

Confraternity of the Malignant Crab

Description: The Confraternity of the Malignant Crab is a secret cult of operating room surgeons and staff that is centered around the ritual sacrifice of cancerous human flesh. Acolytes of the cult can be found in many Western hospitals, including Japan. The cult has no formal symbol, but Confraternity cultists are understandably fond of crab imagery.

Well. The best thing that you can say about the Confraternity of the Malignant Crab is that they're actually not utterly unreasonable, for a human sacrifice cult. Not actively malevolent, at least. It's not like they make people *suffer*. Or at least, they don't at the moment.

People have been cutting out tumors for millennia, of course. And the ancestors of the Confraternity have been worshipping their crab-god for almost as long. But it wasn't until the 1850s that the cult really got going, ironically because of modern medical practice. The Malignant Crab is apparently very finicky about acceptable offerings; the flesh being offered up must come from a still-living human, and the sooner the human dies after the offering, the less valuable the offering is. But the

Malignant Crab apparently cares nothing about how much pain or suffering is inflicted in the process.

That's usually a hint that there's going to be a **lot** of pain and suffering involved. But in this case, painless surgical procedures and full recoveries turn out to be in the Confraternity's best interests. They've thus specialized in surgical oncology since the 1850s. Indeed, most of the modern systems set up to properly dispose of surgical waste was quietly designed by someone from the Confraternity, specifically so as to *not* offend the Malignant Crab with an improperly disposed-of offering.

Also note that the Confraternity is not just made up of surgeons, or even mostly made up of surgeons. Nurses, radiographers, anesthesiologists can and do join the Confraternity in order to enjoy its benefits. Said benefits include the usual mystically imposed good luck on themselves (and bad luck on their foes), increased personal charisma -- and one specific boon; members of the Confraternity can survive on considerably less sleep than the average. So much so that they typically hide the fact that one of their cultists can indefinitely operate at 10/10 efficiency with only one hour of sleep per night.

But the rituals of the Confraternity of the Malignant Crab *cannot* be used to get good health. More specifically, they cannot be used to prevent or cure actual cancer; and they can never be used to benefit a human whose cancerous organs have been offered up as a sacrifice. Cultists of the Confraternity typically disdain the ‘shells’ from which they harvest their offerings; this is not a cult made up of pleasant men and women. Their undeniable medical skill was ultimately **not** acquired in order to be of service to their fellow humans, and the Confraternity would be absolutely opposed to any kind of clinical breakthrough that would make surgical oncology a thing of the past.

Admittedly, that’s not going to happen any time soon generally, but already some cultist specialist ‘teams’ are finding it somewhat more difficult to keep up a full calendar of sacrifices. A few have even been forced to be more activist in making sure that enough surgeries are scheduled. This offers a possible avenue of investigation -- which, of course, offers an excellent way for an investigation team to attract the negative attention of a series of affluent and socially connected cultists who **aren’t** going to be worried if the cops show up. They might, in fact, be the ones who call the cops first.

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