

landscapes, and eerie mysterious characters? The problem (at least to hear real magicians and adepts tell it) is that the trids and sims don't often get it right. Oh, sure, they retain "magical consultants" on staff to tell them that you can't blow up a building with a Powerbolt spell (not even if you're a dragon), but as soon as the story calls for boffo mojo, the spellslinger-in-residence might as well step out for a sandwich for all the good her advice is going to do. As long as box-office extravaganzas like the "Karl Kombatmage" series pull in big nuyen for the studios, the bosses aren't going to worry too much about whether their magician characters are doing things that would have a real practitioner's brains oozing out his ears.

That doesn't even touch on the subject of the magicians themselves. Most real spellslingers react with either amusement or disgust at the portrayal of their fellows in the media: males as lantern-jawed heroes with six-pack abs or weird inscrutable "masters of the mystic arts" festooned with (fake) arcane symbols; females as half-dressed temptresses with body-shop figures and dramatic makeup and tattoos. Adepts of both genders are almost always martial artists or sneaky "ninja" types, and metahuman Awakened types usually get stuck with the villain roles.

## JOHN Q. PUBLIC

Hard as it is to believe, even in 2070 there's still a decent percentage of average citizens out there who have never seen anybody do magic outside of the trids and sims. Magical ability is getting more common with each generation, but it's still rare enough that full-fledged magicians and adepts don't turn up on every corner.

What this means, as in the case of anything that's powerful and unknown, is that people's attitudes toward magicians aren't always the most charitable. Almost nobody is neutral on the subject, and for most, their reaction to magic is either fear, hatred, or fascination. The "fascination" end of the spectrum isn't too much of a problem (many mages would be flattered to discover they had groupies), but the "fear" and "hatred" end (everything from concern about things like astral snooping and mind control to good old-fashioned superstition and paranoia) can lead to all kinds of things that can cause trouble for the Awakened—like stricter laws governing registration of mages and restrictions on magic use, for example. As it is, the laws regulating legal magic use are quite stringent, especially on combat spells and anything that affects the mind, but if some activists and political groups have their way, things could get a lot worse.

## MAGIC AND RELIGION

Most of the major religions have come to an uneasy truce with magic by 2070, incorporating it into their belief systems with varying degrees of success. Some faiths, like Wicca, embrace magic, and have even grown in popularity once again; others, like most Christian and Jewish denominations, accept it when it's used in the service of good (the Pope weighed in on the subject back at the early part of the Awakening); others still, like most (but not all) branches of Islam, view it as evil and heretical.

Even so, there are still many who would use religion as an excuse to persecute magic and its practitioners—for example, the racist Humanis Policlub hates magicians almost as much as they hate metahumans, and they use their own twisted religious interpretations to support their faulty arguments.

## GHOULS AND SPIRITS AND DRAGONS—OH MY!

Human and metahuman magicians aren't the only ones out there who are touched with the Talent. Awakened critters come in all shapes and sizes, from the nearly-mundane (common pests like devil rats) to the magically superior (draciforms, great and otherwise). Critters with any significant magical ability are rare, and you're not likely to blunder into one on your evening constitutional—but don't get the idea that you're safe in the city, either. Plenty of urban predators hang around places like sewers, toxic areas, and sprawl barrens, just waiting for juicy tidbits to come along. Ghouls, for instance, are a common threat in urban areas, banding together and hunting in packs to satisfy their never-ending need for metahuman flesh. There's also the insect-spirit bogeyman to worry about—bugs aren't as common as they used to be, but that doesn't mean that most people don't maintain a healthy (and justified) level of paranoia about them.

## MAGIC IN THE SHADOWS

Most magicians have "real" jobs—mages often work as corporate researchers, university professors, healthcare providers, and such, while those from magical traditions that don't mesh well with the corporate lifestyle (shamans and witches, for example) do things like run lore shops and act as tribal or community healers and wise folk. Because they're so rare, they're usually valued, paid well, and kept happy. So what about the ones who choose a less lawful (and potentially more lucrative and dangerous) path?

The public is even more fascinated with criminal and shadowrunning mages than it is with the garden variety types. Every year you can count on at least a few new sims and trids featuring daring and charismatic magical scoundrels duking it out in arcane battles with corporate security mages (while teammates on both sides make sure that the bullets and grenades are flying at the same time). The truth is, the reality of slinging mojo in the shadows is usually a lot less glamorous than Big Media wants people to believe. For most magical types, they'd be a lot better off (and a lot safer) to keep their nice cushy job with the regular paycheck and medical plan. Still, there are plenty of them that (for whatever reason) don't have that option—and for those who can handle it, the rewards of shadowrunning can be great.

## TAKIN' CARE OF BUSINESS

In the world of *Shadowrun*, there's no getting away from the corporate presence. From the day he's born (probably in a corporate-owned hospital) until the day he dies (buried in a corp-made casket), the average 2070s citizen is surrounded by evidence of the megacorporations' influence on nearly everything in society. They—or their countless shadowy subsidiaries and smaller competitors—provide nearly everything he wants