

of the known members of the Fate unless they had a paying job for them.

All the while, the Fate's huge intake of cash went to purchasing odd items from overseas. What was left over supported the membership and went to purchasing safehouses and places of worship to preserve their secrets.

When the war in Europe began to disrupt the Fate's purchasing spree, they turned to study. A network of safehouses and apartments had been set up in the intervening years and the small membership set about collating many of the most rare and ancient books known to humanity. Several private estates near the tip of Long Island provided safe haven for the performance of rituals and rites.

By 1940, the Fate had spread all across New York state, and had several small holdings in New Jersey and Connecticut. They continued their criminal activities and their pursuit into the arcane sciences. With the advent of World War Two, however, the atmosphere of the self-destructive New York underworld changed—and with it, the Fate's approach to crime. The FBI, ONI and the OSS all took interest in utilizing the criminal elements of the New York underworld to search for and assist in the capture of Nazi spies and saboteurs. The Fate, understandably, retreated even further into the shadows, fearful of accidental discovery by higher governmental powers.

During the war years, the Fate steered clear of their usual magic-for-hire schemes and instead turned their attention inward, focusing on study, worship, and increasing the holdings of the cult. They did use magic to suit their own needs, however, stealing objects and securing properties with impunity.

By 1945 the organization was a tidy, secretive group of about a dozen members, linked only through casual meetings and occasional group rituals. They had no headquarters anymore, only retreats and safe houses utilized when needed and shared equally with all members. There were no records of the money gained through illegal activities, and unlike other criminal ventures, there was no struggle for a greater share by individual members. The Fate had higher ideals in mind. In this way they avoided discovery and exposure. While most other groups remained embroiled in constant struggles over power which left them vulnerable to law enforcement, the Fate worked in perfect union, a single-minded organization willing to do anything to succeed in their plan.

With the end of the war, and the end of the partnership of the FBI, ONI, OSS, and Mafia, the Fate stepped back into the picture again. Unfortunately, times had changed. The leaders of the crime organizations had changed, and along with them the reputation of the Fate had changed. The New York underworld had become used to operating above even federal authority, and the Fate, long thought disbanded, scared them little.

When the Fate began taking jobs again and continued their practice of magic for hire, they found they commanded little respect. Some factions of criminals refused to deal with them at all, while others bided their time and waited until they could be sure of specific targets within the Fate.

The gangs met in late 1951, and in this one instance they shared information about the Fate. Many individual members of the Fate had been followed to various houses and locales, and their leader Madame A frequented several well-known locations.

The first strike came in December 1951, when Madame A was attacked in a classic mafia hit. The cautious crime families who arranged the deed were doubly cautious when it came to attacking the leader of the obscure group. Even so, no one expected what occurred.

The New Order

Madame A was invited to a "meeting" of New York's underworld elite near the docks on the East River. It was an ambush. Gunmen riddled the car carrying Madame A with hundreds of bullets—and then *something* materialized. Of the fifteen men involved in the hit only four survived, and only two remained sane. The body of Madam A was never found.

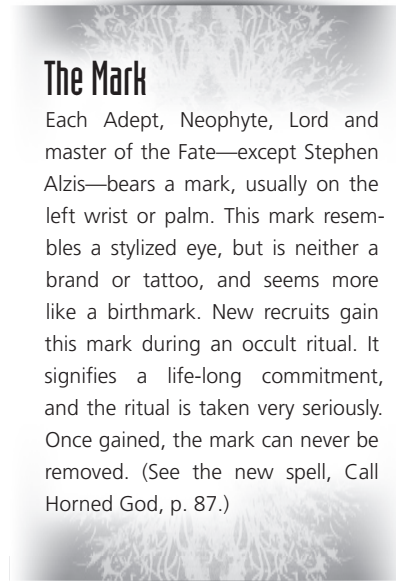
There was no immediate response from the Fate. Instead, they quietly ceased their activities in Manhattan and retreated to the outer boroughs to lick their wounds. Madame A was gone, and Dr. Schmidt could not muster the charisma necessary to run the group. The entirety of the Fate met to decide its future.

On the winter solstice in 1952 the Fate convened for a ritual at their estate in Suffolk County on Long Island. In the isolated wilds they called forth their dark god. The ritual, which had been enacted many times before, had always brought forth something, some manifestation of their god or indication of his will.

This time, nothing happened.

The Mark

Each Adept, Neophyte, Lord and master of the Fate—except Stephen Alzis—bears a mark, usually on the left wrist or palm. This mark resembles a stylized eye, but is neither a brand or tattoo, and seems more like a birthmark. New recruits gain this mark during an occult ritual. It signifies a life-long commitment, and the ritual is taken very seriously. Once gained, the mark can never be removed. (See the new spell, Call Horned God, p. 87.)



The Fate was thrown into turmoil. The resulting chaos destroyed the once-orderly society of the cult. Some members fled, fearful that the organization had somehow angered their lord Nyarlathotep. Schmidt tried to reconstruct the Fate, but was rebuffed by almost all former members. Most turned to personal worship of Nyarlathotep, hoping to avoid whatever wrath he had chosen for the Fate. Some rejected him altogether.

It was during this trying time, in the spring of 1953, that Schmidt met Stephen Alzis. Alzis simply turned up one day and insinuated himself into what remained of the once-powerful group. It soon became evident that Schmidt no longer controlled the Fate, and that he had for some reason gladly turned over leadership to Alzis. It marked a change which would bring about the resurrection of the Fate as a much more powerful, secretive, and efficient entity.

As the dust settled and Alzis began handling things, Schmidt retired to a fully academic position within the group. His failing health prevented strenuous activity and he instead chose to serve his dark master in the remaining months of his life as a sage. Schmidt worked to translate into English as many of the books, scrolls, and tomes the group had come by in their heyday as possible, and to build up an easily-understandable library to foster a new order of wizards.

Meanwhile, Alzis destroyed the unfaithful.

Between April 1952 and August 1958, twenty-four former members of the Fate met grisly "accidental" deaths. Those who had quit or who had distanced themselves from the group found their numbers finally pulled from the proverbial hat. The failure of the summons spell had been a test from their lord, and their faith had been found lacking.

Soon a new ring of followers, more powerful than any to come before it, filled in the ranks of the Fate. Stephen Alzis, untouchable and seemingly all-knowing, presided with an iron fist. His lieutenants, such as Emir Agdesh, Otto Schmidt and Emmanuel Hutchins, recruited the lower echelons.

Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, the organized crime world of New York experienced the wrath of a group that could do the impossible and make nightmares reality. The mob's attack on the Fate had not been forgotten and would never be totally forgiven. To the outside world it looked like a war for mob leadership. Although this was true to a certain extent, many of the deaths were the will of the Fate.

Alzis's company, Whole Earth Enterprises, was already a silent yet significant player in New York financial quarters. Among its many Manhattan holdings was an odd basement beneath a small consortium building atop the Doolittle sinkhole. In 1968, with an unknown silent partner, and with Robert Hubert as legal representative, Alzis and the Fate underwrote the construction of a

new nightclub. Club Apocalypse opened to great fanfare, despite the public "flower power" sentiment. Its anti-reporter policy soon made it the hottest celebrity nightspot in town—no mean trick in New York City.

By 1970, the Fate stood unopposed atop a summit of dead dons, capos, and gang leaders, sent to their graves by a power that few humans have ever seen. With Stephen Alzis at the Fate's helm there was nothing to do but bow to the Network and all its demands, or face the destruction of organized crime itself. Those who knew of the Fate knew they must appease it at all costs. The greatest secret of the underworld would be kept through blood, money and silence, and the Fate would have its way.

About the Fate

The Fate is an exclusive and secretive group of magically-skilled individuals who control a cult and organization devoted to the eventual release of Nyarlathotep, and through it the release of the Outer Gods. They stand unopposed in the New York underworld, and fear no group or individual. The term "The Fate" refers both to the group itself and its leadership. To those outside the organization, the entire group is simply "The Fate" or "The Network."

Within the group there is a hierarchy of ranks, and the members of the Fate sit at the top. The Fate control the actions of the Lords, Neophytes, and Adepts who compose their Network of agents. Those acting without orders from the Fate do not live long enough to reconsider their actions.

Stephen Alzis is the undisputed leader of the Fate. Those in the lower echelons stupid enough to defy him rapidly disappear, and those who plot against him soon realize that he cannot be permanently harmed. And they usually die horribly.

Most in the Fate believe Alzis to be an embodiment of Nyarlathotep himself and hold him in absolute reverence. Those who do not share this belief follow his orders anyway, fully cognizant of his magical abilities. Alzis does not care about the religious aspects of the group's activities, and no one has ever gathered enough courage to ask him to his face if he is Nyarlathotep. He remains indifferent on the subject, refusing to acknowledge the fact that most under his command consider him a god (or at least the flesh-and-blood relation of one).

Instead Alzis is more concerned with the day-to-day operations of the Fate itself, and the various tasks necessary to keep the organization running smoothly, which in turn keeps him happy. The rest of the members of the Fate are concerned only with keeping Stephen Alzis happy.

When Stephen Alzis is unhappy, the membership of the Fate tends to fluctuate wildly.