope of the Fraternity's research.

The Guvners haven't forgotten Sigil; indeed, it's been foremost in their minds even during their absence. Since it seemingly lies in the middle of the Outer Planes, the Axioms discovered there might be the most valuable of all. Rumor has it that Jamis has quite a few of Hashkar's journals, which may include darks regarding both Sigil and the Lady of Pain...

Goals

The main goal of the Fraternity of Order remains as it always has been - to gather knowledge and information in order to gain the secrets of the multiverse. How they've gone about it has changed in some ways, but their defining element has remained unchanged in over a millennium.

Towards this end, they have set up shop in Sigil again so that they may resume their studies. Through an agreement with the aasimon and modrons that run the Hands of Time, a clockwork piece of Mechanus that's somehow been planted in Sigil, they've been able to gain a new stronghold where they can continue their studies. In return, they'll be putting in money and hard work to expand the Hands of Time, as well as deal in the acquisition of new plots of land to develop on. Many are still working in the legal system and bureaucracy, though without their former badges of office. Jamis heads this operation personally, keeping each development and outgrowth on a tight, controlled plan.



Keeping Menaus, a new layer of Mechanus, from slipping back to Arcadia stable is also a major undertaking by the Fraternity. Rooting out the leftover Arcadian petitioners and shipping them back to Arcadia is a high priority for Nancias, who is planning and overseeing the operation. Unfortunately, the Xaositects - and possibly even the Harmonium - are confronting them on this point. Even with their modron allies and their work to import additional lawful inhabitants to the layer, it doesn't look like the layer will be stabilized anytime soon.

Allies

The traditional allies of the Fraternity of Order in the old days before the Faction War were the Harmonium and the Mercykillers. Unfortunately, the Mercykillers were dissolved in the Faction War, and recent events concerning a new layer of Mechanus, Menaus, look to damage Hardhead/Guvner relations, possibly irreparably.

Conversely, they've found new allies in both of the Mercykillers' splinter groups. When in need of having their body guarded, they've hired the Minder's Guild, the label under which the Sodkillers' business endeavors operate. On the other hand, their return to the City of Doors has led them to assist the Sons of Mercy from time to time in the fields of law enforcement and peacekeeping.

Enemies

The traditional enemies of the Fraternity of Order are the Xaositects, naturally enough. Their philosophy of engendering chaos is quite disruptive to Guvner activities, and the fact that one of their number killed Hashkar hasn't helped matters any. Distance and time have mellowed things somewhat, but it's certain that meddling in Sigil will cause both groups to meet head-on in the future.

The Revolutionary League is none too fond of the Fraternity either, but with the Guvners out of power, the League's hostility has dropped a notch. Still, given the claim by the Guvners that they plan to run everything, some Anarchists are inclined to take "preemptive" actions against them, even today.

Special Note

Almost all Guvners speak Legalspeak, their version of high Planar Trade. Legalspeak may be taken as a bonus language by any starting Guvner. If the Guvner has no bonus languages (or joins after character creation), it may be taken for the cost of a single skill rank, regardless of the Guvner's class. Legalspeak is obtuse and impenetrable for non-speakers, combining Draconic with high Planar Trade (but either root language is hardly recognizable as a part of Legalspeak), as well as over a millennium of Guvner jargon and professional terms.

THE FREE LEAGUE

"Right there, cutters! Step up! Step up! Ol' Surefoot'd be sellin' the dark o' things, an' you'll be needin' a lantern afore too long, methinks! M'names Merlianik the Surefooted. An' sure's my name, what I've got here you'll want a cut in!"

"Now I wouldn't sell ya short, sell ya high, or sell ya bunk! But that'll be up t' yer mind to be makin' now. What I be sellin' ya is what they don't want ya to know."

"Books! Ever'one o' them t'make a Hardhead give ya the peery eye. An' if'n ya pop on over to Melodia, say yer 'ello ta one of... ask 'em how the arse end of Arcadia fares."

The bariaur's words carried over the corner in the Grand Bazaar. The swirl of crowds slowed before him as he lifted high two rough bound copies in his hands. Over his flanks, saddlebags

were packed with books and scrolls. There was a jingle from the satchel over his shoulder as he passed around the tomes and gathered the jink.

"Cross me palm with a bit o' jink, a stinger or two or three, and I'll see what I've got that you might take a likin' to. A word's cheap enough a charge. The truth costs a bit more. Factol's Manifesto for sale if you'd take a peek, an' more than that if you'd take an ear t' m' words."

"Now what'ya be wantin', lass?" He leaned in to hear the words of a halfling cutter as she stood tiptoe, before both eyebrows lifted right up. Even as she darted off between the legs of the crowd, he was looking his way up Copper Lane.

"Folks, folks!" He waved to the crowd, sliding his coin into his pack. "I be sorry t' be leavin' ya wantin', but I'm a mite wanted m'self. Tomorrow'll find me on 'nother street, in 'nother lane, maybe on 'nother plane - but you look, an' you'll find me." He smiled widely as the crowd began to back away, before bounding to the top of his booth. He lifted a hat to the three guards of the Minder's Guild, making their way through the crowd, before leaping off towards the alley behind him.

Philosophy: Freedom and individuality.

Nickname: Indeps.

Headquarters: The Outlands.

Majority Races: Tauric creatures.

Majority Classes: None.

Factol: None.

Prominent Members: Harys Hatchis (NG male human Wiz 11 Free League), Kylie (N female tiefling Rog8 Free League)

Alignments: Any, with neutral tendencies.

Symbol: A yellowish or golden-toned abstract dragon, circling in on itself to eat its own tail, wings above its body though folded close.

Philosophy

A true Free Leaguer has no philosophy and no problem telling you so if you try to confront them about it. When asked directly on points, most Indeps will give a loose definition or simply not answer the question at all, turning it back upon the questioner. The only thing that a Free Leaguer will be definite about is their independence. They are free to make up their own mind as they wish, and will not give up that freedom for any price. See, the Free League isn't about spreading a particular philosophy. They don't have a common belief; fact of the matter is, most don't believe there is a "right" belief to begin with. To accept one philosophy over another is only restricting yourself, denying independent thought in favor of someone else's opinion. Members of the Free League are not held to any creed other than individualism, freedom, and tolerance. They accept any person, are often non-judgmental, and can be found scattered throughout the Outlands and within Sigil. In the end, the philosophy of the Free League is not having a philosophy. A member determines his own mind, and does not simply follow an outlined guide for his beliefs.

Brief History

The Free League's true age is lost to time and numerous holes in the histories of the ancient city of Sigil. It is possible that the faction has been around as long as the factions themselves have been around, in one form or another. Perhaps longer, if the nature of the loose alliance of independent minds existed before the factions were formed. Unfortunately, not even the Guvners have any conclusive records on the subject. One of the few things known for certain is that the Free League enjoyed its largest population following the Great Upheaval. At the time, roughly forty-nine factions fought for power in Sigil until the Lady herself declared that there would only be fifteen factions. Many of those factions that had neither the power nor the



numbers to establish their own place amongst the remaining fifteen fell under the mantle of the Free League - a faction of laissez-faire philosophy that would allow them to keep their own ideals. Within fourteen days the Free League was the largest faction in Sigil, with nearly a million members.

Yet fifty years later their numbers had dropped to less than twenty thousand. The Free Leaguers simply died by the thousands, without warning and without a recorded cause over a period of several years. Naturally, many blamed other factions for cutting them down in jealousy. Others spoke of a curse from some pantheon of powers, and a few even attributed the deaths to an unknown internal strife. Medical records of the time, what few survived the years, speak of a bizarre plague that found Indeps to be choice victims. What the plague was, where it came from, and why it ended before wiping the faction out all remain a mystery. Indeps that were alive during the time often refuse to discuss what happened, seeming to prefer that it be forgotten.

Regardless, the plague returned only a few years ago, once again mysteriously culling the numbers of the Free League. Indeps fell sick, dying within days or sometimes hours with no cures available in Sigil. In the gate-town of Tradegate cures were available from a few of the Free Leaguers there if the patient managed to arrive in time. Similar to the previous plague, it struck without warning, though much more subtly, and many an Indep was dead before knowing they were sick. Eventually the news traveled through the Indeps' rumor mill to all ears, prompting some Indeps to avoid Sigil entirely and stick to the Outlands, at least until it disappears again.

Since the Free League always refused to call itself a faction, or appoint a factol, it never had a representative in the city. They simply refused to give up their freedom enough to allow one individual to control them, even if it might have been to their benefit. Thus, before the Faction War, the Indeps had no rights under Sigil law. Naturally, this helped make the Harmonium their greatest enemy, as the Hardheads already believed the Indeps' freedoms were in direct opposition to their ideals of order. Likewise, with the Harmonium's strict requirements that all around them "fall in line and march to the beat of the same drum" the Free League often felt its independence was endangered. Harmonium members were prone to harass members of the Free League, even to arrest them on groundless accusations, and without the legal representation on their behalf, many Indeps simply disappeared.

With the events of the Faction War, the Free League, like all the factions, became distracted from their current troubles. When their leaders disappeared, the Indeps immediately accused the Harmonium, the Mercykillers, and even the Fraternity of Order for secretly killing them. But without their leaders the Indeps soon lost their heart and spirit. Directionless, many Free Leaguers joined forces with the Doomguard against the Hardheads out of a sense of revenge. What Indeps didn't join retreated out of Sigil to other safe locations, particularly Tradegate, the most heavily Free League-aligned gate-town of the Outlands.

With the Lady's Edict, the Free League was banished from Sigil, along with the other remaining factions. The surviving Indeps didn't mind, considering all the other factions were getting the same message. In fact, this meant that the Indeps had won their cause: the factions were no longer able to control the free-minded and free-willed people of Sigil. The Free League had banded together under the ideals of individuality and freedom only to find by the end of the day that the Lady had made that the standard. Factions were now irrelevant, at least in Sigil. As an added bonus, since the plague seemed to spread in Sigil, the Free League may once again be free of it.

The Indeps continued for the most part just as they had before. They had lost many friends to the War, and a few decided to split off to form their own sects. After all, there was now no need for the Free League "cover" of protection against the Lady's rule that there would only



be fifteen factions. But the vast majority of Free Leaguers continued about their business as if the future were the brightest it had been in a long time. They no longer had the Harmonium breathing down their necks, they no longer had the Mercykillers to unfairly punish them, and they no longer had the Guvners enacting laws that they couldn't protest against. The business of exchange of goods and information continued.

With the factions dethroned, the Indeps have had more opportunities to expand. While none are willing to go so far as to mark the Free League symbol publicly in Sigil again, the Free Leaguers were amongst the first to return to the Cage and pick up pieces. Following the Tempest of Doors, many Indeps took the chance to make a profit by exploring the new portals, and as a result Indep-owned businesses rediscovered trading routes faster than most. As they were among the first to rediscover the portals and were more willing to risk the Lady's whims than most trading houses, Indep-owned trading companies have been particularly successful in the years immediately after Faction War. News travels fast amongst a group of "friends looking out for each other", and it wasn't long before the Indeps were back in operation, portal scramble or no portal scramble.

Goals

Most Indeps have their own personal goals, and the faction as a whole doesn't set any for its members. The closest thing to a goal that the Free League currently has is to continue fair business practices in the Bazaar. The Indeps discourage price gouging and other unfair practices. They are certainly in favor of independently owned small businesses, and are not interested in monopolies or any other practices that would restrict the livelihoods of buyers and sellers alike. Beyond that, a body's business is their own and no one else's. They still offer support to their "friends" and the underdog. But as some Indeps would say, "if you want free handouts, go to the Bleakers."

Allies

The Free League hasn't really changed much, though many of the other factions have. Contact with the other factions, new or old, is generally limited to business deals, conversion attempts, or the occasional fistfight when a Hardhead is involved. The Indeps are too loosely organized to have allies as a whole, though individual members often have friends in interesting places.

Enemies

The Planar Trading Consortium, under the leadership of Estavan, has been trying for years to consolidate a grip on all trading in the planes. With the war in Sigil, though, his power within the Cage has faded, especially as fewer trading companies are willing to risk the Lady's whim by using Sigil's portals. Estavan, however, can still make a pretty profit by taking advantage of the position of the Outlands as a central point in the planes. It may take longer than using portals, but it will work. He has been rebuilding his power base there before he moves to regain power in the Cage.

Unfortunately, the Indeps pose a problem to him now. There are no factions to suppress the Indeps anymore, and they're not willing to sell away their free will at any price he could offer. In Tradegate and the Outlands at least, they have a well-established foothold and connections – even a built-in market in the form of Indep villages. The Free League businesses and trading houses won't bow down to Estavan's growing monopoly, and soon that is likely to cause some serious trouble for all involved.

Even though the Harmonium has retreated to Arcadia, and claims to be stepping away from the extreme militarism of the past, to the Indeps "once a Hardhead always a Hardhead". Indeps are even more wary of heading near Arcadia now, and there are some members of the faction that still feel that the Harmonium had something to do with the disappearance of their old



leaders. Along the same lines, the Indeps are perhaps more cautious of the Sodkillers than of their predecessors, the Mercykillers. With the new faction's influence in Sigil and their preference to operate outside the law, they're a primary threat to Free League operations in the Cage.

THE HARMONIUM

The multiverse has always needed someone like us.

Throughout the multiverse, discord and strife rule. Not just in the Lower Planes, where the Blood War rages on without end. Even in the sacred realms of Arcadia, Mount Celestia, and Bytopia there is conflict and strife. Even between beings of Law and Good holy wars have been fought, and countless millions have died. The multiverse has always needed those who would, with a firm hand, end the petty squabbling and meaningless disagreements. The multiverse has always needed those who would unite all of the planes into one harmonious whole that would not struggle, that would not break, that would not war.

Yes, the multiverse has always needed someone like us.

- The opening lines of the Book of the Harmonium.

The Harmonium believes that peace and harmony is the perfect state of the multiverse. In times of peace, farmers can tend to their crops, merchants can trade freely, and soldiers don't have to die. Clearly, peace is better than disharmony and war. And what causes disharmony? It's simple, say the Harmonium: disagreement. When two nations or just two people disagree, it leads to friction, discord, and ultimately fighting. To that end, the Harmonium believes in minimizing disagreements by working together as one group. Their goal is nothing less than recruiting every sentient being into the Harmonium. And once everyone lives in agreement with all others, then the multiverse will enter into a golden age of peace.

Philosophy: Universal harmony through force of arms.

Nicknames: Hardheads.

Headquarters: Melodia in Arcadia.

Majority Races: Aasimar, dwarves, humans, zenythri.

Favored Classes: Fighters, monks, paladins.

Factol: Faith (LG female human Clr17 (Saint Cuthbert) Harmonium)

Prominent Members: Killeen Kaine (LN male half-elf Wiz16 Harmonium), Nicolai Mabru (LN male tiefling Wiz12 Harmonium), Tonat Shar (LG male human Ftr10 Harmonium)

Alignment: Lawful good or lawful neutral.

Symbol: A sword thrust downward in front of a shield.

Philosophy

"The multiverse has always needed someone like us."

So begins the *Book of the Harmonium*, the most revered book of the faction. Within that tome the goals, rules, and core philosophy of the Harmonium are laid down. And central to the Harmonium philosophy is that of the truth of belief. Not just the truth of what *they* believe, but the truth of belief *itself*.

See, it's obvious that peace and harmony is the perfect state of the multiverse. It's only when this is achieved that a person can make the most of his life, and not waste it in a struggle of ideals and petty differences. It's clear, then, that the only true belief is that which brings about peace and harmony. Truth is harmony, the Book explains, and harmony is truth. And only

if everyone accepts this doctrine can peace ever be achieved; anything else is a selfish deception.

When belief is power, belief can be used for the selfish quest of individual ascension, to create discord and conflict among society, or it can be used to forge a unified front of peace and safety for all. Those who care about others strive to find a common system of belief that benefits everyone, while those who only care about themselves choose a different system of belief, inevitably false because it will inevitably lead to disagreement, which causes friction and even war. It is this common belief, this belief that by working together peace can be obtained, that the Harmonium places at the very center of their organization.

Unfortunately, there are many folk that resist the Harmonium, regardless of the truth of their cause. Mostly chaotic people who prefer strife and oppose harmony, and even many good folk who cause friction while thinking it's for the best. And so it's the Harmonium's job to educate them. Remember, disagreement is the cause of war, and so only when everyone agrees with the Harmonium and adopts their beliefs can peace ever be truly obtained. Most Harmoniums will take any opportunity to lecture the uninitiated on the *absolute rightness* of their cause. They *know* with an utter conviction not commonly found even among other factions that their cause is right and just. After all, how could it not be? The Harmonium belief has to be right, because the Harmonium belief is the one system that can bring an end to war.

Of course, not everyone can be swayed, and the Harmonium recognize this. The tanar'ri are a prime example; beings of pure chaos and evil, the tanar'ri would never accept the Harmonium ideals – their ways of thinking are just too different. Therefore, the Harmonium itself has had to become a military machine to fight their menace. That may sound paradoxical, but it really follows quite naturally from their beliefs. After all, doesn't the *Book of the Harmonium* warn that difference of belief inevitably leads to war? And cannot peace only be achieved when the multiverse all accepts the truth of the Harmonium and accepts a common belief? While these facts are obvious, who thinks the tanar'ri will ever accept law and good? Will the slaadi ever conform to the truth of harmony through cooperation? No, they never will. Thus, they must be dealt with in the only way possible: through force of arms. Simply put, to bring about peace, first you must defeat the warmongers. The Harmonium will bring peace about, and will pay any price to get it. If bringing about peace means thumping heads, then the Harmonium is willing to thump heads. Every time the Harmonium defeats an enemy, there's one fewer person opposed to peace, one less barrier to the universal harmony that the multiverse is destined to have. They'll bring about peace to the multiverse, even if they have to wade through every god-forsaken layer of the Abyss and defeat every tanar'ri to do it. It's a nigh-impossible task, but they're trying anyway – even if it kills them.

Brief History

The Harmonium has been around for about five centuries in total, but has only had a strong presence in the planes for the last three. It started five hundred years ago on a prime world called Ortho. It was there that a group of adventurers calling themselves the Knights of Harmony set out to “rid the country of chaos and bring peace to the land.” It was a simple goal, one that many adventurers aspire to, but unlike most adventurers, the Knights of Harmony actually succeeded. And once they'd brought peace and harmony to their own country, they set out to do the same to other countries. And after those, still more.

It was hard work, and sometimes the Knights even found themselves fighting others that were good and lawful. They were saddened by these misunderstandings; how could two peoples, both essentially good and lawful, fight each other over what in the end were small details? It seemed to them that only when a people were united could they ever truly be at peace, and they wanted the peace on Ortho to last, even after their time had passed. But how could they ensure that the countries of their world wouldn't squabble and fight among themselves ever again?



The Knights had become quite famous, legends in their own time, and so they began to exert their political power. As they vanquished evil after evil, the kings of Ortho swore allegiance to them. Wherever a king would not pledge himself, the Knights found a noble that would, and supported their claim to the throne. In time, the Knights of Harmony united all of the planet, even the so-called “monster races” such as the beholders, under one banner, so that the peace they created would last forever. This government they called the Harmonium.

In time, the Knights did die, but their legacy endured. For a hundred and fifty years, there was complete peace on Ortho. But then the trouble started. Every now and then, chaos and discord would appear, and the Harmonium would have to deal with it and put it down. After much study, their clerics and wizards determined that the source of the chaos must be off-world, for certainly their own world was now perfectly serene and pacified. In the end, they decided to mount an expedition to the home of chaos and evil on the Outer Planes – the Abyss. It’s a testament to how little they knew about the multiverse that they thought an expeditionary force would be able to set up a beachhead there, and the problem would be dealt with within a few decades.

Of course, the force was decimated by the tanar’ri and other demons. After being pushed from the Plain of Infinite Portals to the Caverns of the Skull Goddess and back again, they retreated to a more neutral location – Sigil. From there, they wised up on how the multiverse worked, and developed a new plan. Establishing extensive bases on Arcadia, the plane that most closely matched their alignment and ideals, they set out to convert other planar races, as well as others from Prime Material worlds. The Harmonium has extended its empire to half a dozen other prime worlds now, though none are as fully pacified as Ortho, and most still have pockets of non-Harmonium citizens.

As a faction in Sigil, the Harmonium eventually replaced the Doomguard as the city’s police force. It seemed an obvious fit; after all, enforcement of the peace through strength is both the definition of a police officer’s job and the definition of the Harmonium’s philosophy. Yet in the City of Doors they ran into much resistance, with the first problem being the Free League. The Indepts held nearly the exact opposite philosophy of the Harmonium, and it doesn’t take a crystal ball to see that friction would quickly develop between the two. The Indepts were the ones to give Harmonium members the nickname “Hardheads,” one that they went on to adopt with pride. Over the next few hundred years, the hate between the two continued to intensify, so that eventually some Hardheads began arresting Indepts for no reason other than being Indepts. Generally, the charge was “disturbing the peace,” which they considered perfectly accurate, philosophically speaking.

It was also during this time that what was probably one of the most amazingly bad decisions ever in the history of the Harmonium was made. Someone, and no one quite remembers who anymore, had the bright idea of setting up “training camps” in Arcadia. Of course, the Harmonium had had training camps there for centuries by this time, but these weren’t training camps for Harmonium members, oh no. They were camps for those who hadn’t yet seen the truth of the Harmonium way. Those who spoke less euphemistically called the training camps by what they really were: brainwashing centers. Guests at these training camps were chaotic lawbreakers, and the goal was to turn them into born-again Hardheads. There they were forcefully shown the error of their ways, and in the end, many died. Over time, the evilness of the camps balanced out their good intentions, with the end result being that Menausus, Arcadia’s third layer, slid into Mechanus.

Since the Faction War, the Harmonium has undergone significant changes, most for the good. After Factol Sarin’s death shortly before the War, his wife, Faith, rallied the faction and led them to victory against the Revolutionary League, the Indepts, and especially the Doomguard.



With immense support from within the faction and the blessings of her superiors on Ortho, Faith took on the role of factol and began to reexamine the practices of her faction.

Before the War, the Harmonium was not a popular faction. Many saw them as bullies that tried to press their beliefs on others. And, though they *do* wish to convert everyone else to their way of thinking, they certainly don't wish to appear as bullies. Faith knows that part of that is the faction's own fault, though. She believes that the faction let too many people in that didn't want harmony - they just wanted to beat up those that disagreed with them. Intimidation and violence must sometimes be used as tools for achieving worthy goals, but when they cease being tools and become the goals themselves, then that's the *opposite* of what the Harmonium stands for.

Goals

Currently, the Harmonium has three goals. First, they're attempting to get Arcadia's former third layer, Menausius, back. Faith has closed down the training camps that initially caused the problems there and renewed efforts to recover the layer. Previous efforts to do so have been resounding failures since the Harmonium were doing it for all the wrong reasons: they tried to get it back to cover up their mistakes and save face - selfish reasons that would never get a plane to slide back to Arcadia, a plane that exemplifies actions for the greater good. The complete loss of the third layer has wreaked havoc among the Arcadian petitioners and caused plane-wide problems that Faith genuinely feels guilty about. She wants Menausius back for all the right reasons - to help the rest of Arcadia - and she's spoken passionately about it, trying to instill this feeling into the other Harmonium officers. It's helped, and the recent battles with the modrons for control of the former layer have been more successful, not because of any change in tactics, but because it's being done for all the good of Arcadians. Planar sages think parts of Menausius may be about to slide back, and that it just needs a bit of a push - some act that truly reflects Arcadian principles.

Secondly, the Harmonium is trying to improve their image. To that end, their new unofficial base in Sigil is the reconstructed Armory, which was vacated when the Doomguard were all but destroyed. After the faction relocated to Melodia and Factol Faith became the new local leader of the city, the former mayor, a tiefling named Nicolai Mabru, had to find a new job. Faith had some very definite ideas about that. See, Mabru is one of the Harmonium's biggest success stories. He was once chaotic and evil, but his life was saved by a Harmonium member, and he instantly converted to the faction. He still fights against his inner nature, but in the end he's now a loyal, dedicated member of the Harmonium. Faith felt that Mabru would be a good example to others, and so she funded his plan to reconstruct the Armory, which the faction uses to promote a positive view of life under Harmonium law.

Under Mabru's guidance, the Armory has been transformed into a training and unofficial recruitment center (the unofficialness being stressed, so as not to anger the Lady). Indeed, it's not even technically owned by the Harmonium. Instead, it's simply a private venture undertaken by Mabru, who runs things there as he sees fit. The Harmonium have no administrative functions there, and training is not restricted to Harmonium members. Instead, everyone is welcome to train, though training of course costs some money, and Harmonium members *do* get a significant discount. Within its walls, experts in a wide variety of weapons and fighting styles teach their pupils. Spellwords, arcane archers, lashers, champions of law, and all manner of other exotic martial experts are willing to train students and pass on their experience. To further the Harmonium ideals of races working together, Nicolai usually arranges to have odd races paired together, so that dwarves and drow or tieflings and aasimar often find themselves attending the same sessions or one teaching the other. In many ways, the Armory has become much like the Great Gymnasium, a concept many Cagers find amusing considering the Harmonium's distrust for the Ciphers.



And finally, the Harmonium is turning their attentions to the neutral good and chaotic good races. They've been fighting chaos and evil on their own too long, and they believe that they'd be much more successful if only they could unite those of good alignment under the banner of law. Indeed, the Harmonium has revived the idea of the Pax Benevolus, an ancient treaty once written by the good-aligned gods in an attempt to find common ground they could all agree on. It was never ratified, because of sometimes vast philosophical differences even among beings of good heart, but the Harmonium will never give up on the idea of uniting beings of good under one belief. It's a central tenet of their philosophy, after all. But instead of shopping it around to the gods (who they can't exactly walk up to and chat with anyway), they've been trying to get the major leaders of the good exemplars to agree on a modified version that they hope can be used as a foundation to unite all beings of good. Their version reads:

- i. *It is Wrong to Murder*
- ii. *It is Wrong to Covet What is Not Thine Own*
- iii. *It is Wrong to Commit Adultery with Mortal or God*
- iv. *It is Wrong to Steal*
- v. *It is Wrong to Lie or Twist What is True to Benefit Thyself*
- vi. *It is Wrong to Sacrifice Lives to the Gods*
- vii. *It is Wrong to Dishonor Thy Parents and Family*
- viii. *It is Wrong to Sully the Purity of the Upper Planes*
- ix. *It is Wrong to Consort With Fiends*

Of course, the eladrins and guardinals won't have it, but that won't stop the Harmonium from trying.

Allies

The Harmonium gets along well with other lawful factions, particularly the Fraternity of Order and the Sons of Mercy, though relations with the former have become strained over the issue of Menaus, which the Guvners want to keep in Mechanus. Due to their alliance during the Faction War, the Harmonium is also on very good terms with the Society of Sensation. Though the Sensates aren't generally a very lawful faction, their philosophy isn't particularly opposed to that of the Harmonium, and the two factions worked so closely together during the War that continued alliance only seems natural to them.

Enemies

In the same vein, the Harmonium is generally against the overly chaotic factions. The Free League and the Harmonium share an intense hatred for each other since their philosophies are diametrically opposed. Likewise, the Revolutionary League and the Xaositects are traditional enemies as well. The Transcendent Order, while not enemies per se, have long been carefully watched by the Harmonium, who trust neither their actions nor their "true" motive, whatever that might be.

THE MIND'S EYE

The aged tiefling turned to stare back along the overgrown path towards what had been the sole focus of the last few years of her life. Brushing back a wisp of gray hair from her face,



Sarazh let her gaze fall over the clearly aging manor, its ancient stone architecture merging smoothly with the newer, renovated mason-work that its later inhabitants had supplied. This building, the Dreamhearth, had been under the care of Factor Sarazh most of her life, an old Krigalan manor deep in the Beastlands. This structure had been a secondary base to the Sign of One, a place from which faction members would search the cosmos in the hopes of finding ways to further the goals of their factol, Darius the Veyl. But now Darius had been Mazed, and the faction had fallen into disarray. The pain of leaving showed clearly in Sarazh's blue eyes; she knew that in a matter of hours this building would be sealed in a demiplane smaller than a thimble, at least until it was needed once again.

After the Lady had ordered the factions out of Sigil, a meeting was called in the Hall of Speakers, one to which all Signer highups were invited. This debate over the future of the Signers had literally lasted for days, as seemingly all control over the faction was lost along with their factol. It was only when any chance of coming to a consensus had seemingly died and despair began to fill the Hall that finally, Itheros spoke.

He had slowly risen from this chair, Sarazh remembered, the old human gently stroking his beard in thought, then with careful timing he began to speak in his Prime dialect. "Fellow Signers, I would ask you to listen to me for a few moments." The whole hall fell silent for what may have been the first time that day as the eyes of its occupants turned to their respective peer. "It has come to my attention that our dear friends and closest allies, the Godsmen, have decided to leave Sigil, and retain their status as a faction. They are still strong. But as I look around myself, I see our power falling apart. I see the glory of the Sign of One diminished by the squabbling of childish desires. As we have spent the years arguing in this very same hall, our faction has fallen apart around us without us even realizing it. The common berks of the Hive cannot even tell who or what the Sign of One is anymore. We have fallen from our seats of power."

The whole assembly watched Itheros in anticipation, unsure of what his proposal would be, but clinging with hope to the conviction in his words. "It is now, in our greatest time of need, that I feel we should cast off our arrogance; its burden has weighted us down for too long. I say that we merge with our allies, the Believers of the Source. I say that together, our factions will be more than twice what we could ever have become alone!"

And that was the simply beginning of events that would eventually lead Sarazh where she was, looking at her beloved home for one last time. Giving the Dreamhearth a final farewell, she turned and followed the attendant down the road, wherever it may lead.

The Mind's Eye came into existence shortly after the Faction War, a combined grouping of both the Believers of the Source and the Sign of One. Those who gather under the name of the Seekers follow a mixture of their parent factions' tenets, choosing to travel the planes in search of challenges, which they believe is the path to a new level of existence. Somewhat self-centered, and every last one filled with an over-inflated sense of self-esteem, the Seekers view the multiverse as their personal playground. This arrogant attitude has unfortunately resulted in a lack of popularity with the average planar, though despite first appearances they are far from the callously detached egomaniacs that some berks would have you believe them to be.

Philosophy: Explore existence; face life's challenges; discover yourself and the multiverse.

Nickname: Seekers, Visionaries.

Headquarters: The Outlands.

Majority Races: Half-elves, halflings, humans, shads, tuladhara, zenythris.

Majority Classes: Bards, monks, psions, psychic warriors, sorcerers.

Factol: Ombidias (NG male voadkyn Adp9 Mind's Eye)

Prominent Members: Sarazh (LG female tiefling Clr14 (Deneir) Mind's Eye), Itheros (LN male



human Wiz7 Mind's Eye)

Alignment: Any.

Symbol: A finely crafted sword, with a corona of flames rising from its hilt. Coiled around the blade is a sinuous Chinese-style dragon, its scales a radiant gold, and eyes glowing intently. This combination of the two parent factions' symbols represents their union as a new and budding influence across the planes.

Philosophy

If you were to ask any average planar about the powers, they would most likely claim that they are almighty beings, possibly beyond the ken of any mortal, capable of changing the very fabric of existence on a whim. Members of the Mind's Eye view things a little differently. As the Seekers see things, the powers are just one rung up the ladder from any other person, those who have come to understand the nature of the multiverse well enough to rise to the next stage of a natural cycle. The fact is the Mind's Eye sees existence as a huge succession of circles, or rings. Every time one of us dies, we are reborn in a new body, and with every life we learn a little bit more about the path to cosmic truth. It may take countless lifetimes for a soul to move on, but given the time and disposition, anyone can pass that final boundary into the next level of existence. The Seekers believe the only way to travel up this ladder is to embrace and attempt as many of the countless challenges and opportunities that life presents you with as possible.

The challenges that one is presented with during each life are countless, coming in almost any form; some are blatantly obvious while others will pass you by without you ever knowing it. To fail a challenge in the conventional sense is not the issue, for even in failure experience, and therefore knowledge, is gained. By the Seeker line of thought there was no failure to begin with; the only true failure is in not proving your worth. While one who truly follows the path of the Seeker will be rewarded with a higher state of existence, those who stray away from it may be shown their error by moving backwards and living their next life as a lemur or any other virtually mindless being.

There is no set path to enlightenment for every faction member; such a path is a very personal one. One of the main challenges for a budding Seeker is to find their own route to the next stage. While one may find their path in the simplicity and primal nature of battle and warfare, another may find it in the intricacies of sculpture or any other art form. For this reason, Seekers believe that others should be helped and encouraged to find and follow their own paths, in the hopes that all can eventually fulfill their potential and arise as new powers.

Because the members of the Mind's Eye see existence as one huge challenge, many have come to consider the planes to exist purely for themselves. Everything that they encounter is there as part of their own personal series of tests, therefore only existing to mold them into their final state of enlightenment, bit by bit. This has led to a reputation of self-centeredness for the faction's members, and although this isn't strictly true, there is still an obvious level of detachment surrounding most Seekers. This attitude is almost certainly descended from their predecessor, the Sign of One, a faction who by the time of the Faction War had come to view themselves as virtually deities due to their ability to manipulate reality by will alone.

The important issue to remember is that according to the Seekers, all beings have this potential deeply ingrained in their very souls. Even the lowliest maggot has a chance of transcending, no matter how many stages away from such a goal it may appear. Because of this, all beings should be given a certain level of respect, as for all you know they may be on the very threshold of enlightenment. Every being goes through its various lives in a massive cosmic test to prove his value, rising and falling in relation to each life's demonstration of worth.



Brief History

The Mind's Eye was originally formed from the Believers of the Source and the Sign of One, two of the fifteen factions to take up place in Sigil after the Great Upheaval. The Believers of the Source, or Godsmen, as they were commonly known, were formed by Perrine, an athlete and philosopher who considered the possibility that an individual's success and achievement in one pursuit may be in fact affected by past actions, which may at first glance appear unrelated. He eventually chose to found a group based around this theory, hoping to discover if following a certain sequence of actions could in turn produce only good results.

Around the same time as these embryonic Godsmen were beginning to form, an older society known as the Sign of One had started to flourish. Originally based around the revelations of a woman named Rilith, the faction encouraged members to spend their time teaching the benefits of positive thought, and how it could influence the surroundings of an individual, if concentrated on a single purpose. Despite this seemingly harmless ideal, the focus of the Signers, as they were known, was changing. They gradually began to expand the uses of their reputed mind powers, starting to make dramatic proclamations of events that they intended to cause, then drawing as much attention to the occurrence when it finally happened. Eventually the principle of positive thought was completely forgotten, abandoned as members became self-proclaimed gods, believing themselves capable of making anything they desired come to pass.

When the time of the Great Upheaval occurred, myriad ideological groups were winnowed to the fifteen factions that were to dominate Sigil for the many centuries that followed. It was at this time that the Godsmen were finally given a better-defined philosophy. Their factol at the time, Augy of Faunel, came to the understanding that she was actually her one-thousandth incarnation, and discovered that she could recall each and every one of her past memories. Following her new addition to the faction's beliefs, and several other revelations during the following centuries, the Godsmen moved their purpose to helping every living being ascend the ladder of existence in the hopes that eventually a life itself would rise to a new level of existence.

Both factions continued their own courses, becoming close allies, but at the same time retaining their own beliefs, until the Faction War occurred. Just as conflicts between the factions began to reach a boiling point, factols Vergrove and Darius disappeared. With their leaders gone, both factions individually concluded that they had ascended to another level of existence, but like most of the other factions tried to keep their disappearances in the dark, not realizing that this occurrence was not unique to their faction. When full-out warfare finally started between factions, both groups were in a state of confusion. Without the factols to guide them, all the factions began to fall apart, each accusing another of the turmoil that wracked Sigil. A few days after the destruction of the Armory at the hands of a combined force of Hardheads, Martyrs, and Sensates, both the Sign of One and the Believers of the Source chose to join this alliance in the opposition of the Anarchist threat, realizing that the stability of the City of Doors was now at stake.

Eventually, when the Lady of Pain intervened and chose to cast the factions out of Sigil once and for all, the Godsmen realized that this was possibly the catalyst they had all been waiting for. How could they experience all that the planes had to offer if they simply stayed confined to one city? Taking the much-needed push, they chose to abandon Sigil, intending to leave for the limitless potential of the planes. Just prior to their leaving Sigil for good, the Godsmen were approached by the Sign of One. In recent times the strain of keeping a faction based entirely on the ideal that every member was the center of the multiverse was starting to have an effect. So many splinter groups had formed from the Signers that they were gradually beginning to fall apart, each chasing their own personal objectives, forgetting the true



meanings behind the faction. As a result, the remaining high-ups chose to make an offer to merge with the Godsmen, hoping to form a new faction by joining their like beliefs. The faction that arose from this union was the Mind's Eye, also known as the Seekers. Merging the philosophies of the two factions, they elected Ombidias, former factor of the Godsmen and a voadkyn from the little-known prime world Glemayne, to be their new factol. The Seekers chose to move out into the planes to find what destiny awaited them, ready to find the inspiration and motivation that their predecessors had lacked.

Upon leaving Sigil, the Seekers wandered aimlessly amidst the magnitude of the planes for a time, lost as to where to go or how to continue their plans. Gradually, after much traveling, they found that the Outlands was the plane most likely to suit their needs, a land of unlimited variety from which they could extend their search into the more turbulent planes surrounding it. Thus it has become the center of many Seeker journeys, a suitable doorway to everything the Great Ring has to offer.

Goals

The Mind's Eye is generally a very individualistic, scattered faction. As a result, it lacks much of the structure and influence of the more organized factions, the members being more interested in the achievement of the individual's own personal goals than in the overall might of the faction. As a whole, the Mind's Eye is still in the process of forming its plans and intentions, being currently most interested in working out its place on the planes. The majority of the faction for the time being is located around Tir na Og, the realm of the Celtic pantheon. This place seems to be quite an inviting location to use as a base of operations, and though there is still some dispute, it appears for now to be a temporary power center for the faction, at least until a proper decision can be reached. Although the Seekers are based in the Outlands, the majority of them do not stay in one place for any extended period. Expanding their horizons, many have taken to traveling the planes as much as possible, hoping that it will provide them with some new insight into their own teachings.

One of the main objectives of the faction currently is to try to form allegiances with several of the other exiled factions wandering the planes, creating bonds from their similar situation if nothing else. These negotiations are going well with the Fraternity of Order, but also with the Athar, albeit to a lesser extent.

Despite these issues, possibly the greatest problem that Factol Ombidias is being forced to deal with is sorting out his own faction's members, and keeping the more problematic ones under control. Some of the Seekers still seem to cling too closely to their old factions' tenets, unwilling to modify their beliefs in accordance with the dramatic changes that have occurred over the past few years. This issue has not become too major yet, but Ombidias has every intention of "nipping it in the bud" before it begins to grow out of hand. Occasionally there are small flare-ups between those who interpret the faction beliefs differently, but on the whole, the situation is being kept under control.

An issue that is currently being discussed is the proposal of the construction of a new faction hall. Although not even the style or scale of such a building has been addressed, several suggested locations have been offered. The currently most popular ones are in the city of Thebestys, which is said to have a library containing the answer to almost any question, and an undefined location in the Hinterlands, though the latter is only supported by the more eccentric members of the faction. Some have even suggested the notion of a hall capable of shifting from plane to plane, an idea which would not only demonstrate the outgoing style of the Seekers, but also make a clear statement of power to the rest of the factions.



Allies

Due to the relative youth of this faction, the Mind's Eye has had very little time to develop allegiances, or set up its place among the rest of the factions. Despite this, the Fraternity of Order feels a certain sense of kinship with the Seekers, and is probably the closest group that the Mind's Eye has as to ally to date. Seeing many similarities between the two factions' central beliefs, the Mind's Eye realize that the Fraternity of Order's constant search to understand the laws that bind the planes together, and their own acceptance of the tests that the multiverse presents, are not so different.

The Athar are also in the process of trying to develop a level of friendship with the Seekers. This is primarily due to the fact that both call the Outlands home, and because of the vulnerable situation that the Athar are currently in, now that the Lady of Pain does not protect them from the powers. Several groups of ambassadors and diplomats have presented themselves to the Seekers in hopes of allegiance, but there is still a reasonable level of mistrust, mainly due to the bitter rivalry between the Athar and the Sign of One prior to their disbanding.

Enemies

Likewise, the Seekers do not have any real foes currently. They simply have not been around long enough to be able to tread on anyone's toes seriously enough to spark proper conflict. This is bolstered by the fact that the Believers of the Source were generally well received throughout the planes, and although since their disbanding this benefit has lessened to a degree, the legacy of their influence among most political groups is still partially present today.

Unfortunately, the somewhat self-absorbed attitude of the Seekers is gradually growing into a widespread stereotype across the planes. Although on a political level they are currently unopposed, faction members have a growing bad reputation among the normal populace of the planes as being troublemakers. This is gradually developing into an issue for the faction, as the numbers of those wishing to join the Seekers are generally low.

THE REVOLUTIONARY LEAGUE

Broggo cast a peery eye over his shoulder. No one was coming. He breathed a sigh, and returned to work. His fingers nimbly flipped through ancient leaves of paper, yellowed and dusty. He'd been at the Mortuary for two months, and those cursed Dusties weren't the type to wigwag. Nope, they were silent as the dead they fawned over. But Broggo got the feeling, deep down in his gut, that they were up to something.

There were better assignments out there than this, but Broggo was still green. Someday, he'd prove his worth to the cause, and they'll let him hang around the Civic Festhall. Broggo was doing his level best to act like one of the berks here. Wasn't easy, walking through these echoing chambers in the half-light, nor was it easy staring at corpses every day and not flinching. And the Dustmen kept as quiet as the dead, softly creeping about, going about their business.

He needed to find some papers that weren't written back when his grandmother had teeth. If Broggo could get his paws on the Dead's secrets, then he could give this pit the laugh. The Dustmen pretended they were just law-abiding citizens, that they were a faction no more. But Broggo didn't buy it. Broggo reached for another pile of scrolls, lost in his thoughts.

Dirt-caked fingernails dug into his neck, as the stale air of the Mortuary was forced from his throat. Grabbing the bony arms and slowly twisting around, Broggo stared into eyes like open

graves. His tongue swelled up like a worm in the Ditch after the rain, and his eyes rolled back into his head. He hadn't heard the thing coming. The dead were quiet indeed.

The Revolutionary League stands for the reversal of the present order. Operating in utmost secrecy, they strike out against their enemies from the darkest shadows. Ask a group of Anarchists what their ultimate goal is, and you'll get a different answer each time. Truth is, the Revolutionary League has never been known for unity or cohesion. The members are so paranoid they don't even trust each other, much less agree on a common objective. What they can all agree on, though, is that no one should be telling anyone else what to do. Exiles, runaways, and misfits all find a home of sorts with the Anarchists, and a dream of a better tomorrow where all folks're free to make their own way, and face up to the darks of the multiverse by themselves.

Philosophy: The truth can only be found once the chains of the social order are removed.

Headquarters: Carceri.

Nickname: Anarchists.

Majority Races: Chaonds, githzerai, half-elves, humans, tieflings.

Majority Classes: Fighters, rogues, sorcerers.

Factol: None.

Prominent Members: Hazrag the Shifty (NE male human Rog14 Revolutionary League), Little Miss Tempest (CG female gnome Ftr11/Rog6 Revolutionary League), Baltazar Clearview (CN male tiefling Brd15 Revolutionary League (Committee of the People))

Alignment: Any non-lawful.

Symbol: The conjunction of two curving, bladed golden designs.

Philosophy

Order is slavery. No one should be able to tell another what to do, not the city officials, not the judges, not the rulers, not even the powers. See, an authoritarian god's just one more taskmaster on a guy's back, keeping him down. The Anarchists fight to tear down all repressive structures, from the lowest toady to the highest of the high-ups. Several ways exist to accomplish this goal, and the League ain't shy about using just about any of 'em. From propaganda to sabotage, infiltration to assassination, the invisible army of the Revolutionary League fights its war with any weapon it can get its hands on. If they can just uproot all of this decaying system, then the people will finally be able to find the truth. Why is that, you ask?

The planes, as any planar will tell you, operate on belief. If someone can tumble to the dark of what makes them tick, then the planes truly open up for them. But that's easier said than done, and there simply ain't no chance of doing that with things the way they are. A body has to be able to make their own choices, for good or bad, to get anywhere. But no one's going to let them do that. The folks in power, well, they want to keep it that way. They like sitting on top of the heap, and they won't let anyone topple them without a fight. Most poor fools don't know any better, and swallow any lie they're told, and ask for seconds. But if all you believe is what someone else tells you, you're never going to find the truth. The Anarchists are there to help you shake off those chains, whether you like it or not. It's for your own good.

The Revolutionary League is open to all alike, regardless of race, profession, or background. Well, as long as you aren't lawful in alignment, that is. While some would say that the exclusion of folks with a lawful bent makes the Anarchists just as reactionary as their enemies, fact is, lawful types don't have the thirst for upheaval that a true Revolutionary does. Anyone else who wants to can join up, if they can find their way in. The best way to contact this secret society is to make yourself visible (but not too visible). Let your dissatisfaction with the way things are be known in quiet conversation with enough people, and sooner or later, someone'll come calling. Because of the League's welcoming nature, it's provided fellowship (structure even, paradoxically enough) to any number of bashers who never would have found it otherwise.



Some wonder if the Revolutionary League ever qualified as a faction, and why the Lady of Pain would let them exist. Well, for starters, trying to figure out what the Lady's up to will drive you mad, and if you ain't quiet about it, it'll drive you into the dead-book or the Mazes. If the Lady kept 'em around, she must have had a good reason. Some of the more introspective Anarchists or their analysts figure it was because the Anarchists provided a place for those who didn't have any other place to be. Even if most Anarchists listed the Lady as one of their eventual targets, what did she have to be afraid of, anyway? In fact, a few think that the real reason the Lady hasn't flayed them all is 'cause she knows they're right. So, she lets them go on, skulking and planning with the occasional upheaval. It's all for the greater good, and it's not harming her rule none. As for whether or not they were a faction, the Lady proclaimed fifteen factions back in the days of Great Upheaval. So even if groups like the Indeps and the Anarchists chafed at the definition, they fit it better than any other comers. And even if they operated without factols, they were still mighty big movers in the Cage.

But for all that, there's no real unifying philosophy at work in the League. Everyone's working towards this perfect society, but no one's agreeing on just what that society is. The League could've become a cozy little group of old men, sitting in their comfy armchairs and rattling their mouths about this, that, and the other. But the Anarchists don't have time to worry about the future; what matters is right now. The Anarchists believe in action, thinking the rest will take care of itself. Otherwise, nothing would get done. The one thing the Anarchists can all agree on is that things need to change.

Brief History

Who knows when the League started? Not even its own members know. They've never been much for record-keeping, after all. Anarchists have a tendency to look at all sorts of revolutionaries from the past and bring them into the fold. And other folks do the same, painting all dissidents with the same stripes. But many of these heroes never belonged to a faction calling itself the Revolutionary League. The same is true today, for better or worse. Anytime something bad happens, the Anarchists get blamed. Everything from bar fights to childish pranks gets laid at their feet.

What is known for sure is that Anarchists have operated in Sigil for a few hundred years, maybe as many as 700, or as few as 300. In that time, all sorts of havoc have been caused. Two major assassinations are the known work of Anarchists: Factol Kraymar the Bloody of the Mercykillers and Factol Sarin of the Harmonium. Kraymar (mustn't forget "the Bloody"; those charged with crimes by him sure didn't) was engulfed in a spectacular conflagration of spells flung from several alleyways as he marched to the Prison one day. It's said that his carefully orchestrated assassination was not solely the work of the League, but was aided by several Mercykillers who felt he needed to be slapped down. Sarin fell to an enchanted arrow, and his death helped spark the bouncing keg of powder that was the Faction War.

Other victories for the Revolutionary League include Omar, the Anarchist infiltrator who made it all the way to the top of the Harmonium. Upon his election to factol, he tried to disband the Hardheads, but they arrested him and handed him over to the Guvners at the courts. They then handed him over to a Mercykiller executioner and that was that. Still, it was a roc-sized feather in the Anarchists' caps, throwing light on the fallibility of the factions. Anarchists were also responsible for the revelation that dull little Factol Hashkar of the Fraternity of Order was actually a petitioner, and of the Lady of Pain at that! This caused quite a ruckus in the days leading up to the Faction War, until Hashkar was laid low by a Xaositect, and the story lost its punch. But it certainly made the old sage more interesting than he had ever been before.

For centuries, the Revolutionary League plotted the downfall of the factions. They figured with the factions and all their hide-bound traditions and viewpoints out of the way, the average planar in the street would be practically free. The factions had become the symbol of



everything the Anarchists hated, and all their energies were focused on knocking them aside. Nowadays, that vision proved a bit shortsighted. Sure, the factions controlled the functions of Sigil, but it's not like a city without factions has no rules or officials. With the Lady's Edict, the League's dreams came true; the squabbling of the factions finally ended with the Lady of Pain stepping in and saying through her dabus mouthpiece, "Pike it, berks, or you'll get yours!" And the factions went away, just like that, though they seem to only be biding their time, waiting for the Lady to change her mind.

So the League got what it wanted, right? If only. After they were done patting themselves on the back, they started looking around and asked, "Now what?" No answer has been forthcoming. And truth be told, the League had a lot to do with the current state of affairs. They stoked the flames, spread the rumors, lied, cajoled and killed to keep the Faction War rolling right along. Good for them; they did what they set out to do. Now they're dusting themselves off, and haven't got the first clue what to do next. See, they had been operating under the idea that philosophizing could wait for so long, their rusty brains can't get back into the habit too quickly. The hated factions have been kicked out of Sigil, but nothing much seems to have changed. There are still courts; there are still those who'll beat you down soon as look at you; there are still fat merchants with their fat fingers worming into every slice of pie. And as successful as the Faction War was, the Lady sent the top-shelf Anarchists to the Mazes, leaving what little leadership they had in shambles.

So, when word came down from the Lady, the Anarchists bolted to their hidey-hole in the first layer of Carceri, almost to the one. Nestled amongst the prisons of Othrys, the Bastion of Last Hope squats like a big, stony toad. This natural bluff is riddled with caverns and chambers, and has one of the few reliable portals out of Carceri, connecting up to the City of Doors. This secret base traditionally operated as a safe house for Anarchists who needed to lay low for a while. Even here, Anarchists wore masks and kept their real names dark, for the most part. The truly desperate could go under the knife, and come out with a new face, though it was rarely a pleasant one. Now, this den bristled with Anarchists, elbow to elbow, plotting their next step. Some remained in Sigil or other bases, waiting for the word to come down. Many couldn't wait for the word to come, and ran out to cause turmoil in the meantime. In Sigil, they operate without symbol or name, but it's still pretty much the same.

Then there's the Daughters of the Light. This pan-factional group formed for the purpose of quashing the League. Membership was open to all, regardless of race, faction membership, or, despite its name, gender. They drew members from almost every faction save the Anarchists. To them, the Revolutionary League did not qualify as a faction, and was instead the greatest threat to peace Sigil knew. But that changed after the Faction War. The Lady of Pain proved the League right; she revealed that the factions themselves were the problem all along. Now, the Daughters exist to stamp out the remains of every faction *but* the Revolutionary League. Some bloods say this organization is a tool of the League, always has been. Before the Faction War, the Anarchists used them to spread disinformation about the Anarchists, making sure everyone knew how dangerous and powerful the Revolutionary League was. Since the War, these cat's paws have been manipulated into finishing the job of destroying the factions and all their works. There's probably some truth to it; after all, the Anarchists are masters of the infiltration racket. Hazrag the Shifty, a guy who manages to both swagger and slink at the same time, says it was all his idea, but he's been known to lie before.

Goals

Many of the Anarchists are of the opinion that with the factions off their throne, planar society is on the cusp of coming into its own. It still needs a further push, though. Obviously the people aren't quite ready, 'cause the blindfold's been taken off, but they still can't see their way. The skeletal remnants of authority remaining in Sigil need to be smacked down, and then a transitional governing body will be put in place, made up of members of the Revolutionary League. This new "Committee of the People" will shepherd the berks toward the next stage of

development. The Anarchists say they'll only need to run things for a little while, until everyone can stand on their own feet. It may be harsh, but it's necessary.

Of course, not all Anarchists like this idea too much. In fact, some of 'em are so against it, they've splintered off, and are working to stop the Committee's plans. This has become their primary focus, and fighting them off has become a big focus of the Committee too, if they want to survive to see their master plan come to fruition. What'll the splinter group do once they've gotten rid of the Committee? Go back to doing what they've always done, namely working to free planars everywhere from the yoke of law and order. They just don't see the point of replacing that order with one of their own making.

Plenty of Anarchists haven't sided with either group. Some want to see how it plays out before they line up; no point in backing the loser and getting strung up with them after all. Others think it's all a waste of time to be fighting amongst themselves, when there are plenty of enemies out there who don't wear an Anarchist's badge. Whatever their reason for playing the middle, they operate pretty much as they've always done, while they wait for the True Revolution.

Debate broke down real quick. Remember, Anarchists tend to be fighters, not talkers. The splinter group operated in secret for a good while, but once the Committee figured out there were "traitors" in its midst, the purge began. The fighting lasted about a week, but so many on both sides knew secrets about their own hideouts, there was no way for anyone to hold it for long. But Carceri's a big place, and there're lots of places to hide. Skirmishes are frequent, but deaths are rare. Little Miss Tempest, one of the deadliest gnomes to stalk the planes, continuously hops between Curst and Carceri. Her tireless efforts against the Committee of the People have won her the admiration of friend and foe alike.

Anarchists fight each other the same way they fight their other enemies. Anarchists spend most of their time infiltrating other organizations. They keep their real faction membership close to their chests, and only their compatriots in their cells know the dark of who they are, and what their missions are. They spread rumors, half-truths, lies, and even actual facts. They blow things up, and they outright murder. They operate in autonomous cells of three to eight members. At all times, they act as if they were members of the faction they infiltrate, and that includes going on missions for them. They take what they can get from the situation, as long as they don't do anything to risk their cover story. When a cell grows too large, it splits, with one member belonging to both. The high-ups belong to several cells, spiders at key points on the web, spreading orders and information.

Allies

Friends have always been few. Nowadays, they're pretty much non-existent. The Doomguard is crippled, hiding out. The Xaositects have officially disbanded, not that they were terribly organized to begin with. Course, there are still plenty of them around, possibly even more chaotic than they were before. Neither of these groups were staunch allies, but the Anarchists worked with them on occasion. And though they may not agree, many Anarchists admire the Bleakers' dedication to helping the unfortunate and downtrodden.

Enemies

All factions are officially counted as the Enemy. So are the guilds, the governments, and the powers themselves (though most Anarchists leave those to the Athar). The Harmonium are especially loathed. While the Sons of Mercy are better than the Mercykillers were, the Martyrs butt heads with the Anarchists often enough, and the League doesn't like their presence in Sigil. The League also keeps a close eye on the Fraternity of Order, even while they sit on the gears of Mechanus.



 THE RING-GIVERS

"But that's the beauty of it!"

Jeremo danced around the room at a dizzying pace, forcing Ingwe to close his eyes. The Lady's Jester paused after a bit, noticing the look of pain on the man's face. A sly expression crawled across Jeremo's features, and he leaned in close to his captive.

"Weary of this life, Ingwe? Care to move on?" A sneer punctuated Jeremo's sarcasm.

Ingwe struggled to open his eyes, fighting to remain conscious as long as possible, his lifeblood seeping away from the wound to his head. With great effort he spoke. "You offer me your sympathy, even if only in jest, which puts me in your debt. In exchange, I offer you that which you desire...control of the Ring-Givers."

Jeremo stood silent, stunned for a moment, before giving a great shout and spinning around the room at an even dizzier pace. "Ha ha! I won! I won!" He careened off the walls and bumped into Ingwe's chair several times during the celebratory dance. Ingwe felt the rope slip.

Keeping his eyes on the Lady's Jester, one of the most powerful men now left in Sigil, Ingwe slowly freed his hands. He smiled and whispered, "Realize that this great gift puts you in my debt, Jeremo. There will come a time when the power you have craved will become an anchor around your neck. I can only hope that by leading the Ring-Givers you will come to truly understand the nature of giving, before it is too late."

Ingwe crushed the delicate talisman secreted in the hem of his tunic, calling in a favor owed to him by another of Sigil's elite and powerful. With a barely audible "Pop!" the former leader of the Ring-Givers vanished from sight. Several seconds later, Jeremo finally noticed he was alone.

"Where have you gone, Ingwe? No matter...no matter... I have what I want. Now, where to begin?" Jeremo gave a dramatic pause, one finger resting on his lips in mock thoughtfulness before breaking into more capering and dancing. "Aha! I have it! It is always best to begin at the beginning..."

The Ring-Givers are a small but growing faction from Ysgard. Completely opposite in ideals from the Fated, the Ring-Givers believe that everything that is given up will come back to them. Thus, whoever can give up everything and convince the multiverse to do likewise will reap the greatest reward in true accordance of the Unity of Rings. To the Ring-Giver, possessions are a form of limitation, and freedom from desire equates to complete power over oneself and eventually the multiverse. Ring-Givers live only on the charity of others, and they thrive in doing so. In a place as cold and uncaring as the multiverse, that is an accomplishment indeed.

Philosophy: You only get as good as you give.

Nicknames: Bargainers, Beggars.

Headquarters: Palace of the Jester in Sigil.

Majority Races: Bariaurs, half-elves, humans, tieflings.

Majority Classes: Any.

Factol: Jeremo the Natterer (CN male human Ftr6/Rog12 Ring-Givers)

Prominent Members: Borghild Walsing (CG female human Sor9 Ring-Givers), Grim Arneger (CN male human Ftr7/Rog5 Ring-Givers), Ingwe Alting (CG male human Ill14 Ring-Givers), Ragin Ravensson (NG male human Rgr12 Ring-Givers), Voltraagh (CE glabrezu Brd4 Ring-Givers)

Alignment: Any, with chaotic and good tendencies.

Symbol: Outstretched hand with a ring in its palm

Philosophy

Freedom is the true path to power. The acquisition of material possessions dulls a person's true potential. The responsibilities of business and property distract from a person's true purpose. When you have nothing, then you truly have everything.

Ring-Givers covet neither money nor possessions, and rarely do they wield overt power. They keep themselves free of debts while living day to day on the charity of others. When given an object, a Ring-Giver uses it as the need arises, then passes it on to another more in need. Rarely does a Ring-Giver keep more than the bare essentials.

Such a lifestyle would seem self-defeating, especially on such an independent plane as Ysgard, where charity is considered an insult. What distinguishes a Ring-Giver from any common beggar in any city on any plane is a sense of integrity and self-worth that remains in balance. Ring-Givers don't expect a free ride; they gladly work for what they need, and they lend aid without complaint. "The gods help them who help themselves," is a favorite saying, and the most unlikely of creatures have given aid in the most unlikely of situations. Stories of such fortune have helped their philosophy spread slowly throughout the planes.

Of all the factions, the Ring-Givers' philosophy has possibly been subject to the most interpretations. People tend to embrace the core of the Ring-Givers' ethos – give and others will give to you – and alter it to fit their individual perspectives. The Ysgardian Ring-Givers philosophy remains the best-known interpretation: people in a community contribute as much as they can while keeping track of those who owe them something in return. A wainwright mends a farmer's wagon wheel, knowing the farmer will bring him a bushel or two of apples when the crop is ripe. A woman cleans her neighbor's house when there's a new arrival, as the neighbor did the same the previous year. When a stranger comes to town, a family feeds him and gives him a bed for the night; if the stranger doesn't pitch in and help around the house the next day, the family knows they'll be paid back all the more. Such folk hold on to the favors owed as if they were the purest platinum, trusting their charity will be returned in kind eventually. And they're usually right.

Limbo and Pandemonium see a fair number of Ring-Givers as well, as it's easier to give up everything when you don't have anything to begin with. While this makes those planes a bit more hospitable, Ring-Givers in those regions are more likely to make a quick shift of perspective when it doesn't look like they'll be making something for their help.

On the fields of Elysium and across regions of the Upper Planes, the Ring-Givers' philosophy is less self-motivated and more altruistic in nature. Believing that it is a moral obligation to give one's all to those around them, these Ring-Givers act to better the community as a whole. In their eyes this is the only path to the greatest benefits for everyone, and by living by example they slowly convert the multiverse to follow their lead. Not everyone may do so for the same reasons, but the very act of giving is enough.

Abyssal Ring-Givers have the most twisted interpretation – everyone owes them something, for one reason or another. A Bargainer on the Plane of Infinite Portals might admire a fighter's sword, suggesting that it would help him keep his silence if questioned about the fighter's whereabouts. A quasit might solicit individual gifts from party members, implying it would "forget" the adventurer was with the others if the price is right. Even a marilith might accept a person's belongings in exchange for not killing them. Hardly any different from regular extortion, the Abyssal Ring-Givers consider such gifts payment for a debt inherently owed, and that their "gifts" of inaction can be just as valuable as active assistance.



Brief History

Like most of the factions, the origin of the Ring-Givers is unknown, though it almost assuredly began in Ysgard. The principles of the faction seem to have existed in different forms for a very long time, but it was Ingwe Alting who gave it a firm philosophical foundation. In a land where brawn triumphed over brains on a daily basis, Ingwe Alting found himself ineffective in the pursuit of glory by combat. He had no skill with a sword and little coordination, and he lacked the strength and stature of his peers. This troubled him greatly, for he wished to live up to the ideals of his forefathers, and by the standards of his people he did not contribute to the honor of his clan.

Failing to find prestige through combat, the illusionist sought to win respect through another Ysgardian tradition: hospitality. Using his magical talent to provide bountiful food and entertainment, Ingwe earned a reputation as a wonderful host, and by offering more than was customary of his family's resources, over time his visitors all came into his debt. As his influence over the community grew, so did his generosity, until a cycle of favors and repayments established him as one of the most successful men in his region.

His fame naturally spread as others attempted to follow his path to fame. True to his nature, Ingwe shared the secrets of his success, gaining him the respect and admiration of like-minded Ysgardians. Thus, he was eventually given leadership over the fledgling Ring-Givers and named its factol. For years Ingwe gave his all to the faction, formalizing its ideals and guiding his fellows to understand their true meaning. Unfortunately, the Ring-Givers became an organization of a select few precisely because of this perfectionism, and the faction's growth became stunted. It is believed that is one of the main reasons Ingwe "gave" the stronghold of Skeinheim on Ysgard back to the Fated and moved the majority of the faction's organization to the City of Doors shortly before the Faction War.

This played into the hands of Jeremo the Natterer, who used the war to stage a coup and seize control of the faction. In the wake of the Lady's Edict Jeremo's natural charisma and ambition is spearheading the Ring-Givers' philosophy across the Outer Planes, where its message is becoming more common, if diluted. No one is quite sure how Jeremo is running the Ring-Givers out of Sigil; is he truly mad, or does the "Lady's Jester" have a special deal? Whatever the reason, it has drawn even more eyes to the Ring-Givers as the other factions consider their position in the multiverse.

Goals

Aside from whatever the goals of Jeremo the Natterer are, the Ring-Givers as a whole have no direction or higher purpose other than general enlightenment of the multiverse's populace. Through their spreading their philosophy to others, more people across the planes become accustomed to giving, which in turns reinforces the ideals of the faction and the benefits of its individual members. Likely as the faction spreads and its power grows, Jeremo will begin to pull his weight more and more, but in the meantime he seems just as focused on spreading its ideals as any member.

Allies

The Ciphers have always been the Ring-Givers' staunchest allies. Both organizations believe that action is the key to existence, but the Ring-Givers believe that giving is the only action that counts. The Ring-Givers also have improving relations with the Sons of Mercy and the Bleak Cabal, which both find common ground with the Ring-Givers' dedication to giving to the community, whatever the reasons. Most other factions regard Ring-Givers in a favorable light, as generosity begets feelings of good will.



Enemies

The Fated have long considered themselves the enemy of the Ring-Givers, but in truth, the organizations are two sides of the same coin. One takes, the other gives. The flip side being that despite their best attempts, the Fated always find themselves paying for the Ring-Givers' generosity in the end. Naturally, the Ring-Givers enjoy this relationship, despite its tendency towards competitiveness, and while a Ring-Giver will rarely speak ill of the Fated, one would be hard pressed to find a Taker that thinks much of the Ring-Givers.

THE SOCIETY OF SENSATION

Turim writhed in agony, his eyes forced wide by fear, pain surging down his nerves like burning white lightning. The baatezu leered over his contorted, twitching form, as the imp servants slowly, almost teasingly, peeled back another agonizing layer of Turim's skin, a depraved smirks spreading across their monstrous little faces.

"Stop," the paeliryon commanded in its sickly voice, a voice that would almost have seemed appealing to the shad were it not issuing from the obese, sagging mass of weight that was his tormentor. Drawing closer, bringing its garishly painting face within a few inches of Turim's face, the devil leered, gently stroking its claws across his flayed chest, sending new jolts of agony through his body. The shad gasped for breath, though the air around him was filled with the thick, intoxicating aura that followed his captor like a cloud of sickly, syrup-choked flies.

"Maybe now we will talk, my dear little shad, my precious little shad," it whispered coaxingly; "this will soon all be over if you tell me what I want to know. You know how much I want to know, and you know how much you want to tell me." It licked its tongue delicately over its sharp needle-like teeth, drawing even closer. "Don't try to deny it. Deep down you know you want to tell me. You know that this can all end in an instant. All you have to tell me is this one little, trivial secret and all your suffering will end."

Turim stared back, his eyes filled with an overwhelming hatred for this obscenity, the very concept of evil given form incarnate. It watched him calculatingly for a few more seconds, then withdrew its face, an expression of mock disappointment splayed across the hideous, geisha-painted visage. Suddenly lurching forward with a speed which belied its size, the Paeliryon grabbed Turim's slender throat in one hand, ripping him from the table which he had been tied to and with a look of malicious glee thrust its monstrous claws into his gut, as though he were a limp straw doll. Screaming with pain, Turim squirmed in its grasp as he felt his very body distorting, blistering as his flesh lost form slowly.

Suddenly the shad felt a jolt, as though his mind were being thrown back into a dark, shapeless void of nowhere. Then he felt his body impact with the floor. Opening his eyes slowly as they adjusted to the light, he saw the smooth, perfectly spherical sensory recorder stone on the pedestal upon which it was kept. Gasping for breath, streams of perspiration flowing down his forehead, his breathing came in quick and shallow gasps. He pulled himself from the floor consciously as several other Sensates stared in his direction, one or two of the more senior faction members smirking to themselves knowingly.

His breathing steadying, Turim eyed the stone warily with a newfound level of respect. Maybe he would think twice the next time he made drunken bets with his peers at the Portal Jammer. No wonder the elderly githzerai had given him the expression she did when he requested the use of this particular stone...

The Society of Sensation goes by the basic philosophy that to truly understand something, it first must be experienced. With this as their compass, a Sensate travels the planes in the



attempt to find new experiences, in the process coming to understand these new concepts. Although many claim them to be simply hedonists, in truth there is much more to this path. A "true" Sensate will accept any experience short of death, no matter how unpleasant, as they feel that whether a Sensate enjoys an experience has little to do with whether they learn from it. As a result, while one member may be sampling expensive wines imported from an obscure prime world, another at the same time may be testing his perseverance in the depths of an Elemental Plane, yet both do so in the same never-ending pursuit of knowledge.

Philosophy: You can only understand the multiverse by experiencing everything it has to offer.

Nickname: Sensates.

Headquarters: The Gilded Hall in Arborea.

Majority Races: Aasimar, bariaur, chaond, elves, half-elves, halflings, humans.

Majority Classes: Bards, fighters, psions, psychic warriors, wizards.

Factol: Cuatha Da'nanin (LN male half-elf Rgr15/Eye of Da'nanin5 Society of Sensation)

Prominent Members: Annali Webspinner (CN female bariaur Ftr7 Society of Sensation), Quleine (NE female alu-fiend Sor5 Society of Sensation)

Alignment: Any.

Symbol: A navy blue disc with a lighter metallic-blue foreground. Engraved at the top is a blank, genderless face, prominently displaying the nose, eyes and mouth. Below the face, a cupped hand and ear are located. The clear depiction of the human sensory organs symbolizes the unity of the senses.

Philosophy

The Sensates are based entirely around experience. As they would put it, your senses are the only things that allow you to truly know that something exists. To know an object exists you first must see or feel it. To be able to comprehend a food's taste, you must have eaten it. To understand the meanings of a new piece of music, you must have heard it. This makes experience the ultimate teacher, and all knowledge must therefore stem from it. A Sensate can then apply such an explanation to anything that can be thought of, for every physical thing requires the senses to be experienced, and all mental concepts require a connection to physical reality, for without outside inspiration the mind cannot function.

Because of their ideals, the Sensates feel that to gain and build upon personal knowledge, it makes far more sense to actively seek the experiences that life has to offer rather than wait for them to come to you. In a lifetime a Sensate will experience countless smells, sounds and situations, but this will still only be the most minute fraction of what the planes truly have to offer. While every member is encouraged to travel the planes in search of new experience to be found, they are also given complete access to the Sensoriums in Sigil.

The Sensoriums span countless rooms throughout the Civic Festhall, the Sensate base of operations within Sigil, each containing thousands of sensory recorders: small, round stones that are used to store specific occurrences or situations that a Sensate has experienced. Through these, junior Sensates can gain wisdom from various experiences, without having to subject themselves to the dangers or difficulties of experiencing them personally. The sensory recorders cannot be taken beyond the doorway of the Civic Festhall without losing their magically stored contents. This feature was originally designed for security reasons, but caused the faction serious problems when they chose to relocate to their current headquarters, the Gilded Hall of Arborea.

Due to the hands-on style of the Society of Sensation, the life of a Sensate can be a very expensive one. This means that the faction regularly attracts members from the upper classes, who easily have the money to take exotic trips to any of the planes that they care to. This is both a burden and a boon to the faction. On the plus side, a large amount of money becomes available to the Sensates, making them possibly the most financially secure of all factions.



They are able to spare no expense in their fantastical productions of many well-known plays, hiring powerful illusionists to supply special effects, and employing the best actors from across the planes. On the downside, many false Sensates are able to creep into the faction, believing that it is purely about decadent pleasure, or at least using the faction's facilities to that end. Although many Sensates would like to have these members cast out as the frauds they are, several are also the main benefactors of the faction. Without their financial support, the quality of Sensate productions would plummet.

Brief History

The Society originally formed prior to the Great Upheaval, simply one out of the multitude of groups and factions filling the Cage to the brim. They started as a mere group of associates who would gather together occasionally for simple amusement to help the monotony and boredom of their lives move more comfortably. They would organize small trips across the planes, or just exchange conversation or tell tales, whatever really interested them at the time. As the years passed, folks gradually began to hear of the group and expressed curiosity. Anyone who was dissatisfied with their life would join for the sensations and occasional adventure it brought. The Society enjoyed an influx of members, and as the faction grew people began to look beyond the immediate implications of their experiences.

Some time after the Society of Sensation was established, construction began on the Civic Festhall. A small fortune was put into this endeavor, with its huge auditoriums, lecture theaters, and training rooms. Despite the horrific amounts of money being put into the building's construction, those who invested in it realized the financial potential that entertaining the masses could provide. Upon its completion, the Festhall was filled every night with entertainments of every style and description. One evening the audience would be enthralled by some of Sigil's most prestigious actors performing a well-known tragedy, the next night, the bizarre and breathtaking aerial acrobatics of a troupe of air genasi gymnasts.

As things constantly improved for the Sensates, they willingly allowed all who wished to become a member to join, irrespective of race or background. Clueless who needed something to cling to after leaving the Prime found the Sensates welcoming, and the faction as a whole continued to flourish. Unfortunately, in all of this progression they had become slightly too indiscriminate in their acceptance of members. Many who claimed membership of the Sensates were simply there for the pleasures that the Festhall provided, ignoring the true meanings of the Society's beliefs. Others demanded the same entertainments over and over again, never learning to appreciate the uniqueness of each experience. These false Sensates gave the faction the label of hedonists, and although great effort was put into the attempt to rid the faction of such frauds, this problem still plagues the Sensates today.

All the while, other groups and beliefs had been growing, just like the Sensates. In fact the number of factions was beginning to grow almost out of hand; every direction a basher looked, a new philosophy would sprout from the gutter. The Lady eventually intervened in this growing chaos, demanding that there should be no more than fifteen factions in Sigil. Many factions merged, more died out or split between several larger ones, but all the way through, the Sensates persevered. A factol was elected to organize this more focused faction and the Sensates, as ever, continued to grow.

Though not a strong supporter of the Faction War, the Sensates did what they could to maintain peace. In an attempt to stop the rising anarchy, the Sensates joined with the Sons of Mercy and the Harmonium, helping spearhead the assault on the Armory, the headquarters of the Doomguard. Afterwards, when the dust of the war settled, they were forced from Sigil along with all the other factions. The Sensates divided, one-half following Da'narin and leaving Sigil, the others remaining in Sigil to help the city recover from the effects of the war. Da'narin's followers traveled with him to Arborea, where they now reside in the Gilded Hall.



The majority who remained in Sigil continued to aid those ravaged by the Faction War, helping the city's inhabitants, and running the Civic Festhall as before.

Although the Festhall is no longer officially under their control, the Sensates still practically run it, being fronted by the "Entertainer's Guild". Annali Webspinner, a bariaur of wide repute in the Cage, has been placed in charge of the Festhall, taking care of its management on a day-to-day basis. She insists that the Festhall must continue in its original aim, and it still provides some of the best entertainment available on the planes. The Gilded Hall, although it actually houses fewer Sensates than the Civic Festhall, is now the seat of Sensate power. From there Factol Da'narin orchestrates the political maneuvers of the whole faction, supported by a council of advisors. Although Da'narin is technically the leader of all Sensates, Annali Webspinner runs the Festhall independently from the rest of the faction, so as not to tempt the Lady's wrath.

While the majority of members are still devoted to the core tenets, the Sensates as a faction appear to be taking an increasingly disturbing turn in their ideals. This problem is mainly due to the current factol. Da'narin was consort to the former Sensate factol, Erin Montgomery, a priestess of the Celtic goddess of healing, Diancecht. The loss of his lover affected Da'narin severely, and Da'narin seems to have become a far grimmer, introverted character since then, having taken to brooding for extended periods of time. His deep-set dislike of both Sigil and its ruler is well known throughout the faction, though for the time being he seems to not be acting upon it. This same attitude is slowly affecting those closest to him, as more and more Sensates begin to judge the Lady of Pain as a hypocritical tyrant. Such a development has caused grave concern among the faction high-ups, and many fear that their factol must be stripped of his title if the faction is to remain safe.

Goals

The main goal of the Society of Sensation, as ever, is still to teach others the wonders of the planes and how, through only the senses, true knowledge can be found. Although they have politically relocated to Arborea, the presence of the Sensates in Sigil is still a force to be reckoned with. The Lady may have banned the factions filling political functions in Sigil, but the Civic Festhall continues to be used as the primary recruiting center of the Sensates. It still runs the nightly performances that gave it the name it has today, and many claim that under the guidance of Annali Webspinner, the Festhall has grown not only in power, but also in the sheer wonder and diversity of its shows.

One primary concern of the faction is the state of their factol. Da'narin has changed drastically since the loss of Factol Montgomery. Though he was originally a kind, open half-elf, his passion for tales of far lands seems to have been snuffed out, replaced by a grim determination. He has taken to long periods of silence, and is growing increasingly harsh in his punishment of those who cross the Sensates, the once welcoming Gilded Hall now being out of bounds to all non-faction-members, on pain of death. He seems to have developed an air of apathy that coils around him, making his underlings edgy when in his presence. Many Sensates accuse Quleine, an alu-fiend and closest confidant of Da'narin, of poisoning their factol's mind, though due to her standing with the factol few dare to speak out against her openly.

Individual Sensates do what they enjoy most, seeking out new experiences across the multiverse, occasionally returning to recite their tales or record their experiences. They encourage others to embrace their lifestyle as much through friendly debate as by living by example.

Allies

The Sensates have always been very popular with the people of Sigil. Their former factol was possibly the most influential and well-loved citizen of the Cage prior to her imprisonment, and

the support of her faction still continues, even after her loss. Because of this, the Sensates have great leverage in Sigil, and even though they've been displaced to Arborea, the chances are that the average people would side with them above any other faction.

Among the other factions, the longest-running allies of the Sensates still around are the Free League and the Fraternity of Order. The Free League are generally seen as recruitment stock by most Sensates, though a cannier cutter also realizes that they make indispensable hirelings due to their lack of allegiance to any particular faction. In the case of the Guvners, the Sensates find their ideals fascinatingly intriguing, even if they seem somewhat quaint, and are willing to ally with them if it favors both sides.

The newest ally of the Sensates, a group who they had little interest in before, are the Harmonium. During the Faction War both factions worked closely together in the attempt to keep Sigil stable. With the end of the war it seemed obvious to continue with such close connections, and the factions are well on the way to becoming close partners, despite the fact that the two philosophies seem to have little in common.

Enemies

As popular as the Sensates appear to be, even they have gained enemies during their time on the planes. They have clashed with the Sodkillers in recent years, and though they despise the Dustmen's pessimistic view of life, the most prominent and easily recognizable of threats is the Doomguard. The Doomguard's ideas flaunt the very basis of Sensate philosophy, as they implies that planes are merely decaying objects from which nothing can be learned. What's worse, the Doomguard have no desire to stop this decay, embracing the entropy that they feel is the purpose of existence. The lack of desire to preserve the planes is possibly what repels the Sensates most of all, as with the loss of any part of the planes, unique experiences will be lost to the Society of Sensation forever. Although the Sinkers do not seem to go out of their way to disrupt the plans of the Sensates any more than most other factions, the Sensates find them distasteful and unpleasant company.

THE SØDKILLERS

"Where's my pikin' money, ya little leatherhead? Ya said ya'd pay me by- "

A tap on his shoulder gave Zarn pause. He turned around to see a forbidding tiefling warrior, tapping his foot and staring deep into his eyes.

"I want the boy or your life. Don't make me take both."

The powerfully built bariaur spat at Krik's cloven feet, holding up a terrified githzerai youth with one hand against a wall. Krik closed his eyes and prepared himself.

"Ya ain't the pikin' Harmonium...ya ain't even the sodding Mercykillers anymore! Who d'ya think ya are, tellin' me I can't... extract a loan payment from a... a buddy o' mine? Who're you to even tell me 'good day' walkin' by?"

Krik smiled a fanged smile, drew his short sword, and ran him through, all in one motion, giving a curt nod to the frightened githzerai teen.

"Sodding Mercykillers? Nah... merciless Sodkillers." He casually tossed a piece of paper on the ground and walked away, beckoning the boy to follow. The teenager picked it up and looked at it. It read: Get him home in two hours, safe and sound, for payment.



It was signed by his mother.

The Sodkillers are of a mind that any dilemma can be resolved with force. Might makes right. And since they see themselves as being mighty, they see themselves as being right. The more cynical of the Mercykillers (or simply the meaner ones) who didn't think that the Sons of Mercy's way would work decided if Arwyl Swan's Son was going to revive an old faction, so were they. This time they wouldn't make the mistake of sharing the reins of power with anyone, much less annoying idealistic do-gooders like the Sons of Mercy. Now they hire themselves out as mercenaries, proving their philosophy works. They've already cemented themselves in Sigil behind the cover of the Minder's Guild, biding their time until the factions regain their status. When that time comes, they'll seize their goals with all of their might until they have everything they want in their grasp.

Philosophy: Might makes right.

Nicknames: Brutes, Sellswords.

Headquarters: Vorkahan in Acheron. The Tower of the Wyrms in Sigil.

Majority Races: Bladelings, githyanki, half-orcs, humans, khaasta, tieflings.

Favored Classes: Fighters, monks, rangers.

Factol: Nijul P'iuuy (LN female aasimar Rng10/Justiciar5 Sodkillers)

Prominent Members: Grubby Garrin (LN male half-orc Mnk10), Tall Tally (LE male osyluth), Nagaro (LE female human Ftr7/ex-Pal7), Coirosis (LE female rust dragon)

Alignment: Any non-good, non-chaotic.

Symbol: A rust-red colored fist on a blood-red-colored disc, surrounded by a border of green serpents.

Philosophy

Might makes right, that about sums up the Sodkillers' beliefs. If there's something you want, take it by force. If there's someone bothering you, bash them about a bit. If you don't like someone's smile, why tell them about it when you can just punch them in the face? If a body keeps smiling after that, maybe he has a good reason, or a physical defect.

Not everyone is quite that violent, and most aren't that indiscriminate in where they aim their force. Fact is, while a lot of the criminals released from the prison during the Faction War are now members, there are even more members that just want to see people get punished for doing what they personally believe is the wrong thing. A lot of ex-Mercykillers who see the Sons of Mercy as softies join up just because they want to continue Mercykiller beliefs as they saw them. Sodkillers, more often than not, are neutral, not evil. And they don't (for the most part) just go around bashing everyone they see for some perceived slight. That's too chaotic for these champions of justice. Even the evil ones still see themselves as upholding the justice they held as their ideal before the Faction War. And the criminals have joined because they were won over by Mercykiller beliefs while in the prison (mostly anyway). Nonetheless, good folk won't find much of a place in this organization, as they are essentially a freelance mercenary group. When they get a contract from a higher-up, they do it, because the higher-up wouldn't have accepted it if it wasn't just in his eyes. The Sons of Mercy's dedication to good seems perverted and twisted to a lot of Sodkillers. They don't see themselves as evil, only dedicated to "real justice" which shouldn't be clouded by either good or evil. Of course, with the fact that the good ex-Mercykillers all went over to the Sons of Mercy, the Sodkillers are becoming more and more a faction of personal justice instead of real justice.

However, conformity is a fundamental faction principle, and the new Sodkiller factol (a former Justiciar) is trying to eradicate all traces of personal bias in the translation of Truth, Law and Justice. Chances are, she'll be highly successful. The Sodkillers are accepting of anyone who is willing to raise a weapon for justice, assuming they don't pause and whine at every individual case like the Sons of Mercy. Mercy is for the weak, and as everyone knows, Sodkillers are all about strength. The faction's message is popular and gaining a lot of power for three reasons.

One, it's simple. You don't have to wrap your head around believing in nothing, or not believing in anything (which is somehow different than believing in nothing) or believing in Law or Chaos or Good or Evil. You just have to believe that there is justice, and that you will mete out that justice where you see it needed. Two, with the sudden vacuum left two years ago by the departure of the Harmonium and the Guvners, people realized they could police themselves. And what better way to do that than to join up with people who only want what's best for justice? Three, the Sodkillers are effective at what they do through the Minder's Guild, and have been since day one. Everyone can see that. The Sons of Mercy, on the other hand, are only just starting to get on their feet. While both represent justice, only one seems to work with any level of efficiency. Simple, just, and effective. No preaching - results people can see and solid pay all attract more people than the Sodkillers need. And all they had to do was flex a little muscle. Proof of their philosophy in action. Might makes right, say the Sodkillers, and it seems that there is little argument.

Brief History

When the Great Upheaval occurred over six centuries ago, the Sodkillers were not very popular, and the Sons of Mercy were not very strong. When they combined into one faction, they solidified their chances of surviving. The Sodkillers gave up mercenary work to carry out punishments of the guilty alongside the Sons of Mercy. Both began seeing things in different lights; the Sodkillers realized that just bashing heads without a little mercy and consideration for the innocent wouldn't improve things, and the Sons of Mercy soon learned that bashing a few heads straightened out the people mercy did nothing for. Over time the two groups lost all distinction, and became the Mercykillers.

As time passed the Mercykillers' beliefs grew away from those of their predecessors, and while all members agreed the faction's methods were effective, some began to wonder if they had lost their true focus. Finally, during the height of the Faction War, the Mercykillers began to fall apart, with Alisohn Nilesia gone without a trace and brother turning against brother. Arwyl Swan's Son rallied together like-minded faction members and declared the Sons of Mercy revived, turning on his former comrades and their way of life in disdain. In response, a group of around two dozen of Nilesia's personal guards worked around the clock with little to no sleep (which they were quite used to, being as Nilesia slept very little as well) to recruit all of the members they felt would be willing to revive old Sodkiller practices. As it turned out, with the infighting and bloodshed that had already spread throughout the city, there were a good number of folk interested in enforcing a little might. The majority of surviving Mercykillers gravitated towards the new Sodkillers, making it one of the largest organizations left in Sigil.

In a place where celestials and fiends walk down the same streets, people easily became jaded and cynical about concepts of good and evil. Justice was always something that mattered to the common folk, though, and the Sodkillers offered a way to justify the things they did and eradicate what they thought was wrong. The Sons of Mercy, on the other hand, led by some "clueless purple prime paladin or whatever" with an idealistic view of "unified good as justice for all", wasn't about to win over the hardened populace of Sigil.

The Sodkillers ranks swelled, and they took up residence in the Tower of the Wyrms. They started off by selling truth potions at ridiculously low prices to encourage repeat customers as well as to foster more truth in the general populace. At the time, the Sons of Mercy commended the Sodkillers highly for their actions, but shortly after the demand increased the Sodkillers raised their prices and began to hoard as much profit as they could. Using the original profits to form the Minder's Guild, the faction turned to mercenary work as their main source of income. Now they are making enough profit to make a Taker envious. The Sodkillers are gaining more converts and more power every day, and if (to a Sodkiller that's "when") the factions are allowed back in Sigil, they're ready to seize as much power as they can. Chances are, Sigil will be a battleground at least once more before factions are allowed back in anyway, and chances are, it'll be the Sodkillers' fault.



Goals

Shortly after forming the Sodkillers established a guild in Sigil called the Minder's Guild which makes up the bulk of their business as a front for people to hire them as mercenaries. They act as bounty hunters, and now (unlike before the Faction War) they can act as judge, jury, and executioner without having to worry about the Hardheads or Guvners breathing down their necks about proper trials. The Sodkillers are quickly moving their way into positions of power throughout the city, without wasting effort on subtlety or tact. So far, this no-nonsense approach to politics has been very effective at garnering public support in the wake of the Lady's Edict. While all this "forcing" business may get on people's nerves as Sigil begins to settle, for now the Sodkillers are enjoying an ego-tripping power grab that doesn't let too much slip through their fingers.

Meanwhile in Vorkhehan, a rogue army of ragtag petitioners, planar mercenaries, achaierai (bird-like creatures native to Acheron), and various rust creatures attacked from below, rusting the roots of the city from within the cube. The army, led by an achaierai named Mnarknak and an elder wyrm rust dragon named Patynara, thought by attacking right in the middle of the Faction War they could gain the upper hand over the Mercykillers there, who were currently locked in divisive struggle between the older Mercykillers and the new Sodkillers. However, the attack only solidified the Sodkillers' position by prompting the remaining Mercykillers to sign on with the new faction. Though Mnarknak and Patynara escaped, the area is now firmly in the control of the Sodkillers. In addition, Coirosis, an ancient rust dragon, became a Sodkiller within weeks of the attack on Vorkhehan, and the Sodkillers now have complete access to the Mines of Marsellin, where a treasure trove of great war machines is lying frozen in iron. Thus, the Sodkillers are trying to convert bladelings and other creatures immune to the plane's effects to the faction so they can get access to the treasure there without becoming a part of it.

Allies

No one really likes the Sodkillers right now, except those with no faction who don't care that the Sodkillers are making power grabs all over the place. They view other factions as weaklings, nuisances, or direct threats to their power.

Enemies

There are many people who dislike the Sodkillers, but their only real enemies seem to be the Sons of Mercy and the Harmonium, who both view the Sodkillers as a threat to the greater good. The Xaositects and the Revolutionary League work against the Sodkillers' interpretation of justice, and neither cares too much for the Sodkillers growing system of enforcement. Active resistance is light so far, as the Sodkillers operate mostly within Sigil, but hostilities are mounting.

THE SONS OF MERCY

Looking rather foppish in purple and gold, the paladin made his way through the streets of Sigil. He was aware of the looks he got, but paid the snickers and stares little mind. His heart was true; that was all that mattered. Well, that and the matter of the man just to his left, who happened to be beating a tiefling into the ground. Turning to the distinctly abusive human, he grasped the man by the shoulder. "If you stand aside, and let me heal him, I can look the other way."



The man hissed, "Your kind aren't guards anymore!", before giving the tiefling a swift kick with a booted foot. "Go preach to a petitioner!"

The paladin sighed, drawing forth his blade. "Your life could be made so much simpler. Unfortunately, you put me into a position where I have to make things simple for you."

The man's drunken blow missed the paladin, who stepped to the side and cuffed the man upside the head with his hilt with an efficient, calculated motion. The man unsteadily drew his short blade as he recovered – only to find the paladin's blade in his gut. Losing orientation and consciousness completely, he fell to the ground...

... Only to wake up a moment later under the paladin's healing hand. "Why... why are you healing me, you barmy... barmy?!"

The man kicked away the drunkard's blade, saying, "Because. You have a spark." The drunkenness faded with the paladin's final touch. "If you wish to speak with me for a bit, we can discuss it further..."

The Sons of Mercy are a revival of an ancient faction, reborn from the ashes of the Faction War. Reestablished by their current leader, Arwyl Swan's Son, they have focused on upholding justice and good across the planes. Though they're a bit disorganized, their hearts are pure – for better or for worse. They are intent on bringing their brand of justice to the planes whether the planes want it or not. But rather than force others into the fold as their predecessors did, most are content in the belief that their righteous deeds will set an example for the planes as a whole.

Philosophy: Justice exists to uphold the greater good.

Headquarters: Bytopia.

Nickname: Martyrs.

Majority Races: Aasimar, humans, zenythri.

Majority Classes: Clerics, paladins, rangers.

Factol: Arwyl Swan's Son (LG male human Pal17 Sons of Mercy)

Prominent Members: Dadkrilik (NG male zenythri Clr14 (Illmater) Sons of Mercy), Thasala (LG female aasimar Pal14 Sons of Mercy)

Alignment: Any good.

Symbol: A hand reaching up to grasp a sword by the blade; indigo blood runs down over a purple backdrop. Black edges curl around and infringe in a jagged fashion, symbolizing the ever-present threat of evil.

Philosophy

The Sons of Mercy's philosophy revolves around "good", the nebulous quality that characterizes the Upper Planes. Overall, their beliefs are still in the process of forming as the faction's membership and responsibilities grow, but they have a few principles that form the basis for their ethos.

First off, the Sons of Mercy believe that all creatures have an innate spark of goodness. They point to fiends that have "risen" and joined the Upper Planes as proof that no creature is truly without the potential for good. Of course, in something like a yugoloth, you probably won't see that spark more often than once every several thousand years, but it is there – at least to hear them tell it. Still, most of the time a spark that tiny isn't worth pursuing, and they realize this. Even though most folks consider them idealistic fools, the Martyrs are smart enough to know not everyone, especially fiends, are likely to convert, much less show a virtuous side.

Secondly, just as you can't truly make a body believe something, you can't force someone to become good. This is where the Sons of Mercy's philosophy differs from those of other, similar



factions; they believe the best method to spread good is to demonstrate its beneficial qualities. Sure, sometimes you can stoke that spark of goodness by forcing evil creatures to perform good acts, but if you overdo it you're only creating tyranny, not spreading good. On the other hand, the absolute wrong way to defeat evil is to go around smiting evil souls. After all, doesn't an evil soul go to the Lower Planes, with the potential to become a fiend and possibly become an even greater danger? While sometimes evil must be brought under a blade, it should only be done in the defense of good places and folk, as just punishment rather than something more proactive.

Finally, justice is only true if it serves good. Locking folks up in prisons or executing them may be necessary, but justice is better served if there is a good act to balance an evil act, especially if the evildoer reforms and performs a virtuous deed. This is the ultimate purpose of the Sons of Mercy, and its principles have ancient ties to the original faction. The original Sons of Mercy believed that law was originally created to foster good, but was perverted for evil purposes by mortals. Justice was split from law, and so they believe that justice must be preserved by ensuring that the innocent are freed, either by exploitations of the law or by outright sheltering. Ever since the passage of Arwyl through the Upper Planes and his "enlightenment", he has pushed to bring back the older teachings, embracing them as deeply as the Sons of old did. This makes the Sons of Mercy alternately the allies and enemies of law enforcement, passing their own judgment that often will have little to do with local law.

Brief History

According to the pre-Upheaval writings of the Sons of Mercy, the powers – at least the good ones – gave mortals law with the intention of fostering peace, keeping the weak from harm, and protecting people from their own vices. But in mortal hands, law had become warped. Whether written to serve the needs of the elite, evil mortals, or worse, the law had become a weapon against those it was meant to protect.

The answer of the original Sons of Mercy to this dilemma was when a law didn't serve the greater good, it was best ignored. Ironically enough, their idealism would be perverted in the alliance that would help them survive the Great Upheaval. See, the Sons of Mercy were never a large group, and certainly not large enough to live through the changes sweeping Sigil at the time. When the Lady of Pain proclaimed that there would only be fifteen factions, the Sons of Mercy sought out others that would help preserve them... and found few that shared their ideals. As their hope faded, their desperation grew and their ideals died. Hardened by the warring between the factions, they fell in with the Sodkillers, a faction that believed any problem could be solved by force. Though such an alliance would be unthinkable during peaceful times, it was a time of war, and the Sons of Mercy were desperate. Indeed, they had already begun to see things the Sodkiller way, having been forced to kill and worse simply to survive. As the Great Upheaval ended the two groups merged, and their combined philosophy became the basis for the Mercykillers.

As the Mercykillers, they enforced justice... but often at the cost of good, and sometimes even to the gain of evil. Justice became all that mattered, and soon the original tenets of the Sons of Mercy were all but forgotten. During the final days of the Faction War, Arwyl Swan's Son, a paladin from the prime world of Toril (a "Purple Knight" to hear him tell it – whatever that means) watched Alisohn Nilesia pervert the Mercykiller code to perform vile acts, punishing with an intolerance that rattled even the jaded citizens of the Cage. Arwyl would bring a pure heart to the faction, however, and worked to recruit good, like-minded folks in order to help change the faction for the better.

When Alisohn disappeared, Arwyl took the opportunity to break from the Mercykillers with his followers, reforming the Sons of Mercy. Reborn as they are, the Sons of Mercy have struggled to break free of their Mercykiller heritage. They helped stabilize Sigil in the months after the war, taking up the position of city guard and jailers in place of the Harmonium. Being green to



handling the whole process, however, the “Martyrs”, as they came to be known, could be said to be amateurs. Too many criminals slipped past them, and often as not the Sons of Mercy would let guilty folks go due to moral reasoning. They were overwhelmed; trying to balance their traditional role with that of both the responsibility of city guard and that of the prison produced mixed results at best and downright incompetence at worst. After about six months, the Sigil Advisory Council passed a motion that removed them from their hold on Sigil’s law enforcement, a motion that many Sons of Mercy found to be a relief. Still, a number of members have stayed on with the city guard – even though the faction doesn’t run it anymore – and it could be said that their mark has been left. Though more draconian than when it was run by Arwyl Swan’s Son, the city guard is definitely a bit more mindful of Sigil’s citizens than the Harmonium and Mercykillers ever were. In addition, the Martyrs continue to use what influence they do have with the guard to press their philosophy of just punishment.

After the Sons of Mercy were removed from their chosen role in Sigil, Arwyl Swan’s Son fell into melancholy, wondering if there was a place on the planes for his ideals. And so he journeyed to the Upper Planes, trying to find something that would strengthen his resolve and find a new purpose for his faction. It was in talks with the leader of the Guardians, Prince Azlan, that Arwyl Swan’s Son found his beliefs renewed, and the two factions have since become strongly aligned almost to the point of symbiosis. As he continued his trek across the Upper Planes, his sermons and discussions increased the Sons of Mercy’s membership and reputation. Returning to Sigil after several years of travel, he has since published the seven Books of Mercy, containing lessons learned on each of the planes he traveled across. While the Sons of Mercy have become fragmented during his absence, Arwyl Swan’s Son is determined to not allow the faction to suffer the same fate as its predecessors. A large number of folk are skeptical about the Martyrs’ chances, and it remains to be seen if their ideals will truly stand the test of time.

Goals

The first and foremost goal of the Sons of Mercy is to see true justice dealt out to those who deserve it, and free those imprisoned by twisted or false justice. A surprising number of them have turned to the pen rather than the blade, learning Sigil’s labyrinthine code of laws and the loopholes therein. They have worked to defend good folk in the courtroom, as well as writing to spread the word of their faction’s philosophy. Many Sons of Mercy, however, have kept their blades, and still work to enforce justice as per their Mercykiller roots. Though the Martyrs aren’t as efficient as the Harmonium or the Sodkillers, virtually none of the folks they bring in turn out to be innocent. Such Martyrs see going out and performing tasks like bounty hunting and vigilante actions as protecting the good from evil. While there are some members using the faction as an excuse for revenge, greed, or other less savory goals, the faction has proven surprisingly good at rooting out the less virtuous from their number.

Nonetheless, a few members have come to the conclusion that if a good deed need be done for every evil deed, cannot good deeds be done with money? Certainly gold can support soup kitchens, orphanages, and more... taken from the hands of criminals and monsters. Thus, some Martyrs have turned to taking money instead of requiring criminals to turn over a new leaf. Despite Arwyl’s protests, the practice is only growing. After all, doing good deeds doesn’t exactly put food on the table, and some members really need a bit more support than the Sons of Mercy provide (or so they tell themselves).

A major endeavor of the Sons of Mercy has also been to wipe out the remnants of the small armies of undead and fiends unleashed into Sigil during the Faction War. They’re largely concerned with those that present a menace to Sigil’s public, and have helped remove the more offensive creatures left as part of the Faction War’s fallout. Some Sons of Mercy, particularly those that lost family or friends to the monsters, hunt the creatures with motivations far darker than they pretend.



Arwyl Swan's Son, in the meantime, is refocusing his efforts into trying to bring the faction together. Various disparate groups have started to quarrel – guards versus vigilantes, competing parties of bounty hunters, “reformers” against “punishers” – and so he's looked for an example to set for the rest of his faction. Towards this end, he's founded a new business in Sigil: the Sanctuary. Some have accused Swan's Son of aping the Sodkillers, but the truth is the Sanctuary offers services that don't at least compete directly with the Minder's Guild. Rather, it focuses on actions like investigation, repossession, and other similar tasks. And if you seem to be of a good heart to them, chances are you won't have to pay their fees. It also provides safe haven for folks of any race, faction, or moral leaning, as long as they haven't committed an unjust action. In exchange, guests are expected to contribute with mundane work around the Sanctuary, but for planars on run from fiends or worse, it's beyond generous.

Unbeknownst to Swan's Son, a small sect is growing among the Sons of Mercy, one that claims that freeing those unjustly held by the Mercykillers was only the beginning. See, another has been imprisoning folks unjustly in Sigil long before the Mercykillers. Dozens, possibly even hundreds of sods are held in a prison that they may or may not deserve.

And their jailer is the Lady of Pain.

This group believes that the Mazes can – and should – be undone. After all, weren't good folks like Ambar Vergrove and Erin Montgomery locked up during the Faction War? They haven't informed Arwyl of their activities, figuring that once they hit upon a good method to undo one of her Mazes, they can present themselves to him. They figure that sure, while the Lady seems to be impartial and neutral for the most part, neither equals good or just. Plus, one need only remember the destruction of the temple of Aoskar to see an example of the Lady's cruelty. These members know they're walking a fine line, and don't wish to risk the rest of the faction. At least that's what they tell themselves; fear of Arwyl is probably the unwritten motivation. The trouble is, it's awfully hard to tell exactly who's in a Maze until you break them out...

Allies

The Sons of Mercy have found common ground with the Harmonium, even if most Harmonium members find the Martyrs to be disorganized and inefficient despite their goals. Similarly, they've also found strong friends in the Ring-Givers. Though the philosophy of either faction seems extreme to the Martyrs, they have cooperated in works both charitable and just over the past few years with both factions. Surprisingly enough, the Martyrs have also come to work with the Bleak Cabal, supporting the madhouses and soup kitchens run by the Bleakers. As with many other groups, the Bleakers see them as idealists, but they haven't precisely complained about the helping hand, either. The truth of the matter, though, is that the Sons of Mercy have been desperate for allies at best, and are often willing to work with any faction if they believe the means and the ends are both pure.

Rather recently, the Sons of Mercy have come into a very tight alliance with the Guardians of Elysium, and the two groups have been combining their efforts often enough that it seems to some that the differences between the groups are dissolving. The Guardians were a smaller sect dedicated to the protection of the Upper Planes, though the support of the Martyrs has helped them grow and develop – and vice versa. Assuming no major disaster parts the two factions, it may be that within a decade or less they become unified. If such an occurrence were to happen, it would most likely cement the Sons of Mercy's position in the multiverse.

Enemies

Overall, the opinion of many planars is that the Sons of Mercy are led by a prime who hasn't ever really become a planar. Arwyl Swan's Son is seen as somebody trying to enforce an idealistic perspective that might just work on a tiny continent on a tiny prime world, but will



be broken over the back of the planes in a decade or so. This has been a bane and a blessing. Though it has hurt recruitment and made them a laughingstock in the eyes of more cynical planars, it has also permitted them to continue their activities without garnering any major foes. While the image of the bumbling Martyr guard may soon be a major comedic archetype in Sigil's plays, most would-be enemies of the Sons are just as likely to write them off as a temporary annoyance, a defect of the multiverse that will soon be corrected by the natural way of things.

Ironically, a "good" group has become the closest thing the Sons have to a foe. The Order of the Planes-Militant has grated on the Sons of Mercy, particularly in Bytopia where they've been trying to recruit well outside of their bounds. A quiet struggle has begun between the two groups for the hearts and souls of the Upper Planes, though it may soon turn to steel if the Order of the Planes-Militant steps up its already strong recruitment effort.

THE TRANSCENDENT ORDER

Representative Holmin slapped his hand on the table, as if to emphasize his point. "We all know the factions are sneaking back into the city! I say we throw them out before the Lady's mood turns foul once again... show them they're not welcome anymore!"

A raise of an oversized eyebrow punctuated the silence as Estevan cleared his throat. "While I certainly have no love of the factions, perhaps we should consider the benefits of their presence as well as the detriments... what do you think, Rhys?"

The surviving factol began to rise, her eyes not meeting the other Council members as she softly spoke. "Let them stay." She stood up and turned away, her cloven hoof beats echoing through the small hall as she made her way to the exit.

Rising as well, Holmin spoke up. "You can't just walk out now, Rhys! You're just fearful such legislation would threaten your own, don't you..." Rhys didn't bother turning around as she stepped out, not missing a step due to Holmin's outburst.

Estevan looked over with a toothy smirk before shaking his head. "Without all nine representatives, I call this meeting adjourned for now..." He fixated his eyes on Holmin. "... but the lady has a point. Perhaps we should wait before deciding to declare another war so soon after the last, hm?"

Holmin fumed in silence. How was it the others were nodding in agreement when Rhys hadn't said more than three words?

The Transcendent Order may be the name of the faction, but it doesn't describe the faction. Rather, the "Transcendent Order" is what they seek, a sense of perfect harmony and unity. But they don't seek to impose it on others, like the Harmonium does. Instead, the Ciphers draw it from within by unifying thought and action into an enlightened whole. See, according to them, there's a universal harmony – a pulse the entire multiverse beats to. And by understanding that harmony one can always find the perfect action for a given moment.

Philosophy: Know your place in the multiverse; enact it through action without thought.

Headquarters: Elysium.

Nickname: Ciphers.

Majority Races: Half-elves, humans, tuladhara.

Favored Classes: Fighters, monks, psions, psychic warriors, sorcerers.

Factol: Rhys (N female tiefling Mnk15/Sor10 Transcendent Order)

Prominent Members: Quillabrin (N female lightning genasi Psi16 Transcendent Order)



Alignment: Any neutral.

Symbol: An orange sun rising atop a starlit sky, with a crescent moon in the foreground. Gold rims the outer side, with slight hooks within the lower edge, and larger horns rising to frame the skies. The two sides are balanced and joined; unity of the cosmos is attained.

Philosophy

"Cipher thought" is an oxymoron - at least according to them. To the Transcendent Order, thought is but an obstacle to action. Act upon impulses, instincts, and one will find rhythm with the universe. To ponder is to hesitate; to hesitate is to doubt; to doubt is to fail. All that matters is the moment; anticipating the future is meaningless, and so is dwelling in the past.

Of course, any drunken fool can act without thinking, either with his fists or otherwise. That isn't the aim of the Transcendent Order; instead, they believe that ideas should be brought forth into action in a mere instant. By merging body and mind, and balancing both, one opens up both to the multiverse and to the rhythm found within. They call this rhythm the "Cadence of the Planes", and once one is attuned to that rhythm, they can understand their role and purpose in the multiverse. Once this understanding is achieved, they then need not ever think again; they simply know what they must do and act upon it without hesitation or failure.

That doesn't mean that a Cipher is always acting. Inaction has its place in the multiverse too, and sometimes it's best if a body just doesn't get involved. Sometimes a Cipher might come across as uncaring or aloof, but truthfully, it's just that they recognize where their place is. When confronted with less balanced folk, Ciphers will often reflect that imbalance. Around tanar'ri, a Cipher might be saintly. Around a modron, a Cipher might be chaotic. This isn't a deliberate act, but rather, a byproduct of their philosophy. Since they serve the balance unconsciously, they often serve as a counterweight to extremes in the cosmos, reflecting them... rarely, though, do they reflect an extreme deeply enough to become an extreme itself. It just isn't in their nature.

Despite the fact their philosophy has yet to truly splinter, it has a wide variety of interpretations. See, one can't really be taught the philosophy. The basic concepts can be taught, and development can be tracked, but everybody's path is a bit different. It's more than knowledge... it's understanding, and everybody comes to that understanding a little differently... even if the end result is often the same. Even those without professions that require physical strength or grace often take care of their body, regularly training it to be in tune with their mind. The degree of physical training varies with each member, but few neglect their forms. One may never find balance through weakness, after all. Some merely work on maintaining and ensuring their health, relying on a moderate regimen of exercise and abstaining from over-indulgences (food, drink, etc.) Others focus on honing their body to the human limit and beyond, seeking a tool that their mind can unite with no matter its need.

Three major steps of progress are codified through Cipher training. The first is a Master of the Heart, where one learns to act without thought through a special trance... though only for short periods of focus. Then one may advance to become a Master of the Mind, where body and mind become one, and the trance periods last longer and become sharper. Lastly, one becomes the Master of the Spirit, where the trance replaces the member's old, clumsy thought processes, allowing them to come in touch with the pulse of the multiverse. It's said those that advance further - primarily the former factols of the faction - leave their mortal existence behind. Some claim they become powers; others say they become intermediaries between mortals and the nebulous entity that the Athar call the "Great Unknown". It's at least true that clerics of the Transcendent Order are able to channel "Oneness", supposedly a representation of the factols that have previously ascended to form their own pantheon.



If a factol “ascends” in this fashion, another Master of the Spirit, and only one, feels the call to take up the reins of leadership. However, the role is more that of a spiritual leader than an organizational leader. Members may be more or less enlightened, but there are no real ranks in the faction other than mutual respect (or lack thereof). Typically, the factol is the only Master of Spirit at a given time, but sometimes there have been as many or three or four.

The Ciphers live completely in the moment, following the multiverse’s pull and generally doing what they do best. They are not random or without reason; rather, they follow a will that outsiders just can’t get, and even the Ciphers rarely know what the outcomes of their actions will be. No one can ignore their results, however, as the Transcendent Order has long been a contributing force to many events, big and small, in the multiverse, whether they unconsciously helped another faction achieve a goal or prevented a dispute from becoming hostile. Ciphers have a way of being in the right place at the right time, and bring the opposing forces of the cosmos into balance without a second thought (or a first).

Brief History

Despite its age, the Transcendent Order keeps no history and no records, and rarely brags of its deeds or stories. The trick of the matter is that to them, the present - the *now* - is all that matters. The past is gone, and shall never return, and the future shall be, but neither is worth the distraction. Though they have existed for over a millennium, actual records of their origins are scant at best. Some Guvner theories, combined with small evidence, claim the faction originates from a figure who spent time with the rilmani and was attempting to emulate their ways. Others point to the land of Kara-Tur on the prime world of Toril, noting similarities between some native philosophies and that of the Ciphers. Some Ciphers seem to believe that those that have ascended to Oneness guide them, and that the first of their kind stumbled upon the Cadence of the Planes by singular, unguided enlightenment. Whatever the truth is, few tales are told of Cipher exploits, and especially by their own.

That isn’t to say they haven’t done anything important. Most certainly, they have. Prior to the Faction War, they served as mediators, smoothing over clashes and disputes between the factions. It could be said that the Faction War probably would have happened quite a bit earlier were it not for the Ciphers’ efforts. Much of the way the government of factions worked is due to their assistance, and they also contributed greatly to Sigil’s current political structure. At the same time, it’s not as if they’ve worked hard at keeping the peace; rather their own balance helps bring equilibrium to Sigil as a whole. The more advanced members of their faction have often been in the right place at the right time to make a difference, lending their efforts with no more of a deliberate quality than a heartbeat. Their current factol, Rhys, has embodied this “natural action” in her conversion to Cipher thought, becoming well-liked among both those in their faction and among outsiders. Despite being a tiefling, she’s overcome her natural tendencies towards evil and her past criminal acts to become the most natural Cipher anybody knows.

Recently Rhys traveled to Elysium, the retreat of many a Cipher. Coincidentally, she took this sojourn just before the Faction War broke out. Where most factions served only to stoke the fires of conflict higher, the Ciphers helped the common folk of Sigil. Afterwards, Rhys returned to the Cage, the only factol remaining after the war. Though they lost the Great Gymnasium and their faction status, the Ciphers focused on helping rebuild and heal the city. Truthfully, not much changed for the Ciphers, and it could be said they weathered the conflict largely intact. Nowadays, Rhys serves as one of the nine representatives that govern the city, and she’s clearly one of the most influential figures in the city today... not that it concerns her. To her, the power doesn’t seem so important, as she’s just doing what the multiverse needs her to do. Still, a lot of folks are suspicious of her, and whisper that if she steps too far into influencing Sigil, the Lady herself will step in. In the meantime, many factols of other factions watch her progress, curious to see how far the tiefling can go, and just when the Lady is willing to put her words into action.



While technically Rhys is still the leader of the Ciphers (nobody calls her a “factol” anymore), her time on the council has caused another member by the name of Quillabrin to take up the role of “Cipher representative”. A former member of the Harmonium, Quillabrin was troubled by her inner nature as a quasi-elemental planetouched, and never found the acceptance or peace she sought from the faction. After the Faction War, she deserted the Harmonium for the Ciphers, and seems to have found peace in her conflicted spirit through their path. Having become a Master of the Spirit some time ago, she’s served in Rhys’ stead during her recent absence for the few times the Ciphers need a voice. While she hasn’t felt a “call” – at least as far as anybody knows – Quillabrin’s development puts her as the closest thing Rhys might have to a second (or a successor).

Goals

The first goal of every Cipher is, at least ideally, enlightenment... abandonment of hesitation and thought. It may seem a bit self-centered, but it’s far from selfish. They believe that by becoming balanced, they thus become able to balance the actions of others, and bring everyone closer to the Cadence of the Planes.

Rhys has seemingly inspired her faction to help rebuild Sigil, just as she has. Granted, she hasn’t ordered any of her “followers” to do so, nor has she suggested that they should. They’ve simply followed suit. Whether their actions are due to the Cadence of Planes or just Rhys’ charismatic presence is up for debate. Most Cagers don’t mind the assistance, though. After the mess the rest of the factions made, they’re just glad to have any help they can get.

After the Faction War, many Ciphers have drifted away from the City of Doors, instead taking their philosophy to the Outlands and gate-towns. While not quite ‘spreading the word’ deliberately, their presence does have a calming effect. Some whisper that despite their good doings, the presence of the faction further about the planes is actually a bad sign. They say that the Ciphers are preparing for some new disaster, one that’ll make the recent troubles in Sigil look as small as they actually were.

Allies

The Transcendent Order’s one of the few groups that gets along with just about anybody. Often counterbalancing other factions, they complement the philosophies of others quite well, and rarely get involved in the *kriegstanz* to any serious extent. Combining this with their diplomatic and largely inoffensive nature, few have considered them foes, and even fewer have ever confronted them.

Enemies

Of the major factions, only the Harmonium truly eyes the Ciphers with suspicion. See, the two groups are alike in that they seek group harmony. However, while the Harmonium seeks it by converting and inspiring others, the Ciphers do it by looking within. Thus, the Hardheads see the Transcendent Order almost as competition. While the Harmonium desires peace for all, the Ciphers distill peace in the individual. Still, the Ciphers have never given the Hardheads major cause to actually bring their suspicions into action... at least for the time being.

THE XAΘSI+ECTS

Walintin strode through the streets of Sigil with purpose, his robes flowing about him. He moved quickly through the planar metropolis, prideful of his discovery. Though they did not know of him here, they soon would, he reasoned. After all, he was the greatest mage of all Bitaun, was he not? Armies had quaked at his arrival, and he had tamed the mighty tarrasque.

He was beloved by the three fates. All these natives seemed to have was a sneer on their lips and rude comments regarding his hat. But he knew he'd bring them to heel soon enough.

He paused, however, as a ragtag group of young folk of all sorts surrounded him. Some of them were obviously devil-mongrels, while others showed shades of elven and ogrish heritage. Some of them carried buckets, while others bore long brushes. He waved his staff, trying to ward them away with a simple gesture, but they suddenly converged, pulling at his enchanted fabrics! Thieves! Trying to summon power from his staff, he quickly found it yanked away. Trying to gesture, he found them yanking his enchanted goods and fabrics from him. Trying to speak arcane words of might, words that would kill them instantly, he found his mouth suddenly filled with a colorful, foul-tasting poison. A devil-spawn, both human and fiend at once, jabbed a pointed object between his lips.

"Paint plates shouldn't talk," he heard a half-elf holding his arm comment sharply. All of Walintin's knowledge, all of his experience, all helpless before his ignorance in the flow of these madmen, directed by fiendish chaos itself. He began to laugh at the absurdity of it all, swallowing paint...

The Xaositects embody chaos, or at least try to. They are difficult to define, since they spend much of their time working to be undefinable. That's all there is to it. If you want to know more, have you considered Sopworth's delicious soup? Doors usually only open one way; it's too much trouble otherwise. The ointment is best put directly under the skin, but who wants to do that? Blackened tanar'ri smells awful, believe me. If only there were a way to keep a pen magically wet all the time... use the speed factor and damage appropriate to the grip. You don't like Bytopia? Don't go to Elysium, then! Well, I can if I want, and make it so. Inquiries regarding rules should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope and sent to Tactical Studies Rules, POB 756, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, 53147. Grick and drangle, bloeth the preen. Ful and toothbeck, it sans the yrene.

Philosophy: There is no pattern to the multiverse, no meaning. Its true state is chaos.

Nickname: Chaosmen.

Headquarters: Limbo.

Majority Races: Chaonds, githzerai, humans.

Majority Classes: Bards, fighters, rogues.

Factol: None

Prominent Members (at the Moment): Mordigaarz (CN male human Ftr6 Xaositects), The Painter (CG female tiefling Brd3 Xaositects), Quake Lavender (CN female half-elf Wiz10 Xaoistects)

Alignment: Any chaotic.

Symbol: The horned, crimson face of a gargoyle-like fiend on a black backdrop.

Philosophy

The multiverse wasn't just born from chaos; it *is* chaos. There's no order to the multiverse, no rules that define its existence. The only order that exists is that which we try to impose on it, and as soon as we stop the multiverse will return to chaos. And if chaos is the true state of the multiverse, why fight it when you can just accept it, become one with its beauty and energy?

So goes the philosophy of the Xaositects (kay - Oh - si - tekts), and it sounds simple enough. But it's much harder to truly live, and embody, a force with no true direction or reason. Even the hearts of nominally chaotic beings like bariaur and chaond have natural processes and organs that beat and function to a particular rhythm, and truly coming to champion chaos as a force can be as difficult - and dangerous - as training one's heart to beat out of sync. Even slaadi have a hierarchy and path of progress. Few beings can really be said to fully embody chaos. Some mindless creatures like the chaos beast and the teratomorph come close physically, but even they have limitations and patterns they abide by. Xaositects aspire as best they can to

embody chaos mentally, if not necessarily physically. To many they come across as insane or idiotic, but they aspire to neither. The mad are often more lawful than one might expect, limited more keenly by their own delusions or neuroses than any sane person. Nor do they desire to abandon thought, rather they desire to abandon reason and patterns, to act in an entirely unpredictable fashion, and by doing so, seed chaos throughout the multiverse.

Of course, chaos should exist outside of moral structures. Good and evil are irrelevant before its glory. Does a storm care whom it rains lightning down on? Chaos is random, and randomness is arbitrary. Often the only people Xaositects are partial to are other Xaositects, and even that's a bit questionable. However, individual Xaositects often impose their own moral strictures on chaos. Good-minded Xaositects tend to desire the implementation of positive change and development... they tend to stir the pot where they see corruption and stagnation, hoping their actions will serve as a wake-up call and impetus for change on the part of the wicked and lazy. More evil Chaosmen tend to see chaos as a tool to be used for their own benefit, a method for self-gain and a weapon to be used against their enemies.

Naturally, there's no real codified path to follow; that'd defeat the point. Some go to Limbo to try and learn what they can there. Others follow some of the more charismatic Xaositects for periods of time. A few try and take up different roles or missions each day. The one thing that can be said, though, is that each follows their own way. Sometimes that's somebody else's way, but that's chaos for you.

Though often Xaositects seem silly, it should be noted that humor is rarely their intent. If at times they come across as laughable and nonsensical, this is a byproduct of their chaotic actions. Often things that might be considered humorous initially might be dragged out long past being funny, or become things that are rarely considered amusing (especially when folks start losing eyes). Still, as some bards will admit, there is a certain artistic bent the chaotic mindset lends itself to. Some of the greatest and worst artists Sigil has seen have been part of the Xaositect philosophy.

Brief History

While the Xaositects haven't been around long per se, perhaps only a century or so, there has always seemingly been a group that approximates them. Older organizations such as the Order of Dis, the Ochlocrats, the Raucous Guild, and dozens more litter the histories of the planes, few of them lasting longer than a century. Of course, such groups have often been prominent in Sigil, sometimes gathering in greater numbers there than they even might around Limbo and the gate-town Xaos. Most rival factions count them under the simple heading of "trouble". In fact, it may be the only reason the Xaositects are known as such is because the other groups have gotten used to calling them that... and not out of any desire of the Chaosmen to keep a stable name. Certainly, it's not unheard of for a Xaositect to refer to the faction by a totally unknown name. Rarely do such appellations reach any sort of common usage, though it may be how the group eventually evolves into new labels and definitions.

Trying to compile a history of the Xaositects is essentially futile. They have kept no written or verbal records - no accurate ones, anyway - and those on the outside have difficulty telling what's really going on in any Xaositect endeavor. More like a natural force than an organization, they've rarely taken part in pivotal events in the City of Doors. Oh, sure, there are countless colorful tales of the Xaositects' exploits, such as the time they assassinated the factol of the Harmonium by hitting him upside the head with an hourglass. Or the time the Sensates invited them to a party and ended up sparking one of the biggest riots ever to hit Sigil (with some help from the Anarchists). Then there's the time they worked up a bunch of Karan look-alikes during the Faction War, just to add to the chaos. There are thousands of amusing stories surrounding the Chaosmen, of which about half might actually be true. But the Xaositects live firmly in the present. Though the Faction War came and went, it didn't have a huge impact on them. If anything, those lost during the warring and exodus have been replaced

by a nearly equal number of bodies “inspired” by the war and the sheer confusion and change that resulted because of it. Sure, they lost their so-called leader, Karan, but he only really led by example in the first place... when he felt like it that is. No Chaosman has come to take the reins of the group since Karan, and some say the Faction War has only made them more “purer” as a result. A couple of Xaositects have led their own small groups of Chaosmen to various ends, though they’re niche groups and hardly represent any major movements within the faction.

Goals

According to most folks, the main goal of the Xaositects is to foment chaos. The trick is, having a goal means that you’re falling into a pattern, and the Xaositects despise patterns rather vehemently.

So scratch that.

Want to know what the huge, labyrinthine plot the Chaosmen are engaged in is? Ask one. You might even get an honest answer. Doesn’t make it the right answer, though. Truthfully, most plots the Xaositects might engage in are short-term and rarely have more than a dozen members collaborating on them.

Ask Quake Lavender, and you might get a speech about how magic is the root of all things, and that magic is naturally chaotic. She runs a tavern, but she seems to largely be involved with the spread of wild magic in Sigil, though just as often she seems to follow random whims for days at a time. When bored, she often tosses a spell like *random action* or *confusion* about, though whether this is deliberate is up for debate. Her own tavern has many unusual magical “innovations”, from the tap that produces random liquor (served to anybody that asks for “the usual”) to the fact that the business often changes furniture, layout, name, or even locale. While her business is a perfectly serviceable tavern for the most part, there’s the occasional touch that says in no uncertain terms that “chaos was here”.

Ask The Painter, a tiefling member, what she’s doing and she’s unlikely to give you a straight answer. What her actions show, though, is that she and her crew are engaged in painting across Sigil. They’re responsible for the mural in the Great Gymnasium, the one lauded as one of the greatest paintings the planes have ever seen. They’re also responsible for the horrible eyesore that’s been left in the Hall of Speakers. They paint on anything: walls, the roads, trees, spires, the primes... anything that they find handy, and with whatever “paints” they happen to be lugging about at the time (which isn’t always proper paint). Other smaller groups have splintered off on their own, each seeming to follow their own aesthetic philosophy, and at least one is working to try and tear down works of art created by the other groups.

Ask Mordrigaarz what he’s been up to and you’re likely to get the bile beaten out of you for infringing on his turf. Ask someone from the Hive and they might mention that Mordrigaarz and his merry band are a bunch of thugs that wander around the Hive starting brawls, which is a bad thing. On the other hand, he tends to protect them when he thinks they’re threatened - it’s his job to mess with them, and nobody else’s. There’s a reluctant gratitude among many Hivers for his efforts, because he’s cleaned up the neighborhood to some extent... even if his reasoning is anything but benevolent. Often he’ll choose a criterion that he decides Hivers must fit, and goes around harassing folks based on that criterion as “outsiders” (even if they actually are Hivers). Some days it may be the color of their clothes; other days he may pick on folks for not rolling their r’s in the “proper, Hiver way”. Still, most Hivers just know to give him a wide berth and let those less wise in the ways of the Hive get accosted by the Xaositect gang.

Ask Sister Cade and she’ll give a speech on her current newfound faith. Though her faith is deep, abiding, and downright fanatical from time to time, it is also inconsistent. She’s worshipped over forty-three different gods, and doesn’t look to have settled on one yet,



remaining nothing more than an acolyte. While one might think the churches and temples of Sigil would have given up on her already, her deep faith is a much-desired commodity... however brief it may be. Perhaps there's something special about it, or perhaps each religious leader simply wants to be the one that finally makes her settle down.

Ask Karan and chances are he'll chat you up for a bit of chaos-speak, and perhaps try and recruit you, but he will always deny ever having been missing. Of course, most people never see Karan around anymore, and most sightings are passed from a relative of a friend of a friend. Some say there's a group of Chaosmen still going around and impersonating Karan. Others say he never got Mazed in the first place. Some say that Karan was never a "member" to begin with, but instead is a primal force of chaos that just often wears a similar face. A few even claim that there never was a Karan, and that he was a disguise for various Xaositects all along (it certainly would explain his odd absences). But the truth, as with most things Xaositect, is shrouded in chaos.

There are, naturally, many other groups of Xaositects running around with their various agendas. There's the group running around and trying to forcibly implant slaad eggs in others. There's the group down in Menausius trying to make sure conflict between the Fraternity of Order and the Harmonium sparks up. There's a group trying to go research a way to make elementals insane. If you can think of it, there's probably a Xaositect that will do, has done, or currently is doing it.

Allies

The Chaosmen may not be predictable, but their allies often are. The Revolutionary League and Doomguard are traditional allies for the Xaositects, but that's got more to do with the chaotic tendencies of those factions than any active attempt by the Xaositects to court them. Truth is, the Xaositects have been allies with nearly all of the factions at one point or another, but their unreliability makes most folks steer clear of them. More foolish Anarchists and Sinkers sometimes treat the Xaositects as a destructive tool, figuring that if they can get enough Chaosmen in one spot, destruction and anarchy will ensue. This sort of plot works just about as often as it fails. The Xaositects might indeed riot, party, or go to war, but it's just likely that they'll do something less disruptive, such as build a misshapen statue dedicated to St. Cuthbert or take a group nap.

Enemies

It isn't hard to figure out who the Xaositects are most often at odds with - the Harmonium and the Fraternity of Order. While not deliberately opposed to the Harmonium, the Chaosmen naturally find themselves at odds with the Hardheads, especially due to the fact one of their number was responsible for killing a Harmonium factol. Even so, they're not taken to be as serious a threat to Harmonium unity as the Revolutionary League or the Free League. Surprisingly, they clash less often with the Fraternity of Order. Even when the Chaosmen stick their noses into orderly affairs, the Guvners' academic perspective often keeps them from being dragged into outright conflict.

More recently, the Xaositects have run afoul of the Sons of Mercy. While the two groups haven't conflicted often, the chaotic nature of the Xaositects means they often break the law, and they have run into the Sons trying to uphold it. Just as often, though, a Son has upheld the rights of an unjustly persecuted Chaosman, and the two groups' flexible natures has kept them from conflicting on a serious basis - so far.



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Reviewed spacing, paragraph formats, grammar

