

Blood Ties

Inside the Grandfather's House

Although it's well-known that Faction Paradox is organised as a family, there's some debate about why this might be the case. All the Great Houses are to some degree over-extended families (even if they don't generally reproduce through natural childbirth), but the Faction attaches far more importance to family titles than any of the other bloodlines. It's been noted that in this respect it's got something else in common with the voodoo-cults of the Caribbean, and as both voodoo and the Eleven-Day Empire have their roots on eighteenth-century Earth this might not be a coincidence. The way the voodoun describe the loa -spirits is remarkably similar to the way the Faction describes entities like the Grandfather of House Paradox, and indeed, for the voodoun the loa are often perceived as the founders of a spiritual "family".

However, as with many of the voodoo-cults, Faction Paradox is a political organisation above all else. A cynic might point out that for all its ritual and technology, at heart the Faction's no different from any other cult- and the best way for a cult to ensure the loyalty of its members is to forge family ties between them. Furthermore, Faction Paradox is a House that's constantly preparing for war: the military wing might be relatively small, but it's notable that when a new member is indoctrinated into the "family" he or she is equipped with a weapon as part of the initiation process. So although the titles given to Faction agents might suggest family relationships, in practice they're closer to being positions in an army.

The ranks and orders are as follows...

Little Brother/ Little Sister

The lowest rank in the organisation. A purely transitory title, new initiates become Little Brothers or Little Sisters as soon as they're recruited, at which point their training begins. Though these junior members may be given rudimentary weaponry, they're not encouraged to use the Faction's techniques/ rituals, although they are shown the basic principles by older family members (usually elder Cousins rather than the Fathers and Mothers). This stage is essentially a kind of apprenticeship, during which the Faction has the opportunity to prepare the recruit before his or her real indoctrination. However well he or she does during this period, the Little Brother or Little Sister will always be granted the provisional title of Cousin before embarking on a period of initiation: if the initiation is successful, then the new Cousin will be given the title permanently and go through the armament ritual. If the initiate's performance is disappointing, however, then all links to the family will be severed.

Contrary to popular rumour, Faction Paradox does not execute those who fail the initiation, although as the initiation itself is usually performed while under fire it's not unusual for new Cousins to be killed during the process. Those who survive but fail are simply returned to their own place and time of origin... and if their knowledge of the Faction's methods damages local causality there, then that's no concern of the Faction's.

Cousin

The majority of the Faction's agents are designated Cousins. When the Great Houses abandoned natural childbirth in favour of the artificial breeding programme, the word "Cousin" was taken to mean "anyone of the same House", but the term's an archaic one and for the most part only Faction Paradox still uses it." The Cousins are the rank-and-file of the family. Every Cousin has a rudimentary training in the Faction's techniques, and most have had their weapons bound to them as part of the initiation process. The majority of Cousins are to be found outside the Eleven-Day Empire itself, and run (or at least inhabit) the Faction's various interests and colonies in the outside universe.

Few Cousins are actually children of the Great Houses: most are recruits from the lesser species, trained and equipped for whatever tasks the elder members of the Faction deem necessary. Should the day finally come when Faction Paradox begins its long-anticipated crusade against the other Houses, then the Cousins are expected to make up the bulk of the army, although even in the military individual strengths can still be encouraged. Within the Eleven-Day Empire itself, a Godfather or Godmother will often have a small clique of Cousins in his or her employ, to act as assistants and in some cases even proteges. No official distinction exists between "ordinary" Cousins and "sponsored" Cousins, but it's generally accepted that those taken under the wing of an elder patron have a much greater chance of entering the Parliament...

Father/ Mother

There are 630 seats in the Parliament of the Eleven-Day Empire, the vast majority of them taken up by the Fathers and Mothers. These are the true rulers of the organisation, although as there are so many of them it's rare for a single individual to wield a great deal of power. (It's a mistake to think of the Eleven-Day Empire as a democracy, as it's quite definitely a one-party "state", and no Mother or Father would have entered Parliament in the first place if they hadn't followed the family line.) Although every Father and Mother has a right to a seat in the Parliament, many are found outside the Eleven-Day Empire altogether: wherever the Faction has a powerbase in the outside universe, or wherever its agents are working to subvert local causality for their own ends, a Mother or Father will usually be present to oversee operations. Only very small or very well-established Faction outposts are left entirely in the hands of the Cousins.

Many of those who sit in the Parliament are children of the Great Houses rather than members of the lesser species, lured away from their own bloodlines by hook or by crook (the Faction being the only House which steals offspring rather than breeding its own- many have questioned whether it counts as a true bloodline at all, although the Faction makes so many biological changes to its recruits that there is still a genuine blood-bond between members). Recruits from the Houses have a tendency to be automatically granted the title of Mother or Father rather than having to rise through the ranks, and although it's been argued that this is a form of class prejudice it's true to say that members of the Houses do have a definite genetic advantage, certainly when it comes to the techniques of time-control.

Of course, seats in the Parliament don't become vacant often. Thanks to surgical and chemical enhancement, Fathers and Mothers have a tendency to live for centuries, even those recruited from the lesser species. But of course, there are always accidents.

Godfather/ Godmother

Faction Paradox, like any political organisation, is divided into chapters: there are departments, or wings, to deal with specific areas of concern. For example, there's a military wing, entirely devoted to the training of Cousins under battle conditions a bio-research wing, currently dedicated to the development and application of biodata viruses (bio-weapons which re-write the biology of a victim retroactively, thus having a mutagenic effect from the day that victim was born) while the section which handles the initiation rites of new Cousins, and oversees the binding of weaponry, is very nearly a cult in itself. The title of Godfather or Godmother is granted to the head of any such department.

Unlike the Fathers and Mothers, the Godfathers and Godmothers seldom leave the Eleven-Day Empire. Within the city there are any number of buried facilities and testing-grounds, and those Cousins trained by the military wing are among the few who permanently reside in the Eleven-Day Empire itself. Traditionally, one of the Godfathers or Godmothers will also perform the duty of Acting Speaker in the Parliament: the Speaker's Chair itself remains vacant, as it has done ever since the Parliament was founded, awaiting the return of the Grandfather. Not, of course, that anybody expects this to happen in the near future.

The Grandfather

The Grandfather never actually existed, and has now never actually existed for over two-hundred years. Although it's clear that somebody must have created the Faction, and although Grandfather is indeed the traditional title for the founder of a House, many outside the organisation are of the opinion that the Grandfather of House Paradox is, was and always will be nothing more than a myth. On the other hand, it's a maxim of the Faction that failing to exist is the best form of camouflage.

There are very few, even in the Parliament of the Eleven-Day Empire, who would claim to possess any real knowledge of their ancestor. All that remain are certain relics - the knife, for example, which was ostensibly used to remove the Grandfather's own arm in a legendary act of self-mutilation - but the provenance of these items is questionable. The name of the founder is rarely taken in vain by those members of the Faction who do exist, not because of religious veneration but because it's still considered possible that to speak the name too often might summon the Grandfather into being again- an inconvenience which the Grandfather probably wouldn't appreciate.

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