1 The Wizard’s Conclave

The Conclave is an organization of brothers in the Art, in magic, who set aside their personal differences of philosophy and morality to learn together, and to prevent abuses of the power that is magic. It was started after the Holy Wars when the Godstalker discovered the Orbs of Power that enabled magic to function outside of the control of the self-proclaimed priests of the Elder Gods, and it has maintained itself since then by allowing mages to cooperate as well as by offering them a locale where they can associate with those who share their philosophies.

There are many in the Realm who perform magic, to one degree or another. The knowledge of spells, and the skills required to cast them, is available to any whose desire for it is great enough - and for those who eschew the traditional study of spellcraft and devaic lore there is the easier, though more costly, route of witchcraft. You and your brothers in the Art are a special breed, however; you are the upper echelon of mages who have apprenticed yourselves to full mages, have passed through the Time of Trials, and have been granted the title of Wizard and the link to the Orb of Nairaphi that goes with it.

That link is the single most important element in the magic that is yours, for with it you can regenerate your natural store of mana when you deplete it through spellcasting. Without the link to the Orb, you would be dependant on mana-bearing crystals of mythril to conduct all of your magics, and would be forced to spend a fortune thereby to learn and practice your craft. It is for this reason that you have risen to the top of your profession, and have remained a small but powerful coalition of Wizards.

Your Conclave is divided into three Orders:

- **The Order of the Scales** holds the official position that the purpose of magic is to enhance understanding and increase the store of knowledge available to mankind, particularly knowledge of matters mystical and otherworldly. It teaches that a balance, a symmetry is required in all things, for the forces of the Universe to be understood.
- **The Order of the Spear** holds that the purpose of magic is to bring change to the World, through destruction, creation or alteration as is necessary. The ability and willingness to use magic and enforce one’s will upon one’s surroundings is of paramount importance to the followers of the Spear.
- **The Order of the Shield** holds that the purpose of magic is to protect and defend. It is necessary, according to the doctrines of this Order, that magic remain a defensive posture, lest it lose its effectiveness in assuming too early an attacking pose.

The Conclave is run by the Council of Magi, a four-person organization consisting of one Representative of each House and the Heirophant, In theory, at least, the members of the various orders and houses put aside their differences to work together and resolve problems common to their Art. In practice, of course, certain cliques have evolved within the Conclave...but nevertheless, there are certain functions which the Conclave as a whole moderates, runs and takes an interest in, some of which have become important in recent times.

1.1 The Time of Trials

The Trials are held every Stellar Equinox, an astronomical event that occurs every three years, in a location free of all external magical influences. Contrary to popular assumption, the Trials do not test magical potential, magical skill, or magical knowledge--those without potential never become apprentices, those without skill do not remain apprentices, and those with the first two will soon gain the third. Rather, the Time of Trials is designed to test a host of intangibles: adaptability, cleverness, cooperation, mental agility, and so forth. It is also designed to test the aspirant’s leanings, so that he may determine which Order he is to join. It is for this reason that the Trials are held in areas free of magic, so that the aspirants are forced to use their natural skills and so that no external interference may be applied.

The purpose for conducting the Trials before the Stellar Equinox is that it is only during that time that new links to the Orb of Nairaphi may be forged. Every Wizard, with the consent of the Heirophant, may forge one link between the Orb and one uninitiated; thus every apprentice who passes the Time of Trials is sponsored by his mentor and the Heirophant into full Wizard status.

When all apprentices have either been elevated or declared unfit, the Heirophant steps down from the post and the new Heirophant ascends to it. This is both traditional and necessary, for it prevents the Orb of Nairaphi from becoming too strongly attuned to one individual and thus precipitating chaos within the Conclave. As is known to many, the Heirophancy rotates among the three Orders, and the Representative of each Order assumes the post (assigning a new Representative to follow him.)

Unfortunately, this has all been made extremely difficult due to recent events. The Wizard Segwina, Representative of the Order of the Spear and due to ascend to the Heirophancy during this coming Equinox, was found dead of a blow to the head several days ago. The perpetrators of the crime have yet to be found, and the Order of the Spear is currently without a Representative.

This is a major crisis. If no new Heirophant is chosen, over the next three years it is likely the Wizard Arriz will be overwhelmed by the power of the Orb, and become a threat to all around him. If no Heirophant is chosen, and Arriz steps down, all the Wizards of the Conclave will lose their links to the Orb. However, choosing the wrong person for the job could easily result in the destruction of the Conclave. You must choose rapidly and wisely if you are to survive.

Even worse, the failure of the teleport platforms upon Kalerege’s Castle has stranded much of the Conclave on the surface, and unless the spells can be re-established within the next six days, you will be forced to make your selections of the new Wizards and the new Heirophant from those currently on the Castle. Kalerege has not been seen in the last two days, since the failure of the platforms -- and it is his Castle. Clearly, something is afoot.

It was perhaps a mistake to agree to hold the Trials upon the Castle, but at the time, it seemed the perfect solution to one basic problem -- since the war began, the surface of the Realm has become literally *littered* with magical energies. Finding a place free of those energies where you could hold the Trials would have been nearly impossible, while the Castle filled that requirement quite readily, as well as several others...

1.2 Magic and Politics

It is public knowledge, or at least an open secret, that the Conclave has assisted the Guard of the Realm in their military endeavors since the war’s beginning, and is therefore interested in the political aspects of the peace summit on the Castle. The truth is, though, that the Conclave’s largest political concern at the moment is not martial, but economic in nature.

Less than a week ago, the Conclave was informed through one of your political lobbyists that a legislative bill had been proposed to the Table of Peers to make magecraft a licensed profession. Phrased innocuously, but incredibly dangerous to the Conclave as an organization, since the governing of magic would then come under the jurisdiction of the House of Guilds. The very thought of a mundane being the ultimate authority in the Conclave is enough to chill the blood of any true wizard, particularly where magic is one of the Realm’s most profitable professions. If this bill were to be enacted as law, it would become the Guildmaster’s responsibility to run the Time of Trials, and he would thus be empowered to grant full Wizard status only to those loyal to him. This may not be allowed.

Remember, you are all brothers in the Art. Though your philosophies, your goals, and your methods may differ, this bond is still shared between you. While you may perhaps not trust each other in other things, in this one thing do not betray that trust. The Art is all, and above all.

Good luck.

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