

MOTHER OF SERPENTS

The land of Hellas is a place of many gods, both great and lesser, most born from the same divine family tree as Zeus and the Olympians. Each god has their own dominion, some vast like Poseidon's sea or Apollo's sky, others oversee minor things such as the hearth, trees, animals, and streams. Yet for all of the varied gods of Olympus, none claim dominion over the lowly serpent. Seen as bad omens, snakes of all kinds are feared and hated, usually killed when discovered by a traveller on the roads or farmer in the fields.

But in recent years, emissaries of a new religion have arrived from foreign lands that have adopted the snake as their own, and the high priestess is known as the Mother of Serpents. She preaches mastery over dangerous serpents and promises prosperity, fertility of both crop and womb, and rebirth after death—for those who join her. It is an attractive message, especially to those forgotten by Hellenic society such as women, slaves, and the poor. Her presence is frowned upon in most city-states, for she is seen by many as a charlatan, a snake-charmer seeking to swindle the gullible out of what meager wealth they possess. Though the exact origin of her cult is not known to outsiders, it is said to have first gained a foothold on the island of Crete, shortly before the collapse of King Minos' reign. Some have even blamed the king's descent into madness on the influence of the serpent cult in his land, but the wise discount this, for it is well known that his ruin was of his own making, brought about by his hubris and defiance of the true gods of Olympus. Yet despite this controversy her presence is largely ignored, for most of her followers are the unwanted, the lost and the hopeless. Slowly, her influence has grown, and recently small shrines have been erected in lonely places where the initiates of the serpent cult travel to learn the mysteries. Like the mystery cults of Dionysus, Orpheus, and many others that are popular throughout Hellas, the initiates are sworn never to speak to outsiders of the secrets revealed within the shrine.

The Mother of Serpents is weirdly beautiful... tall and pale, wearing an elaborate corseted gown with her breasts brazenly exposed in the manner of foreign barbarians. Heavy makeup adorns her face giving her the appearance of a painted statue, and her mysterious amber eyes are outlined in khol. Her manner is alien and disconcerting; outside of her temple she seldom speaks, and then only in sibilant whispers, heavily accented with some weird, foreign tongue.

Her title is no mere affectation, for the Mother of Serpents seems to have a deep affinity with snakes of all kinds, and they with her. She always carries with her two serpents, and these are both her protectors as well as the living symbols of her religion. Bystanders who approach too closely, or make any hostile gesture toward the priestess are bitten. The venom of the serpents brings a gruesome death, the bitten undergoing violent muscular spasms and bleeding from the eyes and nose before death finally takes them. Mercifully, their suffering is never long, usually only moments. The Mother of Serpents seems fearless of her pets, and they never attempt to strike

her, despite their constant angry hissing and twisting in her grip. Those who see her find the interplay between her and her 'children' at once both fascinating and repellant, and most will watch in awe, as if spellbound by the movement of the priestess and snakes.

Her motives in Hellas are mysterious, but she is known to possess strange powers and a deep understanding of occult mysteries, and these unique abilities ensure that there will always be some unscrupulous, power-hungry leader tempted to enlist her to his cause. It is dangerous alliance to make, however, for men who gaze upon the Mother of Serpents easily fall under her influence, their minds clouded and their will supplanted by her own.

RESTRICTIONS

Any warband led by an Infamous Demigod may include 1 Mother of Serpents. She is taken as a Character Option, either from one of the Demigod's home city-state units or from an allied unit.

Venomous Serpents

The Mother of Serpents carries her beloved pets with her at all times: two writhing serpents, one held in each of her hands. When she is attacked these serpents strike out against her opponents, biting with a deadly venomous attack. All melee attacks made by the Mother of Serpents have a Damage Modifier of 3. Further, if she rolls a natural "10" on any melee attack the enemy has been fatally poisoned, no Armor Save allowed. This result has no effect against non-living opponents, such as Shades, Stone Colossus, or the undead minions of the Eater of the Dead.

Regeneration

The mysterious god of the Mother of Serpents has granted her the miraculous ability to heal herself, even grievous wounds that would instantly kill a normal man. Some even swear to have seen the Mother of Serpents regrow severed limbs in the middle of combat, to the horror of her attackers. Each time that the Mother of Serpents receives a wound, her player rolls an Arcane Save. If the Save is successful, the wound is immediately healed.

Hypnotic Gaze

The eyes of the Mother of Serpents possess an otherworldly aura, and her gaze can mesmerize the weak-willed, causing them to drop their weapons and stand still, dumbfounded and enthralled. At any point during the Mother of Serpents' Activation Phase, she may use her Hypnotic Gaze on any enemy model with an unplayed Command Counter within 12" range and within her line-of-sight.

Note: the Mother of Serpents must also be within the line-of-sight of the intended target, as they must be able to see her eyes for the ability to work. The player rolls an Arcane Test against the target unit. Success means that the unit is momentarily mesmerized and their Command Counter is removed. The Mother of Serpents may not use her Hypnotic Gaze during any Activation Phase in which she has engaged in melee combat.

CLASS	MV	WND	#ATT	ATT	DEF	MIS	ARC	DISC	PTS	
Mother of Serpents	5	2	2	5	5	5	7	6	100	
Weapons: <i>Venomous Serpents</i> (DM 3)			Armor: <i>Regeneration</i> (Arcane Save)				Base Size: 20mm Square			

Divided Loyalties

The Mother of Serpents is the priestess of a mysterious, foreign god, whose motives may come into conflict with the Demigod's divine parent. Because of this, a warband that includes the Mother of Serpents receives a penalty of -1 to their Offering Roll when using a War Altar.

Further, the master of the Mother of Serpents sometimes offers a seductive bargain to a Demigod. If a Demigod that includes a Mother of Serpents in his warband has expended all of his Fate Points during the course of a game, she will bestow a free *Defy Fate* attempt, courtesy of her deity. This attempt can be made only once per game, after the Demigod has reached 0 Fate Points. The Demigod may choose to use this *Defy Fate* when needed—by doing so, he has entered into a bargain with the foreign god. If the *Defy Fate* die roll fails, their bargain has not been fulfilled and everything remains the same. If the *Defy Fate* die roll succeeds, their bargain has been completed, and the Demigod is now in the service of the Mother of Serpents. To the rest of the warband things seem normal, but from now on the Mother of Serpents is the real power behind the warband, secretly pulling the strings of her Demigod puppet. Though this will not change the warband in any significant way, it may have very real effects on the events of an Epic Campaign, with the demigod secretly serving some mysterious foreign power.

