

# Church of the Brazen Serpent

[\[The Day After Ragnarok\]](#)

Three years ago it was just another snake cult -- actually, three years ago it was just a pair of minor medical Greek organizations at the University of Kansas. Then the Serpentfall happened, and the brothers at the local chapter of Phi Delta Epsilon soon discovered that certain of their rituals seemed to have rather more real-world medical relevance than they had had before. Meanwhile, the sisters of Sigma Theta Tau discovered something similar, only in the field of prophecy and divination. Fortunately for them, in the chaos that gripped Kansas City -- along with the rest of the Poisoned Lands -- anyone with demonstrable medical skill could be forgiven minor foibles, such as 'honoring' the brazen serpent of the Old Testament and favorably mentioning the Witch of Endor in sermons. After all, it really was all in the Bible.

Today, the Church has influence from Kansas to Indiana. There's typically at least one Nest in any given Mayoralty; the Church is worrisome to many, but it also treats the sick and injured to the best of its ability, which wins it influence in many places. Also, the Church of the Brazen Serpent

does **not** enjoy friendly relations with either the Konfederacy or the Iowa Soviet; the former thinks of them as heretics and the latter considers them Enemies of the People. All of this makes them 'enemy of my enemy' in many people's minds.

The Church of the Brazen Serpent has a two-tier system. In the Outer Church, Brothers and Sisters (the Church ordains both sexes to the priesthood) tend to the faithful in their Nests -- and to the sick of the larger community, to be sure. At this level, the Church is still ostensibly Christian, and only disturbing in the usual "give unto the Church your mind, body, soul, and worldly possessions" sort of way. All clergy of the Outer Church are qualified doctors, either from before the Serpentfall or from intensive training since then.

The Inner Church, however, is a bit more esoteric. Outer Church members who distinguish themselves are eventually initiated via an extremely high-risk ceremony involving ritual, Serpent-tainted hallucinogens and the Secret Name of their true god ("Ne-hush-tan," of course). The Brothers and Sisters of the Inner Church have the Arcane Background (Miracles) Edge, with the *healing* and *greater healing* miracles and the Holy Roller hindrance. A

few Sisters also develop a full-fledged divinatory talent, but only when inhaling the fumes from burning ophiline.

If anybody knows what the final goal is for the Church of the Brazen Serpent, they're not telling. Heroes who encounter them when nobody's watching will find that they're still not actively plotting anything, and are in fact polite and reasonable to people who are polite and reasonable to them right back. *Anger* them enough, though -- stealing the jeweled eyes of the brazen serpent found in the typical Nest's inner sanctum is a traditional method -- and you're likely to eventually end up dead of an air embolism. There's no better secret assassin than a medical student, honestly.

- Moe Lane

- <http://www.moelane.com>