

## **The Brotherhood of the Viridian Scorpion**

This is fairly close to a standard, everyday, fairly pedestrian secret society of scorpion-cultists. They think they've been around since the ancient Egyptians (needless to say, it's more like the mid-Victorian period, as any serious look at the rituals and phraseology would indicate), and they plan to stay around for quite a while longer. As usual, there's a plan to take over society, bring about the eternal reign of the Scorpion Master, etc, etc, etc, all through the use of esoteric martial arts and good old conspiratorial techniques -- if it weren't for their patron, they'd have little different to recommend them than any other unpopular animal cult. As it is, they've got a genuine shot at the big time.

Who's their patron? Well, for the last hundred years, it's been... David, Archangel of Stone.

Look, it's kind of complicated, all right?

### **Purpose and Goals**

To wrest control of society away from the demon worshippers currently holding power. Needless to say, the Brotherhood will be happy to take their place.

## Organization and Membership

The Brotherhood (note that the group is half female, and two of the last three Scorpion Masters have been women) is organized in a classic cell system. The lowest level is Initiate, which represents still learning the basics of The Scorpion's Sting martial art. Those who master Scorpion's Sting are Claws; from them come the Stings, or individual cell leaders (total cultists per cell range from 5 to 30, but usually 15). Every four years the Stings choose the nine Priests of the Inner Circle; the best fighter among the Priests becomes the Scorpion Master, and he or she retains this position until defeated in ritual combat by another Priest. This usually happens every few years, and can easily be a ceremonial, token ceremony to ratify an already agreed-upon transfer of power. Then again, it can equally easily be a vicious fight that only ends when one fighter is knocked out.

Recruitment is quite often by birthright: suitable sons and daughters of existing cultists (the Brotherhood *strongly* encourages family life) are discreetly tested; those who pass are brought into the group. Individual cells also keep a look out for recruits among society's flotsam and jetsam. A street person with sufficient self-discipline to keep from sinking entirely is precisely the sort of person that the cult

looks for -- but stubbornness in general is prized. Generally speaking, the Brotherhood has little in the way of trouble with disaffected members, but there are a few former cultists. As they are exclusively from the Initiate level, this is generally handled by being ignored. After all: at that level, the cult only looks like a strange martial arts club.

It should be noted that Initiates are *not* Soldiers, or even Symphonically Aware. They are instead regular 5-Force humans who have undergone a moderately vigorous martial arts training regimen. Those with a capacity for more are brought into David's service as regular Soldiers; but this is essentially independent of their rank in the Brotherhood. There are cells where Claws are more aware of the true nature of the War than their Priests are. Nobody makes it to Priest without getting some idea of what's going on, though.

## **Abilities and Resources**

The Brotherhood enjoys both mundane and supernatural resources. Mundanely, they have been very busy insinuating themselves in business, government, the military, the entertainment industry -- any sphere of organized activity that offers power, influence or money. This lets the Brotherhood ensure that even their Initiates

receive tangible benefits from membership. This is rarely overt (a new member can expect the pulled string over the cash payout), and invariably takes the form of **opportunities**, rather than boons.

Supernatural resources are also impressive, and stem mostly from the fact that the Brotherhood is fully plugged into David's organization. Servitors of Stone, in fact, are the hidden framework for the entire cult, from vetting the suitability of new members to keeping track of both individual situations, and the progress of the cult as a whole. While it is of course anathema for any angel serving David to *coddle* a person, there's a difference between denying a service to someone who is capable of doing it on their own and denying it to someone who is not, which makes the occasional miracle available. Also, there are many full-fledged Soldiers of Stone in the Brotherhood; their esoteric abilities are also used for the benefit of the cult, which includes their fellow cultists.

In terms of esoterica, even cultists aware of the War are possessed of rather less secret knowledge than one might expect. Quite a lot of the information that would normally become available doesn't really fit the Brotherhood's core assumptions about the universe, and so they tend to shrug it off as superstitious claptrap. They have a good working approximation of the nature of the more common Bands and Infernal Words that they come into conflict with,

generally know how to disrupt Tethers (which they call 'Apertures') and understand how Songs and Disturbance at least work. Beyond that, their only real hidden knowledge is in dealing with Undead (a legacy of the constant harassment that Saminga attempts to unleash upon them), and their particular martial art:

## **The Scorpion's Sting**

Like any self-respecting cult, the Brotherhood has its own martial art. The main skill is Fighting (Scorpion's Sting): a practitioner may not have it at a level greater than his regular Fighting skill.

| <b>Maneuver</b>       | <b>Power</b> | <b>Accuracy</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Claw of the Scorpion  | -1           | +0              |
| Sting of the Scorpion | +0           | -1              |
| Double Claw Strike    | +2           | -2              |
| Lightning Slash       | -2           | -1              |
| Power Sweep           | -1           | -2              |
| Scorpion's Strength   | n/a          | -3              |
| Scorpion's Crush      | 0            | -3              |
| Scorpion's Might      | +4           | -5              |

*Claws of the Scorpion* and *Stings of the Scorpion* are more or less equivalent to punches and kicks, respectively, with a bonus to reflect more scientific training. A *Double Claw Strike* is a coordinated attack with both hands: the user is at -1 to Dodge rolls for that turn. A *Lightning Slash* is a quick attack that sacrifices Power and Accuracy for speed: the practitioner can make a number of attacks equal to (Corporeal Forces). A *Power Sweep* does damage and forces the defender to roll successfully against Agility (minus the CD) or fall down. *Scorpion's Strength* does no damage, but a successful attack requires the target to succeed at a Strength roll, minus the CD of The Scorpion's Sting roll, or be flung back 1d6 yards. *Scorpion's Crush* is a 'sit on the target and suffocate him' roll. The target must win a Quick Contest of Strength roll to break free. *Scorpion's Might* is essentially a pile driver; the user is at -4 to Dodge for that turn.

There is one other, generic maneuver: all practitioners of Scorpion's Sting may add their base skill level to any Dodge rolls made to avoid an unarmed or hand weapon attack.

A Scorpion's Sting practitioner may buy off the above accuracy penalties. Each Accuracy penalty must be bought off separately at a rate of 1 point per CP, and cannot go above 0. Also, the level of penalty bought off cannot be higher than the base Scorpion's Sting skill: for

example, a cultist with Scorpion's Sting/3 must spend 3 points to reduce his Scorpion's Might penalty to -2, and cannot further reduce that penalty until he raises his base fighting skill.

## **Relations - Heaven**

The major obstacle with integrating this group with the rest of the Host is that, regardless of alignment, patronage and operating methodology, the Brotherhood of the Viridian Scorpion is a secret society actively engaged in a conspiracy to take over the world. This, in itself, does not trouble many angels (in marked contrast to most of Heaven's Soldiers), but the circumlocutions and evasions necessary to accommodate the Brotherhood's unique point of view can grow wearisome.

Even those members of the Brotherhood who grasp the essential nature of the War -- good supernatural entities and evil supernatural entities fight over humanity; the Brotherhood works for the former -- have the details a bit skewed. They refer to their patron David as Scorpion Adamantine, and are under the impression that he enjoys some sort of primacy of place when it comes to the Earth itself. Other Superiors are understood to be either Archetypes or Tulpas, depending on whether they're on the Scorpion Adamantine's side or not (i.e., Archangels or

Demon Princes; Laurence 'suggestion' that David not describe Marc as a Tulpa was probably redundant). Angels are referred to as *Evocations*; the founders of the cult had a decided reluctance to use any sort of Abrahamic religious terminology when describing their patrons, which is really quite ironic.

And as for Soldiers of Heaven? Well, obviously they are servants of their own Archetype in the same way that the Brotherhood serves the Scorpion Adamantine; they will no doubt have their own rewards after the slaves of the Tulpas are cast down from the thrones of the world. In the meantime, show them every courtesy due fellow fighters, and try not to confuse them with explanations about the true way of things.

Those Soldiers aware of this cult appreciate the material support that the Brotherhood freely offers, but could do without the smugness. For that matter, many of the Host, both mortal and celestial, would like to know precisely what David's long term plans for this group *are*.

## **Relations - Hell**

It has been suggested that David sponsors this cult solely to show up and infuriate Saminga. While this is not actually True, it cannot be denied that the Archangel of



Stone takes some delight in demonstrating that *his* cult of conspiratorial martial artists is much, much cooler than Saminga's could ever hope to be. This invariably encourages Samingans to wildly attack, which gives the Brotherhood valuable Undead-fighting experience and a healthy appreciation for commercial-strength deodorants.

Petty amusement aside, this cult is a serious thorn in the side of demons and Hellsworn in power, and not particularly a problem for those who aren't. The Brotherhood *can* be wound up and sent off in the direction of an Infernal rival; it's risky as Hell, but it can be done. The fact that more attempts are failures than successes is, of course, meaningless. Failures fail: it's a law of the universe, or something.

## History

As noted earlier, the Brotherhood had its origins in the European-American revival in occultism during the last decades of the 19th Century (oddly enough, the word in both Angelic and Helltongue for this movement can be reasonably translated into mortal languages as "The Golden Yawn"). The founders were rather unimaginative amateur Egyptologists with copious amounts of money, free time and boredom. Couple **that** with a drearily nasty dispute over an obscure Masonic text (which, for the

record, nobody involved got right), and lo! The Brotherhood was born.

What kept it from falling apart in short order was the interest of Stone. David found the idea of secret cultists -- honest to God, honestly not-influenced by celestials, completely naturally-developed secret cultists -- curiously compelling. Infiltrating and taking the cult over proved to be fairly easy; modifications of doctrine even more so. The founders never even realized that they had been superseded. Or, if they did, they enjoyed their sinecures too much to really care.

And that's pretty much it, until the modern day. The Archangel of Stone has been nurturing this group for almost a century, and they're just now getting to the point where he can experiment in order to see what task they could be profitably put. Which, mind, *might* include the task of 'ruling the world'. After all, it'd be nice if *somebody* did.

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