

THOMAS HENSHELL'S
ARCHMAGE RISES



THE CONCLAVE



INTRODUCTION



he origins of Vaelun are shrouded in time's mysteries.

Many in Vaelun believe the world was created by a benevolent, all-powerful deity whom they know by the name of Elyon, and that evil entered the world thanks to a rebel spirit called Apollyon. Elyon, they believe, will one day quell Apollyon's rebellion once and for all, inaugurating a reign of perpetual peace...but in the meantime, strife, suffering, and death are the way of the world...

Others in Vaelun also call Elyon the creator, but emphasize his distance and his mystery, believing that the words contained in a single sacred Book are all mankind can ever know of Elyon and his will. These, too, know Apollyon, calling her the Seductress...

Still others believe Vaelun came into being through the efforts of dozens, even hundreds of gods, who to this day reside unseen in its forests and mountains, its caves and streams. Of these gods, some are honorable, some playful, some sullen, some tricky. All of them, in some measure, are dangerous. And all of them, they say, can be entreated, placated, offended, cajoled...

And others scoff at all these accounts. Vaelun, they say, exists, and why waste one's short life guessing how or why? Better to look to the future, not the past, and to harness the power of man's mind through philosophy...and the power of his world through magic...

A World of Wonder

White snowcapped mountains, bronze hardened deserts, scarlet spewing volcanoes, and sweet verdant forests filled with jiji fruit. Vaelun is a world of radiant diversity.

Across this vibrant landscape live creatures large and small, regal and grotesque. Ogres lumber among rolling hills, skittish goblins wander the forests, while fierce frost orcs protect their northern home with wicked ice sleighs. These are just a few of the creatures competing for food and soil. Then there are the unknown, unmet creatures in the depths of the earth and sea.

Of Vaelun's earliest days little is known. What remains of Astinus' history paints a picture of a savage, and wild land, teeming with magical creatures and larger-than-life heroes. There is the story of Ka'nan the Mighty, who tirelessly tracked and finally slew the last three

great dragons on Mount Stratus. There is the tale of Jasen and Leviathan. After the great sea serpent swallowed Jasen's boat and his bride, he slashed through its massive ribcage, retrieved her body—perfectly intact, the legend says—and paddled home on the creature's floating heart to give her a proper burial.

Over thousands of years humanity settled and resettled the most hospitable land.

Empires rose.

Empires fell.

Yet, mere miles from the well-traveled roads of merchant and peasant, lays an untamed wilderness full of forgotten creatures and forgotten treasures.

As mankind spread he brought more with him than just plough or wheel... He also brought his magic.

MAGIC



ou don't find magic; it finds you. So runs the old saying. Many call it "the gift," thinking it Elyon's gift to the world, though some would certainly consider it a curse.

The Nature of Magic

Magic is a powerful impersonal force woven into the very fabric of the universe. As inseparable from the world as light or sound. Magic exists as raw potential energy. Unseen and unnoticed to the unskilled eye. Some people, and creatures, are able to harness this raw energy into useful purpose through only the focusing of thought. The more significant the alteration of our world, the more effort must be exerted to harness and then control the magic to reach the desired result.

Magic is elemental transmutation. It uses energy to permanently alter the state of the universe. There is a tremendous amount of power available, and if something goes wrong it can prove fatal for the caster and the people around them.

Magic is not a chemical process, although it can cause chemical effects. It is a force of the will and therefore can affect other's will. Like hypnotism, magic can affect a target's mind either at the conscious or subconscious level, even if it is actively trying to resist. Magic can reach into history past and reveal facts, conversations, or thoughts. The limits to its capability is, and probably will remain, unknown.

There is beautiful diversity in the ways to perform a spell, making magic a field with endless possibility and personal flair. Whatever they do to help them concentrate, be it closing of the eyes, the saying of certain words, wild hand gestures, singing or grunting, it is the casters thought and desires that cause the result. If a mage finds the smells or touch of certain components helpful, they use it. If not, they don't.



No one knows why one person has an affinity for magic and another does not. Instructors have tried to teach their non-magical sons and daughters to no avail; nobles have tried to breed for it and failed. A family in Stump Cross had six daughters, all with the gift; in Azmar, many of the children born on the north side of the river had the gift, while none of those born on the south side did. The ability in humans is rare, some estimate only 1 in 200 possess the gift.

A Mage's Education

While each experience is unique, it is often the case that a child between eight and ten years old will have a significant dreamlike experience with effects in the real world. This has come to be known as "The Visit". For instance, if in the dream there were globes of glowing light, upon waking such a globe could be seen floating in the room by child and parents alike. Generally, these aftershocks are benign, yet there are the stories of the peasant who had his roof blown off by his daughter's visitation dream.

The age of the child when the visit occurs doesn't seem to be significant, though there are examples of great archmages who had the visit as early as age five or six.

After the visitation, the child can accidentally cause small, haphazard things to happen with magic: hurl a pebble, cause a sound, push over a piece of furniture. The lack of control in these situations can be cause for embarrassing or terrifying situations for both the child and family. However, with puberty (ironically, perhaps, given the emotional turbulence of youth) comes a greater sense of "having control of it," as the saying goes.

At this point the child can now be trained in the art of magic. Just as a new wineskin can be stretched wide when it is first made, but once hardened it will never be able to be re-stretched, the gift for magic can either be nourished or allowed to shrink and atrophy. Given the challenges associated with the gift, not a few bakers, potters, shopkeepers, and farmers in Vaelun have quietly allowed their sons' and daughters' gift to atrophy.

Most instructors refuse to take students younger than 10 or older than 16. Parents pursuing their child's gift send them for tutelage by a conclave licensed mage instructor. Ideally, one who is a prominent house mage. It is customary to provide a generous gift to cover the expenses of caring for the child and supplying their educational needs. Only the most privileged can afford one-on-one training.

For the rest, there are the independent mage instructors who split the heavy costs by holding larger class sizes of four or even six students. These instructors are motivated either by love of the craft and the privilege to entrust it to the next generation, or, and far more likely scenario, the mages which couldn't find a placement as a house mage and struggle to make ends meet as an independent.

Then there are the large class instructors. Swindlers who take twelve or more children at a time. Poor parents are attracted to the instructors big promises and relatively small prices. Yet these profiteers barely teach. Instead, they live fat and lazy off tuitions and free student labor. Few of these students pass the First Test. Large class teachers are a scourge to the profession, but the conclave has largely been silent about the practice.

Once in school, the student lives, studies, and works at the instructor's house. Days are filled with classes on natural sciences, anatomy, math, history, writing (in up to five languages), encryption, decryption, and hundreds of hours practicing minor spells known as cantrips. A school day is usually devoted to one topic with a combination of lecture, out loud reading, and independent practice.

Depending on the teacher's disposition, school can be strict and unrelenting with every hour from dawn to dusk planned, or meander and begin mid morning and end early afternoon with plenty of free time. The Conclave sets no standards on how teaching is to be performed. And the future nobles or customers of the mage don't have a lot to compare a candidate against

All school's assign students work: from cleaning the residence and maintaining the grounds and gardens, to assisting the instructor in making potions, toys, or firecrackers. Only an especially gifted student close to graduation could help a master do a simple enchantment for a customer.



The visit is the defining sign a person can utilize magic. It can be a terrifying experience for such a young child.

School and work are usually 7 days a week, with the 7th day being a lighter day (work only, no instruction) for personal time or worship. Worship is of the master's religion not the students.

An instructor is master of the students. He or she makes the final determination if a student is incapable of becoming a mage and is expelled or proceeds on to graduation and First Test. Discipline is maintained mostly through fear and is open to abuse.

If a student is expelled their career in magic is over. No instructor will take "damaged goods", especially if they are over 16. The belief is the student wasn't talented enough, or dedicated enough, or simply too rebellious to succeed under their first instructor. It is better to put efforts into a new unproven child than one which has proven to be no good.

First Test

Each spring, as the winter snows melt away, an instructor will determine which students are ready for one-on-one testing with the chapterhouse master. Passing this test determines entrance into the Conclave but it may only be attempted once. Only those sure to pass are sent. Large class teacher's will protect their reputation by only sending the best one or two students and simply expel the rest.

Upon successful completion the chapterhouse master and instructor sign a special writ purchased from the conclave approving the student. The graduate takes this writ to the chapterhouse they wish to establish their membership at and perform the 9-point oath. Only for an especially favored student will the instructor attend the oath ceremony.

Depending on local custom, any members of the chapterhouse may ask questions of the candidate, or give them hypothetical scenarios to answer. These questions are more formality than a true test of wit, though it has happened a chapterhouse master determined a student was inappropriate for conclave membership, much to the humiliation of the instructor.

On completion the graduate publicly takes the oath. The chapterhouse master signs the writ, the graduate is now a novice able to practice magic as they see fit. They are added to the membership rolls of the chapter, this is where their annual dues are paid. A second writ is made and sent to The Garden for safe keeping.

Finally, the graduate is given an official conclave license to keep with them at all times. This is to defend against any charge of being a renegade. Mage robes are specially designed with an interior license pocket. Upon death, if possible, the license is to be turned in to the conclave.

Finally, in many regions it is customary to hold a feast and celebrate the new member.

Apprenticeship

An apprentice practices either alone or under a master mage, ideally a prominent house mage, or perhaps obtain a position at The Garden. Apprenticeship can take from 6-10 years, essentially until the master feels the apprentice is ready for the Second Test.

As an apprentice, the mage performs all the tasks the master requires. While appearing similar, this is much elevated from the school situation. The apprentice is free to leave at any time and doesn't require the master to take the Second Test. Yet there is the social shame of being seen as disloyal if leaving a master to pursue studies elsewhere.

The master teaches as often or as much as they desire. The learning is done through practice, with the master simply overseeing.

Second Test

To be a full voting member of the conclave, and reach a rank in the chapterhouse beyond novice, the mage must pass the second test. Passing is a major life milestone which concludes the apprenticeship.

This second test tests for knowledge in all schools of magic. It goes beyond pure magic, also testing knowledge, quick thinking, combat prowess, and resourcefulness. The test is performed by chapterhouse masters to determine the apprentice is well rounded enough to join their ranks.

If the apprentice fails they may take the test again a year later. Repeated failures are uncommon.

When the apprentice passes they gain the rank of adept. A customary feast of chapter house members usually follows in which the new adept presents gifts (small, or elaborate) to each master in the chapterhouse.

No mage can join the inquisitors without passing the second test.



THE CONCLAVE

The 9-point Oath

I serve the Conclave above all else. I will do so my whole life unto death.

I will serve my lord and obey their rule to the best of my abilities.

I will not practice magic the conclave determines forbidden.

All decisions of the Conclave are wise. If I disagree with an edict of the Conclave, I am in error.

I will obey in all matters of discipline.

I will report renegades immediately, do my best to thwart them, or face their same fate.

I will protect the Conclave, it's members and property, from all threats both foreign and internal.



Ground breaking for construction of Conclave headquarters The Garden

Formation of the Conclave

Excerpt and Summary of Avinus's History of Vaelun, Book II

In the spring of 230, Clemmen II launched an attack on the Free City of Readrith. Historians generally cite the fall of Readrith as the beginning of the end of the free cities of the mages. Clemmen II disproved the widespread belief that the free cities were invincible (or, at least, too costly to take) and other nobles quickly took to the field in lusty pursuit of vengeance, wealth, power...or all of these. By the summer of 250, Vaelun was again awash in anarchy.

Cooler heads among both the mages and the nobility understood that the land could not survive for long in a state of constant chaos, and eventually even hotter heads realized that they lacked the resources to sustain perpetual war. Thus, the mages and nobility agreed to meet in the fall of 256 at the vast and ancient castle of Jamant. At what became known as the Council of Jamant, representatives of over 40 separate houses met with the mages and their elected representative, the passionate and visionary Elwood.

After weeks of negotiation, the council reached the Five Agreements:

1. That the mages would create a unified circle—similar to Martin's initial vision—to represent their concerns. This organization is what came to be known as The Conclave;
2. That the mages and nobility would together agree on a list of spells and areas of magic to be banned from study and practice;
3. That the mages would police themselves, managing membership and enforcing punishment for those who practiced disallowed spells;
4. That the nobility would immediately and henceforth cease all acts of aggression toward mages; and
5. That the nobility would grant land and title to all mages who desired them throughout the lands of Vaelun.

The terms of this agreement were to be enacted over a period of five years, creating a custom for the Council of Jamant to reconvene for a period of three weeks every fifth year.

In the year 257 the conclave became the governing body for all mages. Its headquarters, set on a hilltop called The Garden and donated by Lord Elwood, was completed seven years later. It stands today as one of the world's architectural marvels, an example of what magic-infused building can achieve: a massive structure with five soaring towers (each named for one of the five schools of magic), a colossal central library, an audience hall seating nearly five thousand, a crypt for the honored dead, and accommodations for up to three thousand.

However, not every mage was pleased with the conclave and its seven-member council's decisions. Some grumbled that the Jamant agreement amounted to nothing but thralldom by another name. Particularly controversial was its second point. Some mages granted that the existence of a ban on what

was *practiced* was acceptable, indeed possibly even desirable, but believed that proscribing certain magic from even being *studied* was a bridge too far; those who believed this became known as one-point separatists. Meanwhile, others found Point Two rotten to the core; it was an insult to their freedom and indeed their very identity as mages to forbid any form of magic from being studied or practiced, particularly in the name of appeasing a greedy and ignorant nobility. Establishing an informal, sometimes uneasy alliance, the two groups of separatists began working underground: forming secret societies, stealing and hiding banned books, practicing forbidden magic. Operating in the shadows, they referred to themselves—and continue to refer to themselves to this day—by the old, idealized name Free Mages. But to the conclave they became known merely as Renegades.

Historians wonder if it might have been otherwise—if the separatists might have remained a force of loyal opposition within the conclave—had it not been for the disastrous succession vote in the spring of 284, in which Maranda of Setmoor, a one-point Free Mage with a soft-spoken demeanor and an iron will, lost her bid for leadership and then defected with her followers en masse from the conclave. No historical records of Maranda appear after this point; she passes into legend. But her legacy remains firmly ensconced in history.

In the wake of Maranda's defection, the conclave created a new order: The Inquisitors. The Inquisitors were charged with three tasks:

1. To discover the whereabouts of renegade mages;

2. To attempt to persuade any discovered renegade to renounce his or her misguided ways and return to the conclave;
3. To return any mages who refused to do so to the nearest chapterhouse to await trial.

At first the inquisitors were held in high honor, exemplars of virtue, self-sacrifice, and loyalty to the conclave. Bernard the True, for instance, is said to have returned nearly nine hundred dissident mages to the fold during his tenure as an inquisitor, all without the use of force, violence, or deception. But later inquisitors, like Silas the Scourge, embarked on a career notorious for its cruelty and violence; official records are silent on this point, but it is said that he was fond of using forbidden spells to “persuade” renegade mages to return to the conclave. Of course, most inquisitors lie between these two extremes, and in Vaelun today the Order of inquisitors is generally accepted as a necessary evil in a chaotic, misguided world.

Today magic, mages, and the conclave have been woven tightly into the fabric of everyday life in Vaelun. The council runs the conclave efficiently. Internal disputes are settled quickly. Inquisitors still investigate cases of rebellion, but they maintain a low profile. The Onyx Order, an order of secret spies reporting only to the head of the conclave, quietly observes those who practice magic. Clandestine circles

of Free Mages continue to exist. Some whisper that they have organized underground, that they have resurrected the deadliest, most advanced forms of banned magic, with the goal of one day destroying The Garden and toppling the conclave. Others reject this as mere rumor-mongering.



Each chapter house has a unique library and artifacts to be used by its members.

Chapterhouses

The conclave administers its affairs at the local level through a network of chapterhouses, each managed by a chapter master; a mage's first experience upon graduation is making the nine-point Oath at his or her local chapterhouse.

Member Ranks

Chapters vary significantly in terms of their “personality”—some have a reputation for being bastions of traditionalism, others for having a more freewheeling spirit, and so forth. However, each chapter manages its membership among four ranks. A mage may be a member of only one chapterhouse at any given time; typically though not necessarily, this is the chapter closest to where he or she lives. A copy of each mage's membership is stored in the caretaker's archives in The Garden. The four ranks are as follows:

Novice

The most basic level of association, each mage who swears the nine-point oath upon his or her graduation is registered as a novice within that chapterhouse. Novices have no special privileges, nor are any expectations placed upon them. They have access to the basic books of the chapter's library and blast chamber

for personal study. Most chapter members are novices and never seek to climb further up the ladder of political power.

Adept

A more prestigious role in the chapterhouse also comes with higher dues and expectations. Adepts gain access to more of the library. They are also trusted to take on renegade investigation-related tasks as assigned by inquisitors.

Acolyte

A proven, deep commitment to the chapterhouse allows acolytes to have access to unique equipment, the ability to take on apprentices, and the ability to run for minor offices.

Master

Proven in ability and in heart, those who earn the rank of master are afforded access to the rarest and most powerful books and equipment available. Likewise, they are the only ones permitted to run for the roles of guardian or chapter master.



Interior of a prominent noble's house mage quarters.

Positions

Curator

The curator is responsible for administrating the library, equipment, and facilities of the chapterhouse. This is a minor but respected role within a house. Given the constant interaction with members, curator is usually a step towards higher positions. To become curator, an acolyte or master must be nominated and then voted upon by membership.

Guardian

The guardians form a select group of masters deeply committed to the operation and future of the chapterhouse. Typically possessing a reputation for serious-mindedness, guardians oversee the curators and both advise and monitor the chapter master. Guardians are the only chapter members permitted to vote on edicts. Guardians are nominated from among the house masters and voted upon by chapter members.

Chapter Master

Each chapter is led by a chapter master, who is elected from among the registered masters. The house provides its chapter master a private room, study area, and anything else he or she requires for the practice and study of magic. However, the chapter master is rarely afforded sustained periods of such practice and study; his or her primary role is to interface with the local lord, keep up on conclave business, remain

vigilant of Renegade activity, and ensure the house is in good order. The chapter master determines what business is discussed at chapter meetings of masters and decides the edicts to be voted on.

The chapter master reports directly to the Attendant of Members in the Order of Caretakers.

Serving as a chapter master is the most common method for applying for and transferring into the direct work of the conclave at The Garden.

External Roles

House Mage

Loyalty is a house mage's greatest asset.

Nobles want all the benefits magic can provide. From creating water during a drought, to protecting the audience chamber from nefarious spells, to hurling fireballs at an enemy, or just keeping wine cool at a feast, a mage is nothing if not useful. A mage who provides his or her services to a noble becomes a prized member of that noble's inner circle and is referred to as a house mage. In the most typical situations, house mages swear fealty

to a noble and his house for the duration of the noble's life, though other arrangements are not unheard of.

To be a house mage is to accept a certain amount of mundanity; making sure the horses are watered out on a campaign is not thrilling work. But the position is not without its benefits: a house mage eats well at the noble's table, has ample accommodations for work and study, is paid a regular wage, and has the ear of local power. There is a personal side as well: the house mage is part of the noble's family, tutoring the little ones as they grow up. It is not uncommon for a house mage to serve the son as he or she served the father.

House mages that make a name for themselves add to their lord's prestige. Feasting nobles will often brag and compare house mages as they would thoroughbred horses. Skill competitions between house mages are a highlight of feasts and fairs.

A house mage can run for elected office in his or her chapterhouse; however, many remain novices as their focus is on the noble they serve rather than on the conclave hierarchy.

House mages may hire permanent apprentices to help with their workload. Placement with an influential and wealthy noble house is both highly prestigious and highly desired by any apprentice as it can greatly improve his or her reputation at the local Chapter House

or even throughout the larger conclave. Indeed, in Vaalun today, three of the last five mages to serve as Prime Magus have been apprentices of the same noble house.

From time to time, house mages may hire independent mages to help with special jobs, or if they require specialized skill in a particular spell school.

Finally, it is rumored that some nobles take on Renegade mages as house mages, but how they avoid the wrath of the conclave is unknown.

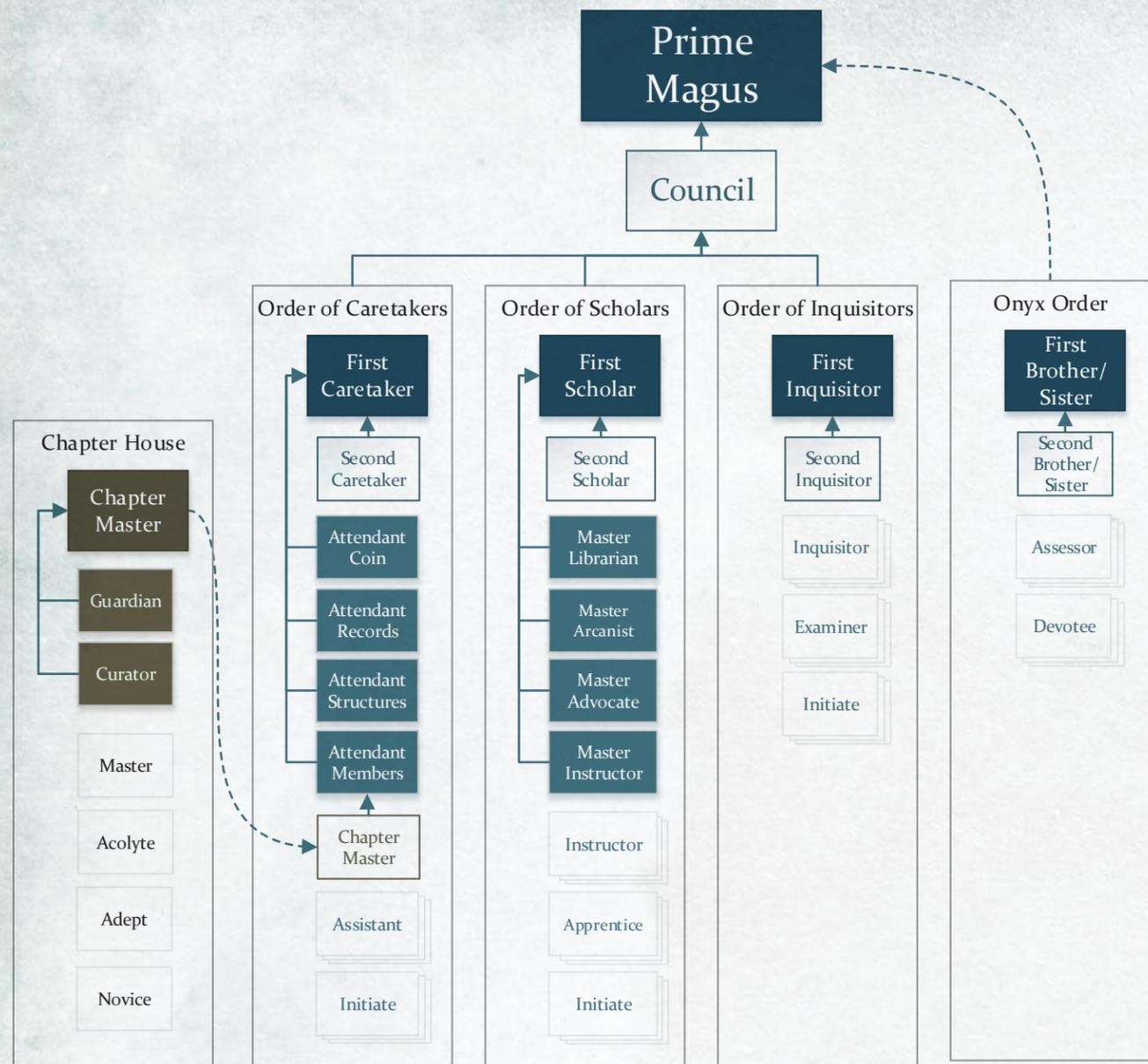
Independent Mages

Talent is an independent mage's greatest asset.

Any mage not serving as a house mage immediately falls into this second category: independents. These mages hire out their services on a per job basis, sometimes travelling widely to find work from various house mages. Independents vary widely in their circumstances, with some being as poor and hungry as a street beggar and others being as fat and rich as any noble. As with many things, talent is the great separator between persons.



Independent mages often spend more time in travel than study.



A caretaker dabbles in some diversionary magic before returning to record keeping.

Order of Caretakers

The caretakers oversee the day to day operations of the conclave and manage its membership. While not the most prestigious order, it is an important and necessary one. The order is made up of four key Attendants and their various assistants and initiates.

First Caretaker

The head of the Caretakers is the First Caretaker. The First Caretaker presides over four key Attendants and reports directly to the Council. He or she is assisted by the Second Caretaker, whose responsibilities and working relationship to the First Caretaker can vary but who is trained to be a successor to the First Caretaker should the need arise.

Attendant of Coin

Responsible for the massive sums of gold that are the conclave finances, this position is the most prestigious of the remaining Caretakers, almost equal in reputation to that of the First Caretaker.

Managing rivers of gold is not as easy as it may seem. There is the constant flow of funds to and from the chapterhouses. All conclave staff must be paid regularly, purchases and payments with a vast array of merchants, investments and borrowing with bankers, maintaining and guarding the treasury and disparate caravans, special allotments for special projects, coin

for other departments like repairs to structures. And should any of this vast snaking network of interconnected locks and dams not flow smoothly it falls upon the Attendant of Coin to answer directly to the council.

Attendant of Records

Since its inception, conclave operations has generated a flood of documents that must be created or obtained, stored, and made easy to retrieve. What was discussed at the Council meeting on Apmer 13th, 283? The Attendant, or one of his or her assistants or initiates must know. When a mage transfers his or her chapterhouse registration from one town to another, it is an initiate of records that locates and moves the document. When the latest round of merchant payments are made, it is the Records that file away the proof for safekeeping.

The Records and Librarians face similar issues; thus, they often share innovations in record keeping with one another.

While the Records keepers are looked down upon by others in the conclave as paper-pushing bureaucrats, Records workers understand the true importance of words on paper. Many of them secretly nurse fantasies of the utter chaos that would envelope the conclave if the records suddenly disappeared.

Conclave Hierarchy

The Conclave are the masters and governors of magic. Appointed by the gathered nobility at the end of the mage wars, they maintain, rule, and administrate the practice of magic. The Conclave works from their palatial headquarters at The Garden through the local Chapter Houses spread across Vaelun.

The Conclave is made up of three major orders and

one secret order. The major orders are ruled by the Council, and the head of the council is the Prime Magus.

Major decisions within the conclave are made by majority vote. But *who* can vote is what matters most.

What follows is a list of the conclave orders and the positions therein.

Attendant of Structures

The landholdings of the conclave are voluminous. The Garden is, of course, the largest and most prestigious building in the conclave portfolio, but hundreds of others across Vaelun must be repaired, maintained, expanded, repurposed, and so forth. All these structures and the grounds they are on are the responsibility of the Attendant of Structures with his or her assistants and initiates.

Structures works closely with Records and Coin to fulfill their mandate.

On a lighter note, it is Structures that is responsible for the decorating and hosting of festivals and holidays at The Garden.

Attendant of Members

Knowing who is a rule-abiding member of the conclave and who is an oath-breaking Renegade is of supreme importance to the conclave. The Attendant of Members, with his or her assistants and initiates, manages the membership, investigating complaints. Failure to pay dues is a serious matter not taken lightly by the Members.

Each chapter master reports to the Attendant of Members. Thus, the Attendant has a window on the “real world” into which few others in the conclave can peer.

Order of Scholars

Self-considered the most important order of the conclave, the Order of Scholars focuses solely on the knowledge and art of magic. Separated into four distinct sects, the largest of which is under the aegis of the Master Librarian, each does its part to maintain, protect, teach, and advance magic.

First Scholar

This most prestigious position in the most prestigious order is typically held for life, a precedent set by Maurin, the first to hold it. Ambitious mages in the Order of Scholars agonize over whether to take a lesser position in hopes of being Prime Magus one day, or whether to claim what seems like second prize as First Scholar.

The First Scholar manages the Master Librarian, Arcanist, Advocate, and Instructor, along with their various apprentices and initiates. As with the Caretakers, a Second Scholar is in place to assist and provide a



The conclave has a vast network of chapter houses, towers, farms, and forests throughout Vaelun.

clear path of succession if needed, but due to the life-long nature of the position, many a First Scholar has outlived the replacement waiting in the wings in the event of his or her death.

The First Scholar reports to the Council and is customarily the first order head to speak in council meetings.

Master Librarian

“The future is contained in books.” “That which is written is real.” These gnomic utterances are etched in stone as well as on the hearts of the Master Librarian and his or her various apprentices and initiates. The Master Librarian is ultimately responsible for finding, copying, storing, and organizing all written knowledge of magic. His or her primary responsibility is the overseeing of the vast, eleven-level library that reposes in the center of The Garden like a multifaceted jewel in a ring. Indeed, if there is hallowed ground at The Garden, many mages would locate it there. But beyond the sheen of that jewel, there are the myriad little libraries at each Chapter House throughout Vaelun. Despite the romantic ideal to have one library that contains absolutely everything (and the library at The Garden goes farther than most libraries at making that dream a reality), it is useless in practice to require every mage travel to The Garden every time a book needs consulting. Therefore, it is the little libraries that are the life’s blood of the body of magic in Vaelun.

Master Arcanist

Magic is an ever-evolving discipline. New spells for new purposes are created through experimentation, but new techniques for tried and true spells of the past can also be discovered. At the forefront of spellcasting research is the Master Arcanist, whose position is considered the most prestigious within the order.

Spell study is conducted for its own sake, but it has a pragmatic side as well. Ever-present is the threat of the Renegades and what their unfettered research could discover. The prudent defense is simply to stay ahead of them and know the best counters if—or when—they are needed.

Master Advocate

At the Council of Jamant it was determined that the conclave must adhere to laws set out by the nobles. Ensuring such compliance is the responsibility of the Master Advocate. As an organization, the conclave interacts with many different nobles, each with private

arrangements and customs that must be met. Then there is its own large body of members to oversee. When a dispute arises, it is up to the Master Advocate, as well as his or her apprentices and initiates to investigate, research, and defend the conclave. When it is an internal matter, such as members violating the rules or the oath, judges are selected from within the Advocates—initiates for small matters, apprentices for larger ones.

Each conclave member has the right to appeal any decision to the Master Advocate. In practice, this is rarely done: the Master Advocate is too busy to hear every petition, and second, overruling decisions just leads to more appeals.

The role of the Master Advocate has evolved somewhat in the conclave's recent history. It used to be the case that the First Scholar was the only member of the Order of Scholars to attend Council meetings. This is still the official rule, but a recent development has seen the Master Advocate invited to certain Council meetings to advise on matters of law and justice. The long-term results of this shift remain to be seen.

Working within the Master Advocate sect is a frequent step to becoming an inquisitor, council member, or Prime Magus.

Master Instructor

It is difficult to know if holding the lowest position of the highest order is a good thing or a bad thing. The master instructor oversees the education of future mages, earning him or her the derisive title of “master wet nurse” by those whose own childhood lies in the forgotten past. Yet the Master Instructor's role is important. He or she oversees a system that identifies mages with the gift, provides them access to proper instruction, shepherds them through to graduation, and ensures that newly-minted graduates can be capable and successful participants in the conclave system. It is this last point that could be said to be the most important: simply put, a significant part of



the master instructor's role is to ensure that no new mages become Renegades. From the earliest age, it is inculcated into pupils—and built into their curriculum—that they should hold respect and reverence for the conclave.

The Master Instructor and his or her sect are likewise responsible for selecting and licensing Instructors, those who tutor students in magic. While a formal system ostensibly exists for this process, the Master Li-

brarian would be disappointed to learn that, in this case, that which is written does not appear to be particularly real: allegations against instructors, even serious allegations, are rarely investigated. Moreover, few schools except the closest and most prestigious are ever inspected, leading to those in rural and remote locations operating essentially independently.

Order of Inquisitors

At formation the inquisitors were charged with three tasks:

1. To discover the whereabouts of renegade mages;
2. To attempt to persuade any discovered renegade to renounce their misguided ways and return to the conclave;
3. To return noncompliant mages to the nearest chapterhouse to await trial.

Initially and officially the renegades were not viewed as enemies, but rather as lost brothers and sisters who needed help finding their way back home. Inquisitors were not selected for their malice or cruelty, but for their giftedness at both magic and the art of persuasion. Trials were not showpieces in which guilt was already predetermined, but genuine efforts to ascertain the truth about a rebel mage's beliefs and motives. Sentences—which ranged from terms of imprisonment to execution—were not meted out capriciously but rather with great sorrow and a sense of defeat.



Maranda's Threat, commissioned in 303, it hangs in the First Inquisitor's study as a constant reminder to remain vigilant.

First Inquisitor

By tradition, the First Inquisitor is the embodiment of all that is right about the conclave—its commitment to purity, truth, and the rule of law. In practice, however, the position of First Inquisitor has sometimes been coveted by men and women more concerned with changing behaviors than changing minds—or by those with an elevated sense of their own purity and possession of truth. The First Inquisitor, along with his or her army of inquisitors, Examiners, and Initiates scour the world quashing renegade circles, and following up on tips of suspected renegade activity.

Every First Inquisitor since the first has been haunted by the specter of Maranda of Setwood: specifically, is her continued existence real, or merely recruitment propaganda for the so-called Free Mages? To prove Maranda is truly dead, or better, to capture her alive, is each First Inquisitor's great dream.

Inquisitors are provided with food, clothing, and ample funding to pursue their mandate. They may hire on independent mages or non-mages to assist in their quests.

The Council

The seven-member council rules the conclave. It is comprised of the most prestigious and talented mages in Vaelun.

The primary position is that of the Prime Magus. Like him or her, the other six members serve for life, unless they step down or are disgraced.

The regular business of the conclave is discussed at council meetings, with the First of each order providing a report or raising issues for debate. Matters are determined by majority vote.

Position Replacement

When a position on the council is vacant, nominees are taken, with the Prime Magus able to nominate one person. Then the rest of the council is able to nominate any number of other candidates. Technically, any member of the conclave can be nominated. Realistically, the usual names are chosen from the ranks of the First Caretaker, Scholar, Inquisitor, Brother/Sister, Attendant of Coin, Master Arcanist, and Master Advocate.

The Master Advocate will determine the timeframe for voting (a few weeks to a month from nomination) and the kind of vote: Small, Large, or Open.

A small vote is limited to just the top positions of the



Prime Magus Tettani holds audience in his throne room.

conclave each getting one vote: First and Seconds of each order, Attendants, and Masters (16 top positions + 7 council members, for 23 total votes). That the Onyx Order, created by a Prime Magus of the past, even gets 2 votes is a contentious matter.

A large vote is everyone in a small vote, plus each chapter master, which could amount to up to 50 additional votes.

Finally, an Open vote is one in which every member of the conclave, except Initiates and Novices, can participate. This is usually reserved only for highly controversial votes, in which it is deemed better to diffuse responsibility across the whole population rather than to try to enforce an unpopular decision from on high. The most famous open vote was the Succession vote of 284.

Prime Magus Replacement

When the Prime Magus dies, the nominees are the remaining 6 members of the council. No other nominations are taken. The vote for Prime Magus is always an Open vote. Thus, any position on council is one step away from ultimate power.

Non-confidence Replacement

After Jakin of Tatsfield succeeded Elwood as Prime Magus, he feared what could have happened had Maranda ascended to power. Thus, with his friend the Master Advocate, he created a mechanism to allow the council to take a vote of non-confidence and remove a Prime Magus from position. The vote must be unanimous for removal to happen. If it does, the Prime Magus is then considered on leave until an open vote can be taken for confirmation, typically within three months. However, the move is not without risks for

the one proposing the non-confidence vote: if the Prime Magus wins the non-confidence vote, all six council members lose their position and are replaced.

If another nominee wins the vote, then the deposed Prime Magus is considered retired and given a generous living allowance for the rest of his/her days.

Prime Magus

The Prime Magus is the highest-ranking mage in all of Vaelun. A prestigious office held for life (though there have been two abdications), the Prime Magus sets the tone, agenda, and vision for the conclave. Each Prime Magus since Elwood the Founder has left his or her personal mark on the conclave. (Plus, the position comes with really stunning robes.)

Officially, the Prime Magus determines when the council meets, which items are on the agenda for discussion, and what items will be voted on. Those who think of this as an unimpressive power have failed to consider its implications, for the one who calls the meeting and sets the agenda has effectively already determined what will and will not be discussed; and the one to decide when votes will (or will not) happen has the power to decide what will (or will not) become law.

The Prime Magus also has power to veto votes; however, he or she must be prudent in the use of the veto, otherwise supporters may not be supporters much longer.

When a council position is open, the Magus makes the first nomination, after which the council presents their nominations.

Moreover, the Prime Magus is the conclave's primary liaison with the nobility, speaking with any of them as an equal. Every fifth year the Magus attends the Council of Jamant with the nobility. The Prime Magus selects those considered worthy and profitable to the discussion to attend as part of the entourage. To be selected—or not to be selected—is a clear signal regarding where one stands with the Prime Magus.

Finally, the Onyx Order—whatever they do, whatever they find, is relayed only to the Prime Magus.

Onyx Order

The Onyx Order was created in the second year of Prime Magus Tettani (309). Its purpose is to find and expose sedition within the conclave and renegade activity throughout the land, and to ensure the conclave is always protected from enemies internal and abroad. These “spies” operate openly by wearing their onyx robes while at The Garden, or secretly in the world, appearing in the guise of anything from a baker to a town guard.

From the order's inception the rumor has circulated that the Onyx Order traffics in forbidden mind control spells. Officially, this is pure nonsense. But officially as well, only the Onyx Order could investigate such an allegation...

The head of the order is called the First Brother or Sister. A true friend of the conclave, his or her only thought is what is best for the conclave and its continuation.

When recruiting, only the pure are chosen; these individuals enter at the rank of Devotee. If their service is valuable (that is, if they find actual subversion) they can be promoted to the rank of Assessor. An accusation by a member of the Onyx Order is difficult if not impossible to overcome.

For the most part, the inquisitors and the Onyx Order have coexisted surprisingly peacefully, thanks in large part to a clear division of labor: the Order turns over any leads on renegade mages immediately to the inquisitors, freeing them to focus silently on information-gathering.

In 284 the audience hall was filled beyond capacity during the Succession Vote. The extra two days it took to count the votes led to rumors council was adjusting the results.



