

# THE SWORD AND THE SERPENT (PART 1)



**Group Name:** The Holy Order of the Sword

**A.K.A.:** The Protectorate, The Order

**Group Mark:** Two swords in gold, crossed, and facing downwards on a field of emerald green

**Group Colors/Livery:** Gold and silver adorn the adherents of this once proud order. Any who recognize the colors know the power these men and women possess, but now see the order as something from their childhood.

**Goals:** Protect an ancient sarcophagus buried beneath their citadel

**Leader's Goals:** Hansel works daily to ensure the high priestess Myrtana is kept confined and will never be brought back to life. He oversees the training of his small group of men and women at their temple, simply known as the Citadel.

**Individual Goals:** Hansel's chief lieutenants, Gerald and Ibaenia, strive to maintain the structure that has kept the order together for two hundred years. They keep discipline amongst the ranks and

maintain a spy network to ferret out any followers of the Cult of the Serpent, the chief antagonists of the order. Both Gerald and Ibaenia are finding it difficult to recruit others into the order as the people in the realm have been led to believe the Cult of the Serpent no longer exists.

**Objectives and Objections:** To find and eliminate agents of the Cult of the Serpent and protect the unknowing subjects of the realm from the reawakening of the Serpent.

**History and Motivation:** The Order was started two hundred years ago when a group of young clerics and paladins banded together to overthrow the Cult of the Serpent, an evil order which enslaved the realm. Their high priest, Myrtana was working on a ritual to cover the world in darkness and open a portal to another dimension. The collection of heroes led by Victor the Just overcame the cultists and disrupted the spell before Myrtana was able to complete it. Myrtana had recently gained immortality, so as a punishment the heroes encased her in a gilded sarcophagus. They destroyed the altar and consecrated the ground. The order is now tasked with protecting the sarcophagus and fighting a war with the Cult of the Serpent.

**Organization:** The organization is quite small, as many no longer believe there is a threat to the realm. There are only seven left in the order. They are fighting a losing battle against the ever popular Cult of the Serpent.

**Chain of Command:** At the head of the organization, Hansel has known about the Cult of the Serpent and their activities due to the stories of his parents (both of which were members of the order) and his own encounters. Hansel is troubled by the current state of the order and has tasked Gerald and Ibaenia with recruiting new members.

**Rank and File:** The two lieutenants, Gerald and Ibaenia are paladins who were personally picked by Hansel to continue his legacy when he passes on.

**Gerald:** Gerald's first encounter with the Cult came in his teens. His parents operated a general store just outside of the walls of the imperial city. It was here that a young, wounded paladin named Hansel sought refuge during the Conflict at Herbert's Manor. The young paladin won the day, but his wounds brought him to death's door. Gerald's parents dressed the paladin's wounds (as the stress of battle had exhausted the paladin's holy abilities). The house was attacked by agents of the Cult, but Hansel was strong enough to slay all seven agents. Gerald saw Hansel's bravery and was

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enthralled. It was then and there he decided to join the order and become like Hansel. He has served Hansel faithfully for many years, earning the rank of lieutenant after the death of Joseph. Gerald's attempts to recruit others to the order have met with failure, but he is confident the order will see better days.

**Ibaenia:** apart from Hansel, Ibaenia is the only one whose forebears were members of the order. And like Hansel, she has grown up with the stories of the Cult from her birth. She is a dedicated member to the order and works to bring new members into the fold. Though she is the oldest of the members, Ibaenia has the energy of others half her age. She most recently brought a young man named Abner into the order. Abner saved her and Luna's life when they were ambushed by the Cult in the back alleys of the imperial city. She believes he is a just man but is contending with Hansel as to his true intentions. She has taken him under her wing and hopes he will be a great member of the order.

Raw Recruits: Gerald and Ibaenia have two agents under them.

**Wilhelm:** a distant cousin of Hansel, he has heard the stories of the Cult from a young age. He did not believe them until his first encounter with the Cult during the Skirmish at Halifax. He is now committed to the cause and serves the order with total devotion.

**Mildred:** she is the daughter of two former members of the Cult of the Serpent. Her parents were agents of the Cult until Mildred's mother was with child. Mildred's father did not want the Cult to find out (as some members of the Cult give up their children as sacrifices) so they fled into hiding. Mildred was unaware of their shady pasts until they were tracked down by Hansel for their roles in the Desecration of the Temple at Shiloh. They begged for mercy and gave their daughter to the order as payment for their past sins. Mildred has been like a daughter to Hansel and is now old enough to be a full fledged member of the order and is devoted to Hansel's crusade. She has not spoken to her parents for many years.

**Luna:** a woman from the east lands, Luna rarely discusses her past. She seldom speaks, but her devotion to the order is unquestioned. Her role in the Battle at Arthur's Crossing has sealed her fate as a champion of the order. She is uncertain of the new recruit Abner (she suspects his timing during the ambush to be a little too "convenient" and is keeping a close eye on him).

**Abner:** a southlander, Abner's true name is Scott. Abner has compiled a large list of bounties on his head in the southlands and has fled north to start a new life. He was in the wrong place at the right time when Ibaenia and Luna were fighting agents of the Cult. A stray dagger nearly killed Ibaenia, but something about her compelled Abner to step in and save her life. He fought with the two women and helped them destroy the Chaos Machine. He was taken to Hansel and asked to join the order. Abner has accepted and is staying with the order just long enough to make enough money and flee to the Western Sea.

Abner wears an amulet of non-detection which clouds his true aura. While Abner is not a murderer, he is not on the "good" side of the law. He has hidden this well, but he knows Hansel grows suspicious.

Methods and Activities: the order seeks out clues to the activities of the order. They have some assistance from beggars and former members of the Cult, but are wary of any information as the Cult will use their own agents to pose as citizens friendly to the order. After Stephen's Betrayal at Windsong Lake and the death of Joseph, the order must sift the information they gather like wheat to ensure the leads are true.

**Third Party Abilities:** though the order is true to their word, most will help the order out of a sense of duty. Local clerics and other do-gooders will assist the order when necessary, but few actually believe in the order's cause these days.

Resources and Power: the resources of the order are dwindling. Since few local authorities believe the Cult exists (the propaganda machine of the Cult at work), guards, soldiers, and even other holy knights view the order as a fairy tale told to children. Many local merchants offer the order goods at a reduced price because of their past heroics, but this is kept secret because many merchants do not want to lose the business of the populace. The order has become partially self sufficient, tending to a small garden on the Citadel's grounds.

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**Areas of Operation:** the order operates within the capital city, as the sarcophagus is buried under the foundation of the Citadel. (The Cult of the Serpent does not know where the sarcophagus is buried and is actively seeking it out.) The order will send one or two agents to the outlying territories to investigate rumors of the Cult's evil-doings, but only if such activities pose a direct threat to the royal family.

**Allies and Enemies:** the allies of the order are next to none. As the power of the Cult grows, the power of this once fine order is nearing its end. Few adventurers will openly work with the order as many guilds believe the order is no longer necessary since the Cult has been eradicated. Most are led to believe the order had their time to shine, but should be disbanded. It is only the King of the realm that keeps the order around. (The king has his suspicions about the Cult and believes they exist, but dares not speak of the order to others[as this may damage is reputation]). Many thieves are used as pawns by the Cult to give false information to the order. The Cult has gone as far as to try and place their own agents within the order, but the few that have tried have been slain by Hansel.

**Status Quo:** The order works daily to track down leads and eliminate agents of the Cult. Hansel is working to recruit more members, and is wary of Abner, the order's newest recruit. Though Ibaenia believes his intentions are pure, Hansel is as of yet unconvinced and has charged Luna to watch over him.