



# KNIGHTLY ORDERS OF ANSALON

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# Chapter 1: KNIGHTS OF ANSALON

**Y**ou bring back the dead,” Tanis said, regarding the knight with incredulity, “at the risk of your own life?”

Steel shrugged. “What is life without honor?”

“Est Sularus oth Mithas,” Tanis murmured. “My honor is my life. You are your father all over again.”

Steel’s face darkened. His hand clenched over the hilt of his sword. “I am a Knight of Takhisis,” he said coldly.

*Dragons of Summer Flame*

By Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman

The glorious Knight of Solamnia. The humble household knight. The conquering Dark Knight. The secretive Steel Legionnaire. For three thousand years, there have been a chosen few mortals who rose above the common warrior to count themselves among the most prestigious of martial ranks. There are a dozen assorted types of knights across Ansalon, and in some ways they couldn’t be more different.

Some knights are members of well-known, continent-spanning Orders. These Orders, of which the Knights of Solamnia, the Knights of Neraka, and the Legion of Steel are the largest, have taken it upon themselves to pursue goals larger than the interests of a single baron, king, or nation. Rather, they pursue the defense of Order and Good, or the enforcement of the will of Her Dark Majesty, or the welfare of the common folk. They fight with the courage of their convictions—or at least they aspire to.

The majority of knights in Ansalon are not members of these Orders. They are simply trained warriors who have sworn fealty to a lord, who may himself be an older and wealthier knight. Sometimes called cavaliers, many are household knights who serve to garrison the lord’s castle or estate. Others have their own affairs to manage and they take up arms when their lord calls upon them. In return, these knights can expect support from their lord in the form of money, material, and protection.

Still others are mercenary knights, landless rogues who abandoned, lost, or were banished from the service of their lord. Forced to wander from estate to estate, they seek any opportunity to use their knightly skills for status and for steel.

## QUALITIES OF A KNIGHT

Whatever order they belong to or tradition they follow, knights of Ansalon tend to share certain traits. Most historians agree that the modern knighthood can trace its origins back to the Ergothian Cavaliers, widely thought of as the first and oldest order of knights in Ansalon. As the warrior-noble caste of humanity’s first great civilization, they established ideals that many of Ansalon’s knights still aspire to today.

Honor is important to a knight. Regardless of what an individual knight believes, regardless of what gods he may or may not follow, the vast majority of knights share an overriding belief in the value of personal integrity.

Ansalon’s history is full of examples. Storied knights such as Huma Dragonbane and Sturm Brightblade have behaved with so much honor in life that, even after death, tales of their admirable deeds rank among the most proudly told stories in Solamnia. Even infamous Dark Knights, such as Lord Ariakan, enjoy the reputation of always having treated their enemy captives with respect—all while serving the dread side of evil. In fact, be he good or evil, it is this very code of honor (integrity, dignity, and pride) that lends a noble quality to each and every knight.


There are at least four noble traits held in high esteem by knightly characters in Ansalon. These set knights apart from the common adventurer type and make them such unique characters to play. For those who seek to follow the knightly path, it helps to remember that most knightly characters aspire to exemplify the following qualities:

- Honor in all actions, above all else
- Commitment to a set of goals and a code of conduct
- Loyalty to other knights who share the same beliefs
- Self-control—both in daily life and in battle

These qualities are often collectively called a code of chivalry, even if they are not formally written or codified.

In spite of these unifying qualities, Ansalonian knights are a wonderfully varied group. Depending on their order, the values of their lord, and their own personalities, knights fulfill these qualities in widely diverse ways. Do all knights have to be sword-wielding, armor-wearing, human male fighters? Not at all. In Ansalon there are wizards, clerics, rangers, rogues, bards, merchants, and all types of folk who proudly count themselves as knights. Of course, each knightly organization comes with different rules for admission (and it’s true that some knighthoods do indeed consist mainly of human male fighters), but it is also not uncommon to find women, elves, and even an occasional kender who have joined a knightly brotherhood. There are whole knighthoods devoted to dwarves and to minotaurs. Later chapters will describe in depth the three largest knighthoods—the Knights of Solamnia, the Dark Knights, and the Legion of Steel. In addition, detailed information will be given for a handful of smaller, more specialized knightly organizations.

In most of Ansalon’s knightly orders, the knight has extensive opportunity to gain status and influence. Even the lowliest household cavalier can, with skill at arms and intrigue, win land and title. Those who are brave and true to their cause may attain awards, glory, and perhaps even legendary status. But of course, with such an important position comes great responsibility. A knight must be willing to put aside his personal agenda when so ordered by those who rank above him. A knight may be asked at any time, even when in the middle of a personal quest, to drop whatever he is doing and perform some task deemed important to his brotherhood or his lord. Some knights may be assigned specific duties such as guarding



an important tower. Other knights might be charged with tasks such as hunting down a group of marauding ogres or capturing an enemy leader. In crucial moments, a knight might even be charged with a particularly difficult or dangerous mission, such as recovering a valuable artifact for the very sake of the knighthood. And of course, in times of war, most knights are expected to band together to fight as a cohesive unit against the enemy army.

The knightly path is not always an easy path to walk. A knight's bravery, self-control, and combat skills will be constantly tested—not just in the beginning, but throughout his life. His peers will always judge his actions and he must constantly prove himself worthy of the privilege of knighthood. And yet, in spite of the structure and the discipline required, the knighthood is a worthwhile path. In Ansalon, a true and faithful knight can find himself living a life filled with legendary deeds and great influence over others.

### KNIGHTLY ARCHETYPES

Knights share some common qualities, but these are but a small part of what makes a character come alive. Knights come from all walks of life, many different races, different economic classes, and different moral and ethical outlooks. This is reflected in the many different sorts of knights found in *DRAGONLANCE* literature. Some of these archetypes are listed here. It's by no means a complete list, but it might help when trying to imagine a creative knightly character concept. Remember also that many knights might fit more than one archetype, or none at all.

#### THE LIBERTINE

Libertines are more concerned about wine, women (or men), and song than they are about the more serious aspects of knighthood. They use their positions to live the good life. Some become avid sportsmen, taking up hunting, falconry, or the tournament with abandon; these knights' blunted tournament swords see far more use than their sharp war swords. Sir Markham, while a brilliant strategist in the War of the Lance and the Blue Lady's War, often seemed more concerned about his wine than being "knightly;" he could be considered a Libertine.

#### THE CHIVALROUS KNIGHT

Chivalry is a nebulous code, with as many definitions as there are knights to have opinions about it. Most agree, however, that a Chivalrous Knight should champion justice and mercy, be modest and humble, and exhibit courage and valor. Chivalrous Knights often seek the favor of a lady or gentleman who will inspire them in battle and tournament. Chivalrous Knights appreciate art and beauty, often studying music and poetry. They are often very concerned about honor (thus this archetype frequently overlaps with the Honor-Bound knightly archetype) and are quicker than most knights to issue challenges and fight duels.

#### THE FLAWED KNIGHT

Knightly ideals are difficult to live up to. In fact, most knights seem to fall short of their order's stated ideal in one area or another. Some knights, however, have a major flaw that they must overcome, lest it prove their undoing. A raging temper, an addiction, a secret criminal past, a chronic injury, or a blinding prejudice might keep any knight from fulfilling her potential, yet she must try to overcome it. Marshal Medan, commandant of the Dark Knight occupation force in Qualinesti during the War of Souls, allowed his conscience and empathy for the elves to compromise his duty, and he paid for this flaw with his life.

#### THE HONOR-BOUND KNIGHT

"My honor is my life." The Oath of the Knights of Solamnica sums up what the majority of knights of most orders traditionally believe. However, some knights take this belief far more seriously than others, willing to sacrifice their own lives before accepting damage to their honor. Sturm Brightblade and his son Steel were both rigidly bound by honor. Sometimes, a knight's honor and a knight's liege lord come into conflict, creating overlap between this archetype and the Knight with Two Lords. Honor-Bound Knights are often Chivalrous as well.

#### THE LORD'S MAN (OR WOMAN)

Lord and realm—some knights see patriotism as the highest virtue and believe that loyalty to their king or their people is their life's purpose. On their lord's orders they are often willing to perform tasks and fight for causes that might make a more principled knight hesitate. Some minotaur Legionaries fit this archetype, as they are willing to do anything, and sacrifice anything, for the furtherance of the Minotaur Empire.

#### THE KNIGHT WITH TWO LORDS

Most knights swear fealty to a king, an order, or a lord of some sort, who holds the knight's loyalty fully and without question. There are some, however, who serve two masters, and the knight must learn how to balance them and fulfill his oaths to both. Sometimes it's a church and a secular lord who make competing demands; other times the knight's family and the knight's order divide his loyalties. Sometimes it's the knight's own sense of morality and honor that she serves, conflicting with her acknowledged superiors. Members of the Order of the Kingfishers, which is the branch of the Solamnic Auxiliary made up of wizards, all share this archetype, owing allegiance to both the Knighthood and the Orders of High Sorcery.

#### THE LAWYER

All knights are expected to study their codes of honor; Solamnics revere the Measure, Dark Knights learn the Code, and Steel Legionnaires study the Legacy. A few knights, however, take this farther and become experts in the minutiae of their code. Sometimes the Lawyer simply uses his knowledge to browbeat his comrades into conforming to his personal ideal. Often, especially if the knight also fits the Politician archetype, they use this as



a weapon against their rivals within the order. Solamnic Knight Commander Sir Jamis uth Remmik was a Lawyer who used the letter of the Measure to prosecute Linsha Majere.

### THE POLITICIAN

Viewing his order as a mountain to be climbed, the archetypal Politician knight carefully maps the social and political state of his order and sets about to rise to the top. Little else matters but the next promotion. Politicians seek the assignments that will bring them the greatest attention, the quests that will bring the most glory. They are often concerned about the letter of their order's code, making the Politician archetype a common overlap with the Lawyer archetype. Sir Derek Crownguard and the Nightlord Lillith, the grey-robed Thorn Knight who prosecuted Steel Brightblade, were both Politicians.

### THE PRAGMATIST

The polar opposite of the Lawyer, the Pragmatist believes that sometimes the rules need to be broken in order to get the job done. Taken to an extreme, the Pragmatist can be downright dishonorable and make a tatters of his order's code. The Legion of Steel was founded on a philosophy of pragmatism. Within the Knights of Solamnia, Lady Linsha Majere is a Pragmatist, and Lord Marshal Jaymes

Markham's pragmatism borders on criminal—in fact, some say it crossed that line. Extreme Pragmatists often end up as Rogue Knights.

### THE PRODIGY

An order of knights might be tempted to recruit a starry-eyed youth with an amazing sword arm—but they often come with more naïveté than the sky has stars. A talented young knight who advances too quickly through the ranks may fall victim to his own inflated self-worth, might have to overcome jealousy and resentment from those in his order who don't think that he has earned his spurs, and will have to develop the wisdom to correctly apply his talents. Mina embodies the Prodigy archetype, rocketing to the top of the Dark Knights while still a teenager.

### THE RELIGIOUS KNIGHT

Some knights feel called to service by the gods themselves. Filled with religious fervor, they take up the sword or the mace, call for a blessing from the heavens, and wade into battle to bring truth to the unrighteous. They make fearsome opponents, as they are often driven by the conviction that they will be richly rewarded in the afterlife. Mina during the War of Souls epitomized this archetype. Most of the Knights of the Divine Hammer fit as well. Many Dark Knights served out of a sense of dedication to Takhisis; similarly, many Knights of Solamnia believed themselves chosen champions of Paladine.

### THE RELUCTANT KNIGHT

Knighthood is a tradition among some Solamnic families. Occasionally a Dark Knight finds that the Vision is less than convincing. In either case, young people sometimes find themselves in a knightly order against their will. These knights may have already given their oaths and made

binding promises and they cannot back out of their commitment—but they desperately wish they could. Different knights react to this in different ways. Some may end up becoming rogue knights. Others request dull and mundane assignments, hoping to live life as normally as possible and to be able to forget, at least for a few hours a day, that they are knights. Still others take the opposite approach

and request the most dangerous assignments possible, preferring a swift and glorious death. Some simply do their jobs as best they can, and a few of them learn to like the knight's life. Sir Gerard uth Mondar at the start of the War of Souls is a good example of a Reluctant Knight.

### THE ROGUE KNIGHT

Whether former members of knightly orders who become disgusted with their methods, household knights exiled for crimes against their lord, or heretical crusaders banished from their church, Rogue Knights live on the shadowy edge of the law. Even commoners look unkindly upon those dishonorable enough to abandon their oaths. Some Rogue Knights abandon their principles and take up banditry, as many Knights of Solamnia did after the Cataclysm. Some Rogue Knights relish their outlaw reputations—a few have even become minor celebrities and champions of the common people, using their skills





to tweak the noses of the wealthy and powerful. Some crusade against their former order. Others just try to fade away, attempting to maintain a low profile and live a quiet life. Sara Dunstan and Dhamon Grimwulf are fine examples of Rogue Knights. Status as a Rogue Knight is often the fate of a Knight with Two Lords.

### THE WARRIOR

Some become knights not out of commitment to a cause, or a sense of honor, but out of a love of war. At the extreme end of the spectrum, some knights only feel at home on the battlefield and are never happier than when they are fighting. They feel naked without their armor, useless in times of peace. This archetype often has little respect for tournaments, politics, and the comfortable trappings of court. The Warrior knights who manage to channel their talents in constructive directions remain loyal to their order and become respected battlefield leaders—Falaius Taneek, a Steel Legionnaire and gifted leader, fits this archetype. Others end up as Rogue Knights; sometimes they are thrown out of their orders for cruelty or bloodlust, sometimes they leave their order to take up the life of a mercenary.

## THE

### NOBILITY OF THE KNIGHTHOOD

Members of a knightly order share a strong bond with one another. Even though many modern knighthoods consist of both men and women, the importance of archaic fraternal descriptions (such as “brotherhood”) cannot be overlooked in describing the ties that bind members of these groups. For example, one often hears the term “brotherhood of knights” to describe an especially close-knit group. Such fraternal descriptors express the fact that fellow knights often feel closer to each other than do blood brothers...or in some cases, blood brothers and sisters.

To be fair, in Ansalon there are many types of exclusive organizations where members share a feeling of kinship and brotherhood. For example, wizards who join a magical conclave often feel a special connection to the brotherhood/sisterhood of magic. Similarly, thieves who become members of a guild often share a fraternal bond that lends itself to the expression “honor among thieves.” In fact, belonging to a knightly organization is similar to

other types of exclusive organizations in the following ways:

- Members feel a closeness not shared by outsiders.
- Members pledge to strictly follow certain rules.
- Members submit to the judgment of those higher in authority.
- Members risk expulsion from the group for transgressions.

However, joining a knighthood is different in one very important way:

- Knights must be capable of behaving with nobility.

### THE NOBLE KNIGHT AND HIGH SOCIETY

When a young warrior becomes a knight, he essentially becomes a member of the exclusive upper class, if he is not one already.

In fact, knighthood is historically viewed as an entry-level position into the ranks of the nobility. For example, young Willen Ergot may have started life as the son of a bricklayer living in the town of Endaf, but once Willen passes the test for knighthood, he becomes almost born again as Sir Willen of Endaf.

No longer a commoner, Sir Willen is now regarded as “a nobleman of humble birth.” Wherever he goes, Sir Willen’s nobility will be immediately recognized in part by his noble bearing and in part by the new title that precedes his name. And, as a knight walking into a town marketplace, Sir Willen generally commands more immediate respect and deference from the shopkeepers and passersby than he would if he walked into that same market as Willen Ergot, son of a bricklayer, or even Willen the Rough, mercenary fighter.

Knightly tradition requires a knight to behave in a manner that befits his higher social level. This is an important difference that sets knights apart from other adventurers. The ideal knight is a perfect blend between the vicious side he shows in battle and the gentle, courteous side that functions in polite society. There is no corresponding social requirement that accompanies any other organization in Ansalon. For example, a commoner might pass the difficult Test of High Sorcery, join a wizard’s conclave, and, theoretically, become as powerful as the legendary Raistlin Majere, yet he might still be viewed by

