

# The World of Modern Magic



This is the *setting guide* to a fictional world named (tbd). In this world there are devices and customs that might be familiar as modern people, but through the curse of technological advancement magic has woven its way in and out of every part of life. Though for this world magic is and has always been real.

The world looks very similar to what we see today, with towering skyscrapers, smartphones, cars, and mass manufacturing. The bulk of this setting is about a city called Manhattan which you may have heard of. This setting is intended to work with fifth edition dungeons and dragons but it does not contain any mechanics, so it is easily transferable.

## **History:**

Magic is a fundamental force that permeates everything and has an incredible capacity for destruction. As far back as time can be traced there has always been magic. At first those who

attempted to harness it had great difficulty and often blew up. Slowly, over time, powerful mages started to appear. At first magic users were few and far between. These were dark times of poor and simple living, plagued with feudal subjugation. Most students would master one or two spells in their lifetime. Over the centuries this number grew. When basic spell casting became commonplace the application and work of these spells helped make life easier. As the average use of magic grew so did the number of highly skilled and powerful magicians. The destructive power of magic has a devastating effectiveness. War was a terrifying horror show, and all too common.

According to some history books the edges of the seas are actually portals to ‘the olde planes’. These books say that some of the races, that now populate this world, originally came here from these other planes. For the few books that make this claim there is no consensus on which races crossed over and which are native.

It took a long while for peace to become the norm. In the year 1000001682. NSR<sup>1</sup>, on the site of an old and bloody battlefield, over the course of a week a group of wise men and women gathered and wrote a declaration for a new type of government. This was where the country of Patrium was devised and it was the turning point. With the purpose being to alleviate the suffering of every one, fewer people saw conflict as necessary. Patrium, slowly started incorporating more land eventually spanning coast to coast. Admittance as a citizen was always

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First publications of events differed on the notation of the year. In a conference amongst all notable historians it was agreed to call the year of the conference 1000000001 New Standard Reckoning. Today the year is 1000002065 NSR or 2065 R which is the common shorthand. The oldest records for most races don’t go back farther than 999995500 NSR. Elvish recorded history can be traced back to 999992872 NSR. By best estimates the land in its form was made in 825000000 NSR about one hundred and seventy five million years ago.

voluntary, this created neighboring countries that stabilized around their own founding principles. As working minds never stop, inventors were finally able to put their creative energies into what was the building blocks of the technology we see everywhere today. This renaissance of the last three and a half centuries seems to be advancing ever faster.

**Life:**

For as long as anyone has known creatures have sprung up in so many different and unique forms. There are many different types of sentient creatures called races. You will find the huge diversity of these races everywhere. A child going to school will sit next to a boy with horns and a girl with pointed ears, while the teacher might stand shorter than his students. The following year he may see a classmate burp fire, or have a teacher that has a striking otherworldly beauty. This world has a plethora of races that coexist with one another, and while peoples of a similar type might congregate in to communities, this is the exception not the norm. In cities the diversity is on display on every sidewalk, with pedestrians ranging from two and a half feet, all the way up to ten or eleven feet tall, and some might even float or fly. There are regions where one race has a large population but over all there isn't an outstanding majority.

You won't see many people walking around with guns or wands. Because of centuries of conflict and war the sale of dangerous items is tightly controlled, only licensed sellers can traffic in arms-of-fire. Permits to own dangerous items are hard to get, and possession or sale without a license is an automatic death penalty. Items that grant people the ability to cast 'safe' spells are found in many forms other than wands. Due to the stigma of the wand being so dangerous it is more common to see a watch of *haste*, or a ring of *prestidigitation*, maybe a glove of *mage hand*.

Modern technology as we have it exists but it doesn't look quite the same. Smartphones are prevalent everywhere but the internet was never free. Government provided public wifi is heavily censored and tracks all people who use it. The gnomish encyclopedia is vast and well built but requires a hefty fee to access. Out in Silicon Valley strange magics are creating new faster and better tech all the time.

Though society is mostly functional, with a police force that handles most cases of law braking, there are a number of beings who are so powerful that a general truce is understood. Some of these individuals have taken it upon themselves to enforce their own code such as PowerMan or Mr. Smiley. Others use their power to circumvent conventional law while others take it upon themselves to be the protector that the City Watch is unable to be. For whatever reason people migrate to and live in a city there is a general understanding of peace with one's neighbors, coexistence lets everyone be happy. A small minority choose not to follow this, whether because of whim or opportunity.

In the deserts of the west lies a magic that connects with the life of the land, and it is a strange magic. (to be written latter)

### **The races:**

- Aasimar are people with a small amount of celestial ancestry. Aasimar heritage can lie dormant for generations, only to appear suddenly in the child of two apparently human parents. Aasimar are typically wonderful people. They gravitate toward faiths or organizations associated with celestials. More than a few televangelists have claimed to be aasimar or don't deny the such claims, but

they are not taken seriously outside their congregations. Aasimar have appeared in history primarily in times of crisis, and great change. Young people finding out they have celestial ancestry from school shootings is now a cliché. They are sometimes called crying angels.

- Changelings, are subtle shapeshifters capable of disguising their appearance. “Do they exist?” “Yes.” “But do they?” “Yes.” “Have you seen one?” “No, wait yes. On the TV they have a seat and a representative.” “You know that's a lie and propaganda right?” “So do they exist?” “I asked you.” - conversation between two stoned college students.
- Dragonborn as their name proclaims descendants of dragons, they walk proudly through a world that greets them with fearful incomprehension. Dragonborn have the stereotype of being quick to anger but also very wise. It is assumed that all Dragonborn have a familial connection to dragons and therefore the dragon bank accounts. Some like to perpetuate this while others hate the association with old money.
- Dwarves are well liked and widely accepted, and are well known for their work ethic. Dwarves have kept their ties to that which comes out of the ground. Besides mining operations the refining smithing forging and making of anything made of metal or involving minerals has at some stage passed through the tools of a dwarf. Stereotypes tend to cast dwarves as being overly fond of both money and alcohol, though in truth most will put family and clan above all else. In most cities

there is a dwarventown these are demarcated by buildings with no windows, recreating their underground lifestyle.

- Elves are a magical people of otherworldly grace, living in the world but not entirely part of it. Elves are known for being in the entertainment industry. They are also into politics although it is not many elves that are in politics just that those that are have been for a very long time. Many universities have elves as founders or have elf collections in their museums, some tour guides or librarians may refer to events they experienced first hand. The dwarves have a really bad reputation. They are assumed to be evil. Modern equality groups have been trying to remove this stereotype along with that of the duergar. The election of the first half-dwarf as prime-minister felt like a huge leap forward.
- Firbolgs, reclusive giants that prefer to avoid contact with other sentient races. Among their own kind, they live in colonies, which are usually found in forests or caverns. 'A firbolg in a suit' is the joke that means never going to see it.
- Genasi, were first created by powerful djinn millennia ago and they have always been around ever since. There are four types of genasi, fire, water, air, and earth. They resemble humans but have unusual skin color; red, green, blue, or gray respectively. The elemental blood flowing through their veins manifests differently in each genasi, often as magical power. There are four genasi of each type totaling sixteen. When one dies another is born. Some worship them as gods. They tend to avoid being in close proximity to other genasi. Despite this they are a very close community.

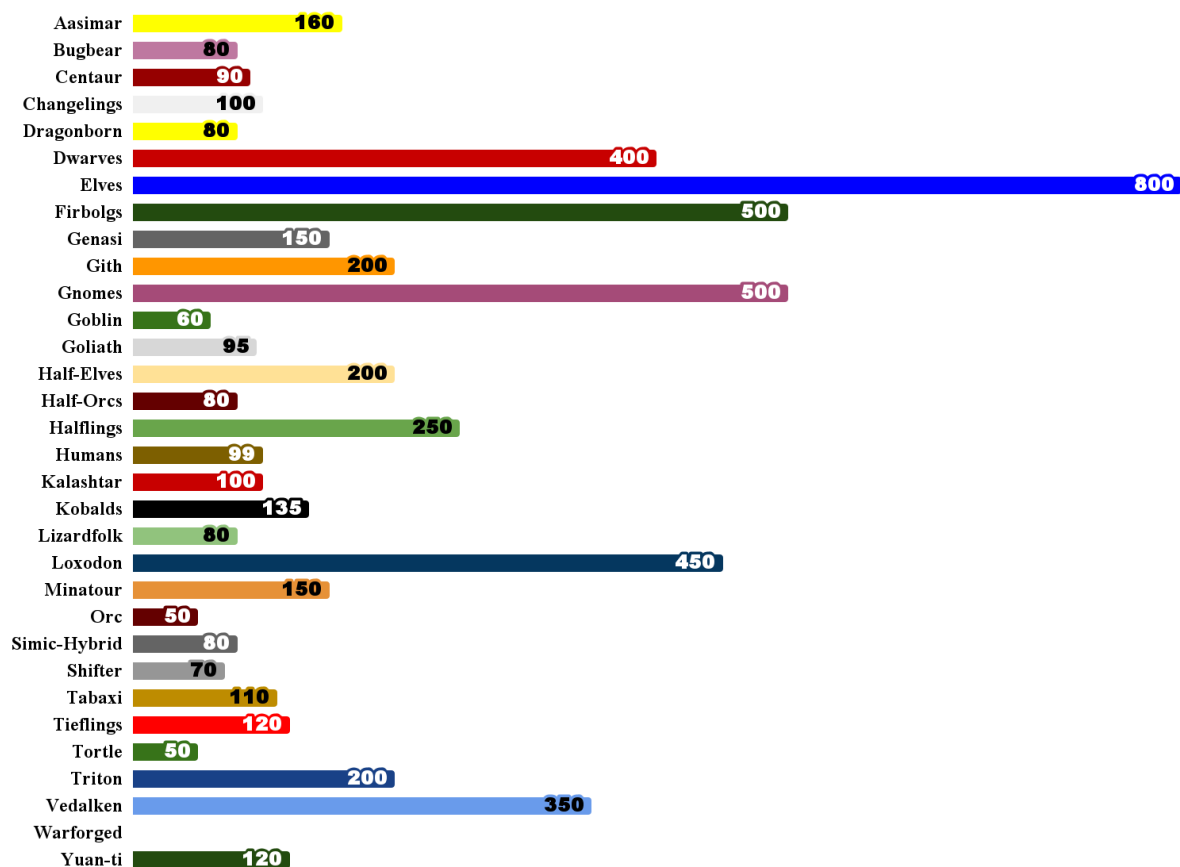
- Gith; rammers of these strange yellow people from another plain have been around for centuries. People who believe them tend to wear tinfoil hats.
- Gnomes have great energy and enthusiasm for living. Gnomes average slightly over 3 feet tall. Their tan or brown faces are usually adorned with broad smiles, and their bright eyes shine with excitement. Their hair has a tendency to stick out in every direction, as if expressing the gnome's insatiable interest in everything around. They are the inventors, they have always been tinkerers. A gnome programmer is a double edged sword. She is just as likely to rewrite the whole system as find the bug. The old gnome is a reference to a great peacemaker.
- Goblins used to occupy an uneasy place in a dangerous world, and they reacted by lashing out at any creatures they believed they can bully. Today they live a more respectable life, contributing to society. Goblins still get spit on but sometimes they deserve it. Their own society's lower castes must scrape before those of greater status.
- Goliath bodies look as if they are carved from mountain stone, large with tremendously strong builds. Their spirits take after the wandering wind, their lives meander as chaotic as a line of mountain peaks. Goliaths and Half Orcs have fully embraced the hipster culture and are the brewmasters of the best coffee.
- Half-Orcs have a long and honored history even though it contradicts most other histories. Still it is the Orc history. Every city has a little Gruumshin where you can see the old culture. Being big and strong and often wired on caffeine puts some people on edge.

- Halflings, the shortest of the races, don't spend much time in cities keeping mostly to the country. They like the agricultural lifestyle. Halflings take civics very seriously and are found in many government positions.
- Humans, what are they like? Turn on the television.
- Kobolds, for many years they were thought to be the children of Dragonborn or their pets, it's probably the size difference. They look just like a Dragonborn shrunk down.
- Lizardfolk, their scales and reptilian nature make them stand out in a crowd, although considering the crowd maybe not. They hate being called snake people. They are known for their quick thinking ability and resourcefulness. "You want to circumvent something? I know a guy." - a guy.
- Tabaxi have more in common with large wild cats than humans. They are always dressed audaciously setting many fashion trends. They hold all the climbing records.
- Tieflings, each and every one can trace their ancestry back to some great devil, but no group gives to charities more than tieflings. Horns of Hope is the most philanthropic organization around. Are tieflings the product of infernal coupling? Yes. Does this make them evil? It depends on who you ask.
- Warforged, people built not born. "Does this thing look alive to you? Holy shit!" People have forgotten how the warforged were first made. Centuries ago they were given their freedom and control over the creation forges. When they were asked who their representative in government would be they built a warforged

named Politician. As the time has passed and technology has progressed so has the parts that a warforged can be built from. Almost no warforged have stone in their bodies unless its old or making a statement. Carbon fiber is one of the more common materials used these days.

- In a large modern metropolis you will find many strange beings, some that would only be found in fairytales, others from nightmares. If a red skinned horned devil steps out of a taxi then you're probably in the business sector. For someone not native to these places it would boggle the mind, to the rest it's just another day. After you read this sentence text me where I typed it and I will give you 2 points of DM inspiration.

## Average Max Lifespans of Various Races

**The Families:**

As the prevalence of magic grew it became clear that certain spells became linked with certain families. The Burak family are known for fighting and advising great campaigns, they have the innate spell casting of *bladeward*, *truestrike*, or *resistance*. The Promithi family all can cast *control flames*, they are old and very old. The Spielman family can cast *friends* or *message*. They are well known in Hollywood. One of the first families to write down and define the science of magic was the Caster family, they can cast *guidance* or *prestidigitation*. The Guest

family are infamous for causing tornadoes, as the name suggests they can cast *guest*. The Feinsein family are assumed to be the adventures of the first tools, they can cast *mending*. The Slate family can cast *mold earth*, this is helpful where they live. The Maizich family were thought to be driven to extinction because they could cast *spare the dying*.

A player can play a character that is a member of a family by taking the noble background and picking a family, the character must use the family last name and gains one of the families spells as a spell known. This replaces any racial spells that character may have.

Back when Atlanta was just a small town a man named Billy Gust found that he could harness the wind and make clouds coalesce to make rain. He was able to grow better crops and grew rich. For generations the Guest family has had a hand in a lot of businesses in Atlanta. It wasn't till William Guest III that the 'e' was added. Though the family has grown wide with marriages connecting powerful people with others the Guest name has always meant wind and air. They are so entrenched into all parts of life their name has become synonymous with small puffs of wind and the spells that create them. Most Guest's are half-elves, humans, or elves but there is a large halfling branch that own a majority on the farmland around the home city.

They say that the progenitor of the Promithi family was the first to bring fire to the first peoples. No one knows for sure. Most of the Promithi family is in energy. Andrew Promithi is the president of P.P.C. inc. the largest coal power energy conglomerate across the continent. All across the north Pro-Heat stoves keep most of the houses warm. The Promithi Dance is an annual celebration the day after the winter solstice. In most major cities and large towns a large outdoor

show is held, the event can get so hot that the performers and audience need to wear summer clothes. Most of the Promithi family are Goliath with some Dwarves as well as some Gnomes.

Moesha Feinstein was the youngest of seven. With so many mouths to feed there was never much on the dinner plate. Moisha grew up very skinny, called nail by other kids in the village. This pushed Moisha to become a blacksmith. Back in those days not all tieflings had innate magic like they do today. For years Moisha worked as a blacksmith's apprentice. Every year his family was more proud of him. His fortune changed when he struck out on his own. Low quality raw materials coupled with dissatisfied customers drove down his business. After a year he was broke and struggling to feed himself. One day after solder passing through dropped of his armor for repairs, Moisha was lost. He had no money to pay for coal to heat his forge. He couldn't fix the armor. If he didn't fix the armor he would starve and die. He sat in his cold forge staring at the armor for hours willing the universe to change. Than all of a sudden it did. The armor was fixed. Moesha had cast mending.

Today the Feinstein family is in a very different position. The lesson that luck is fleeting and the future is uncertain is taught to every member of the family. The family is heavily involved in finance and banking. The family donates a lot of money to the arts and marked special yearly donation to HoH that goes specifically to homelessness, hunger, and job training. Most of the family is composed of tieflings, humans, gnomes, and half-elves.

The Burak family is a fierce and competitive family. Most of the members of the family are not rich but none of them are poor. Any City Watch, militia, private security company, or fighting force will hire a Burak. The Burak family has more generals, commanders and military leaders than any other family combined. Though they keep in close contact there is no clear

direction in the family. Over the years there have been many wars with Burak's at the head of both armies. On one historic occasion the family was the war. They call it the war of Black and Gold, because the heads of the opposing sides were Baloch Burack a gold dragonborn, and Gimlich Burack a black dragonborn. They were cousins and at the end when they were found in the center of the battlefield bleeding out in each others arms. Before they died they were asked why they started the war. In unison they said "Because there was nothing else to do." To this day it is said 'be wary of a Burak doing nothing'. The family is made up of dragonborn of all colors.

The Spielman family has only recently stepped out into the public. The strong fey heritage can be seen in every member of the family. Though from the outside it may look like a coordinated action, the fact that every aria of the entertainment industry, from film, television, news, broadcasting, theatre, music, and radio, have a member of the Spielman family working is quite accidental. It seems that the trait passed down is a drive to perform and the skill to do so. Though a prominent brow ridge, slim frame and "dreamy" eyes, are constant, the family has members of any race.

It seems that members of the Caster family never grow up. Their youthful appearance seems to be a blessing passed down from some powerful ancestor. It seems members of the family can't stay out of the spotlight. The business of the family is excruciatingly public, rapped in candle from emotional breakdowns in public spaces, to mysterious deaths. It seems the family is synonymous with fun, in all its gruesome twisted corrupted nature. The gnome branch of the family seems to be the largest, but they are the least known about. Strangely enough it doesn't seem that any member of the family works. The source of their wealth has always been a strange mystery.

The family holds the patents for several scroll recipes, and members of the Caster family were signers on the constitution, two of them. According to a scroll that tells of a Great War between the dwarves and the elves a Caster was a high general with magic spells that had never been seen before that time. Though the county does not have a royal family or an official position of head wizard, most put the Caster family or a particular member in that position. It is possible to see a member of any race within the Caster family.

The maps of the country of Patrium demarcate boundaries with other nations. They do not show one nation that holds its border below the land. His royal highness, King of the city of Terra, Emperor of the Province of Gaia, Voice under the mountain, Edward “the far-wise” Terkontion Flitzwaltertopick Cragthar Slate III, has ruled the county of Terra-Gaia for 200 years. The 350 year old under-gnome has ruled in peace time for 160 years being renowned of ending the Shaft 6 Tunnel 14 civil war. Some say that if the war had ended earlier that his older cousin Vitruvian Slate IX, an under-dwarf, would have been made king. The previous king Edmond Slate I, an under-elf, is always praised in conversation but when his reign ended there was much rejoicing. The Slate family has been ruler of Terra-Gaia since the merging of the city of Terra with its neighboring city of Gaia. Now this large underground metropolis is the jewel of the photosensitive nation. All members of the Slate family are native to the underdeep.

### **Governments:**

The capital of Patrium was made specifically to be everywhere and nowhere. It was created magically to only be accessible via teleportation. It was named De-Facto Commissum, or

D.C. At the edge of the city is a great barrier to the pocket dimension that was specifically created to house the city. Everyday hundreds of people commute to work via Shaztrek cercles.

The Prime-Minister is a half-orc that claims to be a half-elf. He wears a toupee that looks like a wet cat or cotton candy spun from piss. The government is divided into four parts. The executive. The judiciary is led by the conclave of elders made up of elves, gnomes, and two dwarves. Being over 200 is not a requirement but there has yet to be a member appointed younger. The legislative branch holds the senate made up of district representatives, each district mapped out so each senator represents one hundred thousand souls. About four hundred and eighty three senators represent the diverse group of these districts voting for policies that will benefit them. Lastly the House of Peoples is the congregation of representatives of each race with seats for every race and seats for mixed races. There is a total of twenty two seats nineteen of which are occupied. Some seats change hands often while others sit empty. The aasimar do not have a representative in the house, their seat has been empty for over two hundred years. The representative of the halflings changes every two years while the half-orcs will not elect a new representative till the current one is dead.

Law is made by proposed legislation being introduced in the senate. After winning a majority vote it is than voted on in the house of peoples where it must win another majority. Finally it is signed into law by the prime-minister.

The Federal Bureau of Divination is this worlds FBI. The FBD are primarily an investigative arm of law enforcement. They work in conjunction with the DIS. Defense Intelligence Services as well as local constabulary. Each city and town has its own constabulary.

These people are referred to as watchmen or City Watch, some have Knights Watch on their crest.

The federal government controls the land as far north as it can. Official maps are vague as to the northern border. The country of Patrium is divided up into provinces, there are (to be written later) in total. Each province has its own local government some are run by a governor, while others have a council of elders, while still others are ruled by a patrician, and a few are ruled by dukes or kings. Typically when cities become large enough they are declared provinces unto themselves.

To the west lies the Kingdom of Terra-Gaia and the United Confederation of Orbistan. The country of Terra-Gaia is ruled by king Slate. Every member of his kingdom is conscripted into military service for a minimum of two years. All ambassadors and representatives of the country are military. The country of Orbistan has held a policy of neutral opposition with any rivaling neighbor. Though there was speculation that subversive elements of the Orbistani government helped get the current prime minister of Patrium elected his first act was to declare war on the 'hostile' nation. If the manipulation of the election did occur it seems to have backfired due to the current invading force. Early on Patrium garnered allegiance from Terra-Gaia, who is an official ally though they refuse to send troops over the Orbistani border simply holding the line 200 men deep. Though Texas has not officially declared sides in the war Texan mercenaries are abundant and have played a major role in the war so far. The Chief Counsel of Hope is divided on the war.

To the south two countries border; the Independent Republic of Texas and the Confederate Clans of the Hope. The Confederate Clans of the Hope is a country that is more of a

connection between towns and local tribes than a national identity. There are six major tribes in the country; Navajo, Apache, Cheyenne, Siksikaitsitapi, Lakota, and Iroquois. The country is divided up into constituencies. Each constituency votes on and elects a local council of eight. The local councils vote to elect members of regional councils who in turn vote for members of the national council who also take on the role of the federal government.

### **Organisations:**

In the city of Manhattan, there are 3 large and major cathedrals in each of the 3 sections of the city. The Temple of the Abyssinian in Uptown, The Temple of Time in Midtown (adjacent to Times Square), and the Temple of the Bowery in Downtown. These cathedrals are massive but their function is not only worship. They also are the cities main healing areas, due to their central location in each part of the city. All three churches are non-denominational and have staff to help with worship for each of the major Pantheons. As well, each have staff adept in restoration magic, as well as a team of specialists when magic can't quite cut it or there are more, sinister afflictions. As well, next to each of the three Temples are area offices for HoH.

There are still churches dotted around the city, dedicated to certain sets of deities and Pantheons. Due to the Polytheistic nature of the Religions, many of the churches have select services and times where a specific Deity is worshipped as well as a weekly general service to the entirety of the Pantheon. These usually last fairly long. These churches also are able to handle some basic healing, illnesses, minor healings, etc. However, if someone is afflicted with something more serious they will have to go to one of the Temples.

Horns of Hope, it is standard practice for any employer to allow a HoH donation as a deduction for paychecks. If a tiefling does not request some percentage of their pay donated they may face ridicule, bad treatment or termination. This is a stereotype HoH has let persist to their own benefit. Homeless shelters disaster relief efforts and other places will most likely be HoH or have the logo as a supporting member. Some have the opinion that the money is really going to nefarious purposes, such as resurrection of long dead tyrants or attempts to summon devils from the nine hells.

The Independent Democratic Collective Conclave of Constructed Living Entities Socialist Workers Conglomerate, in the Autonomous Constructs' Republic Of Natural Ytterbic Mountains, and Kingdom of Gears, or TINDCCCLESWC, ACRONYM, KOG, is a group that has been forging a place where living constructs such as warforged can live and be at home with each other. The representative for the chair was built here. The island has long been abandoned by other races. TINDCCCLESWC has the patents to many devices and is the hub of factories constructing vehicles and computers. Though the designs by warforged use computers they rarely are the inventors of computer technology. That territory is usually claimed by gnomes.

Shaztrek is owner and provider in mass teleportation technology. They developed the runes and spells that create mass teleportation circles which have been connected to every major city. Mark Gates is the owner and founder of the company. Where we might use planes or trains, in this world it is easier to travel via Shaztrek circle.

Zilo's is a fast food chain that is very popular. They have many options for all sorts of people from vegetarian to Woden. There are many locations around the city. It's the Starbucks version of McDonalds.

Self-help groups and Twelve step Organizations:

Not including secret organizations with members seeking a unified goal, though there is some overlap. Such groups like teleporters anonymous, non-mage anonymous, telekinetics anonymous, pyrokinetics anonymous; which is held in all metal buildings, many attempts to start a telepaths anonymous have failed. Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous have been joined by Cyber Anonymous.

Secret Organizations that are rumored to exist include, the Knights Templar, the Illuminati, the Horns of Hades, the Wings of Icarus, the Black Guard, the Watchmen of the Night, and the Order of Keys. Do these organizations exist? Maybe.

### **Religion:**

Of the Religions we know here on earth the same gods and faiths exist in this world. There is an exception; any religion that is monotheistic never existed in this world. The different gods influencing the actions of the lesser beings under them and their rivalries with other gods, has made lasting impacts on the world and its people.

### **Schools:**

There are many ways to get an education. National education is provided for all and there are many forms of higher education.

For those who seek knowledge in the arcane there are many wizarding schools. The Unseen University has been unseen for the last three hundred years, with the widely publicized exemptions, where it has magically appeared in different locations for random periods of time. It seems that an experiment in temporal magic will cause the history of the Unseen University to fracture. Although this would be a problem for most people the faculty at UU have leaned into the problem making it a new lifestyle. There are numerous Universities that have been the spiritual successors to the Unseen University; Harvard, Cambridge, Yale, Princeton. They all claim to be founded by former faculty of UU. These claims are hard to dispute. Besides schools for magic there are trade-schools, some of which have grown into Universities in there own right. New York University, which started as a trade school for builders, has grown and expanded to cover numerous degrees. Columbus University, though being founded first did not start growing until NYU challenged it. Cornell has been a longstanding University with more nature oriented curriculum. Brown University, Dartmouth College, and those on the west coast should also be mentioned.

If a player wants to attend a University they will need to have a high enough intelligence or wisdom score. They forgo starting gold instead, debt, they learn one new skill and one non-damage dealing cantrip as well as adding +2 to one untrained skill.

**Manhattan:**

The slang term Crownny refers to the police originally being Crowns Guard. Ranks are:

- Lance-Constable, while in training.
- Acting-Constable, freshman.
- Constable, uniformed officer.
- Lance-Corporal, carry swords.
- Corporal, most senior officer in uniform.
- Sargent, allowed to wear plain clothes, but somehow still looks like a uniform.
- Sergeant-at-Arms, bookkeeping, filing, office maintenance.
- Lieutenant, in charge of precinct.
- Captain, deals with the politics and bureaucrats.
- Commander, comes with knighthood.

A typical crownny has a breastplate, a truncheon, and short-sword with rank, a radio, and a taser. They have firearms training but do not typically carry a gun.