

The Elmerite Order

Description: The Elmerite Order specializes in the finding of esoteric loopholes. They're looking for places in current math and physics where magic might be usefully inserted, or even grafted in; progress is slow, but potentially very rewarding. The tricky part is in creating magical grafts that won't cause the occult equivalent of immune system tissue reaction. The current Scientist paradigm (see below) is robust enough to withstand an egregious violation of the rules, but the mages who are actively trying to fiddle the metaphysical books at ground zero might not be so fortunate. And, unfortunately: 'ground zero' is not always a metaphor. A misstep by the Order won't blow up a city, but it can certainly blow up a room.

Background: So, it turns out that the worldview found in the first edition *Mage: The Ascension* TTRPG is not entirely inaccurate, after all. To wit: magic works; there are various schools of magic that can manipulate it; but one paradigm (scientific rationalism) is so dominant that the others cannot currently operate freely on our plane of existence. Fair enough, as far as that goes.

Where it all breaks down is *why* this state of affairs has occurred. You see, the scientific rationalist mages (call them Scientists for short) didn't actually want to hamper the other schools; and the other schools aren't being viciously suppressed by them, either explicitly or implicitly. It's just that about five hundred years ago there was an incursion into our reality of some highly unpleasant entities, and the only way to fight them was to bolster one school's operating paradigm to the point where that school could consistently and unerringly define what our reality actually *was*. The other schools reluctantly conceded that the Scientists had the most robust model, so the Scientist model was the one that the mages used. And it worked!

But it worked at the cost of virtually suppressing pretty much all other forms of magic. This had immediate and unpleasant effects on both esoteric and mundane power structures (it should be noted here that the historical record, prior to 1500 AD, is at times wildly and even deliberately inaccurate). Despite the best efforts of all the schools, the price for not having an alien evil run wild on this plane of existence was to have a great number of human evils do so instead. And, since the non-Scientist schools could not actually **use** their power, those schools inexorably withered and died over the course of the next few centuries.

The Scientist school did not passively accept this, of course, but the boost to their particular paradigm made preserving other paradigms difficult (if not impossible). The best that the Scientists could do was to document what information and lore that they could, in the hope of recreating the other schools at some point in the future. To that end, in the 17th century a clearinghouse of esoteric (albeit currently useless) resources was created; this nameless organization was made somewhat public in the 19th century, in the guise of an eccentric Anglican religious order (The Elmerites). Elmerites were faintly scandalous in that they had male and female members, and accepted married lay members, but as no scandal ever accrued to the Order, and it hardly sought fame and renown, the scandal soon passed. The Elmerites were soon permitted to labor in blessed obscurity.

This continues to the current day. The Elmerite Order is not particularly large, as such things go: it can be found throughout the Western world, but largely focuses on what is sometimes called the Anglosphere. In the United States, there are the usual chapter-houses in Baltimore, Chicago, and Providence, but generally the Order prefers to work via written correspondence and electronic communication, rather than by direct contact. For one

thing, it keeps them familiar with technology. For another, it minimizes any damage that might happen when reality slaps back. And reality can and will slap back.

Other complications? Well, the Elmerites' experiments **do** try to get around the Scientist paradigm, and there are perhaps members of that school that are not entirely pleased with that idea in practice (particularly since failed attempts can get energetic). And then there are the fragments of the other schools of magic; most of the non-Scientist mages joined with the group that became the Elmerites, but some survived on their own, with what fragments of power they could personally maintain. Their distant organizational descendants can sometimes have a distorted view of historical events, and what should be the response to those events. Lastly, there are the invaders that forced the Scientists to bolster their school's paradigm in the first place. Those things are still on our plane, and they cause what trouble that they can.

All in all, there's room for some adventure in all of this.

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