

Vincent Florio and Brian "Fitz" Fitzpatrick
Present

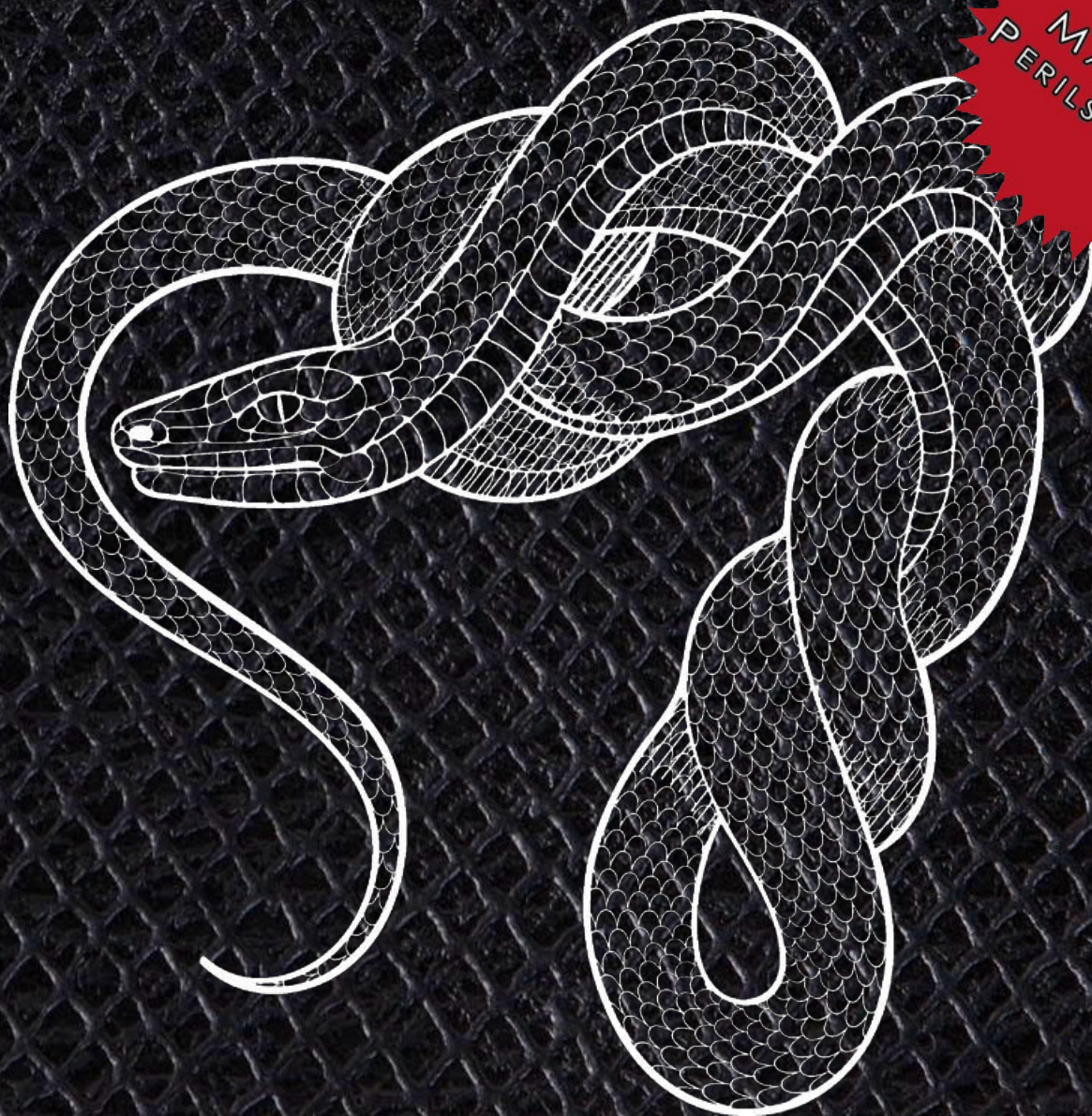
THE SNAKE'S HEART

LOST AGE ADVENTURE

An adventure for 4-6 Mazes & Perils characters of 1st or 2nd level.

By Brian "Fitz" Fitzpatrick

COMPATIBLE
WITH
MAZES &
PERILS RULES



MAZES & PERILS



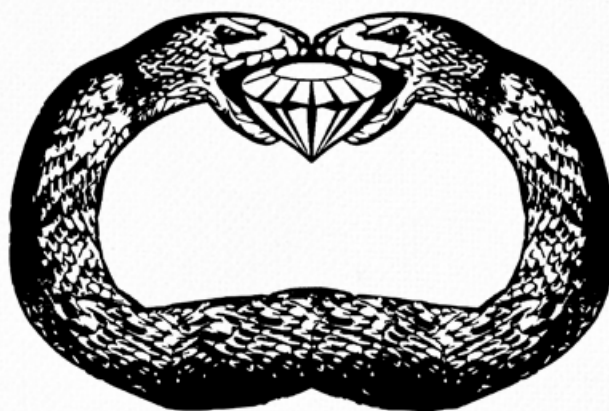


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Present
**A Cinema8
Production**

THE SNAKE'S HEART

A LOST AGE ADVENTURE

An adventure for 4-6 Mazes & Perils characters of 1st or 2nd level.



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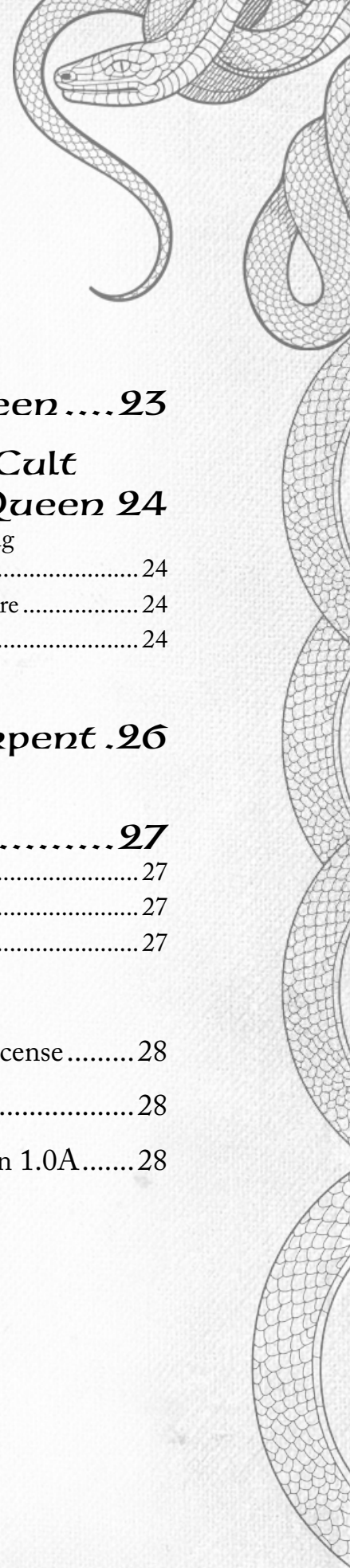
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OVER BLACK:

Drums beat in the distance, like the heartbeat of the land.

NARRATOR (Voice-over)

Between the fall of Atlantis and the second rise of Mankind, much history has been forgotten. If they could be found, the writings of that Lost Age would tell of empires and kingdoms rising and falling with the moons. In their wake, men, women, and children were orphaned on the Great Plain, stranded and forced to find their own way.

In that space, a band of adventurous spirits has formed from this constant stream of souls and they find themselves attacked by raiders of a local warlord...

Introduction

The Snake's Heart is an adventure designed for 4-6 *Mazes & Perils* characters of 1st or 2nd level, but it can easily be adjusted for use with any edition of your favorite fantasy RPG.

Welcome to the Great Plain -- a flat, featureless plain of grass and low hills as far as the eye can see, dotted with occasional valleys and crevasses hidden from view. This is the land of the Lost Age, locked in a time of barbarism and magic, gods and grief.

Your heroes are the adventurous souls of this day and they find themselves traveling near the village of Elhann -- home to shepherds, gardeners, horsemen, and a few aged warriors. As they get closer, they find the village attacked by a group of bandits. At the edge of the village, they see four of them guarding a cage filled with children and the others nearby seem intent on adding to their catch. But a few have spotted your party and are coming to investigate!

Running the Adventure

This adventure can be run for characters of 1st or 2nd level. We have included stat blocks for each creature or combatant the PCs will encounter.

To reduce the difficulty for 1st level characters, we recommend cutting the number of HP to half the amount suggested by the HD level. For instance, a HD 1 Bandit would normally have 6 HP and you could cut that to 3 to reduce combat difficulty and a HD 3 Bandit Leader would go from 18 HP to 9 HP.

You may also average the HD for any combatants, alternating between 3 and 4 on a d6 to get a middle value suitable for your heroes. With that technique, a HD 3 leader would have 10 HP instead of 18.

You can also adjust the number of enemies in each encounter to make it more or less difficult based on what your needs are for your group.

However, for 2nd level characters we recommend leaving each combatant at its full HD complement of HP.

The Combat Counter

The Combat Counter (see page 12) can be used to help crank up the tension during the adventure. As soon as the heroes engage the bandits and they have an opportunity to sound the alarm, the clock starts ticking. But the players should be relatively unaware of the stakes until they get to the temple, interrogate a bandit, or chat with some of the captives. The chanting will rise in volume and intensity as each victim is sacrificed, but there are no screams from the other victims as the ritual progresses.

We encourage you to find ways at your table to build tension without letting the cat out of the bag right away. Something as simple as a big red dice you leave in plain sight and slowly change the side showing to the players is one idea. Or a playing card with the number 3 on it that you slowly and inexplicably reduce whenever a child has been sacrificed. Or even playing chanting in the background and quietly increasing the volume without any explanation may also add to the unease.

The World of the Snake's Heart

Muscles, magic, and mad gods. This is a world where might makes right in all the worst ways. This is the Lost Age.

Background

The old gods don't rest well here. Among those banished from the world in a previous age is the Goddess, also known as the Serpent Queen.

Long ago, in the age of monsters and when men lived in fear, the Serpent Queen ruled her domain. Cruel. Fair. Protective over her brood. She wished nothing more than to ensure the safety of her people. But she was not invulnerable. Like her lesser brothers and sisters, she relied on the warmth of the Sun. Without it, she grew cold and impotent, unable to keep her flock safe.

In her dreams, she saw a future where she consumed the world and ate the sun. She would control its power once and for all. She would never grow cold again with the Sun as her heart. As her domain grew along with her physical size and stature, she felt that her dreams could be reached in time.

But it was not meant to be. Eventually a group of powerful heroes banished her to the Beyond. And her dream perished with her — or so the world thought.

From her imprisonment, she discovered the ability to send her spirit to visit the mortal realms. It is only a sliver of her full power, but sometimes in her travels she can infect the dreams of mortals in the mortal realm. Some of the infected even become her faithful. And a few of those have the dedication and madness to bring her back to the world.

Someday, perhaps, they will return her to her former glory. Then she will begin her quest to consume the Sun once more.

Enter Naroa... Priest of the Serpent Queen

Naroa believes in his Queen. His desires are hers. And she will return one day soon as he has been planning and scheming for months to make it happen. But his sacrifice must be worthy of her magnificence. He and his people have pillaged, looted, killed, and burned anything and everything to set his plans in motion.

The kidnappings only began in the last two weeks so he may select the perfect victims. And the time is almost right to bring his Queen home.

As the one to finally make her dreams a reality, he would be worthy of his Queen's love at last.

See the Appendixes for a description of the Serpent Queen as a deity as well as a description for a specialized Cleric class.

Adventure Hooks

The referee can use almost any ruse to get the heroes here, but here are a few possibilities.

The adventurers may be coming from:

- The village of Nifton's Inlet, a settlement on the coast of Lake Feann where two rivers end.
- The village of Fenmont, near the saltwater fens fed by the the Western Run and the Red Bear River before the freshwater flows into the sea.
- The village of Vanguard, near the mountains rising to the north.
- The tower of the wizard Osbeoth.
- Any of the other villages nearby where children have been kidnapped.
- The Trade Road which connects the major markets across the plains to the Vakha, the Central Market.

However they manage to get to the first encounter, their initial greeting is far from a warm one as they enter the village.



The Village of Elhann

This village is built around two things... the spirit of community and the protection of the local blacksmith. Water can only be found in special places across the Great Plain and having the ability to not only draw water for a working smithy but flush away the harsh byproducts of that process is a huge challenge. The elders have spoken at length about the strange colocation of two sources in the same bedrock, but they have decided that it is likely a gift from the gods and will let it go at that.

The community well comes from one part of the aquifer deep below the village, but the source for the blacksmith's quench comes from a separate area. The blacksmith does his best to keep the bit of tainted water from the forge from affecting the pure water of the village. Every day he carries what is left out to a location about a mile from his forge. It is now a space where nothing grows and animals avoid, but it serves its purpose and he gives thanks every day.

The village longhouse serves as the central location of the village, used as both a meeting place and for communal meals. Every member of the village contributes to every meal, though not all villagers contribute equally. Families with multiple children contribute a little more than everyone else, but they want to grow villagers who are strong, healthy, and can contribute in their own ways when the time comes.

Each family or hut grows a small plot of vegetables and fruits (potatoes, carrots, onions, and a variety of melons and berries). The climate is such that most of the year they can grow a rotating mix of crops. Winter usually only lasts a month and then the ground is warm enough to continue their process.

The road offers opportunities for trade a few times a year as traveling merchants come through the area. Any extra produce, tools, weapons, or art they create works well to barter for anything they may be lacking.

The village is not built for entertaining guests, but they have put folks up in the longhouse overnight occasionally. They might be willing to do so for the PCs if they ask. And they will definitely share a meal with the PCs if they help retrieve their stolen children.

What Happens In Elhann?

Every member of the village contributes to its continued existence in some way.

All members of the village must gather food for the communal meals. Towards that goal, villagers not only gather wild mushrooms, grasses, and berries, but hunt small deer, antelope, rabbits, and other game. In lean times, they will also go after more dangerous prey such as snakes, elk, or bear.

All must contribute to the survival of the village and band together to help with repairs when needed. They are in a wide open plain, so strong wind storms and tornadoes sometimes cause damage to homes or communal buildings. Villagers help effect repairs to buildings and stand together to fight off attackers as best they can.

The community also comes together to celebrate religious days, birthdays, and funerals. There is storytelling around the communal fire pit and they pass along tales from their own journeys.

What does Elhann produce?

The short answer is "barely enough to survive," but they also produce a few things useful for trade:

- Trinkets of wood and bone
- Tools from the blacksmith
- A few blankets and coats from animal furs and hides
- Vegetables and fruits from their gardens

What do they trade for?

- Luxury items such as bolts of cloth and libations
- Unusual stones and shells
- News and tales from the outside world

People

The village consists of 16 people:

- The Village Elders - a retired merchant and his wife help keep things running smoothly and deal with any conflicts that arise. They have an adopted child.
- The Blacksmith - lives alone and tries to stay as isolated as possible. He has been attempting to atone for his days as a warrior for some far-off kingdom. He makes and repairs tools, weapons, and armor as needed.
- The Trade Family - a couple who used to be traders along the road with their two young boys.
- The Old Warrior - a disabled fighter and his sister.
- The Old Women - two widows who have chosen to live out their lives here
- The Young Family - a man and woman from another village nearby with a son, daughter, and a newborn infant

Extras

These rumors can be dropped into conversation if the party interacts more deeply with the villagers.

Village Rumors Table

- Children have been stolen from other villages in the area already. (true)
- A giant ruby is held at Naroa's Tower. (true)
- Naroa is a cannibal, eating the children to gain their power. (false)
- The children are to be sold as slaves. (false)
- The tower houses fifty mad cultists. (close enough to be true)
- Someone heard the bandits say that "the Goddess would soon be free!" (true)
- Someone in the area petitioned the wizard Osbeoth for help. He refused. (true)
- Naroa can see the future. (false)
- Naroa's Tower is haunted. (false)
- The Beasts will get you if you travel after dark. (true - see the random encounter table for examples)

Random Encounter Table for the Road (d10)

This table offers some ideas for other encounters the PCs may have had on their way to Elhann.

d10 Roll Result	Random Encounter
1	2d6 Wild dogs running wild
2	Rattlesnake sunning
3	3d10 Scorpions disturbed from their nest
4	1d6 Huge Spiders seeking a meal
5	Distraught parent (or parents) looking for missing children
6	Messenger on horseback riding hard (d6, odd = riding north, even = riding south)
7	1d4 Bandits on patrol
8	Trader driving a cart full of fresh produce from Nifton's Inlet
9	Trader on horseback with two bags of dried fish from Nifton's Inlet
10	Trader driving a cart full of weapons (marked blades of Zithan, unbreakable, expensive)

Random Encounter Stats

- Huge Spider: HD 2+2; AC 6; Atk Bite (1d6 + poison); Move 180'; Special: Huge spiders build vast sticky webs in tunnels or wells, with tremendously strong strands that only a character with strength 18 can break free of in 1 round.
- Rattlesnake: HD 1+2; AC 7; Atk Bite (1d6 + poison); Move 120'
- Scorpion: HD 2; AC 5; Atk (2) Pincers (1d6), Stinger (1d4 + poison); Move 120"
- Wild Dog: HD 2+2; AC 7; Atk Bite (1d4); Move 180'

Encounter 1: Meeting the Enemy

EXT. GREAT PLAIN - DAY

A dark-haired, armored BANDIT screams a war cry, raises his axe, and directs his marauders to attack our band of HEROES with a vengeance. In a flash of steel, the battle is joined!

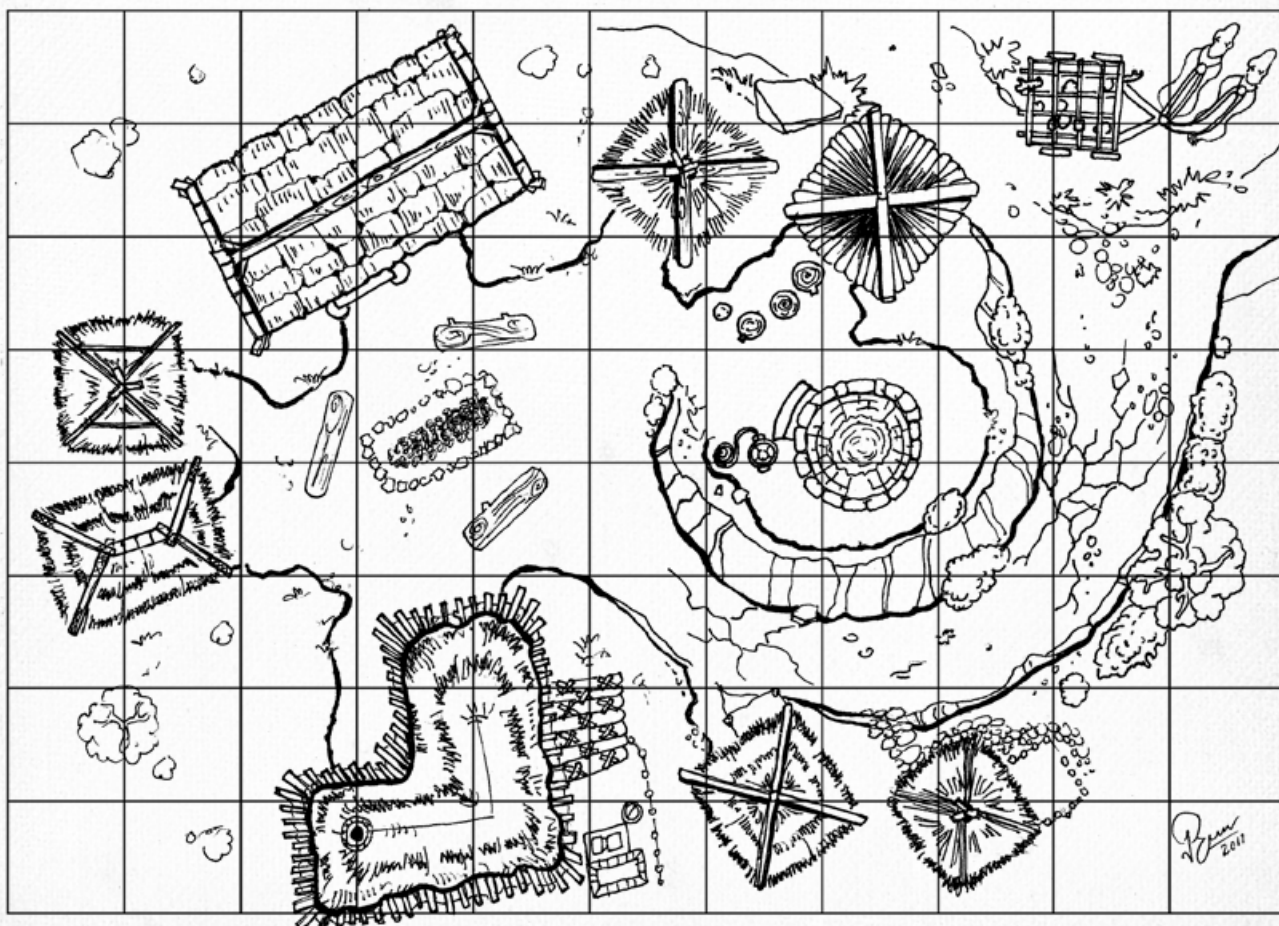
It Begins...

Upon seeing the heroes, the group of raiders (1 Bandit Leader and 6 Bandits) charge and attack as they pose the most obvious threat. The rest of the band (another 1-6 Bandits) continues searching the village, attacking adults and bundling screaming children into a cage atop the back of their cart.

The heroes are thrust immediately into the battle, attacked by a number of bandits equal to the size of the party.

Summary

- **Hook:** PCs are attacked while riding near a small village. Bandits are kidnapping children and putting them in a cage on a cart.
- **Combatants:** 6 + d6 bandits (6-12) and 1 bandit leader
- **Bandit Leader:** Human; HD 3; AC 5; Atk Battle axe (1d6+1), Longbow (1d6); Move 120'; Items - Battle axe, Longbow (20 arrows), Chainmail armor
- **Bandit:** Human; HD 1; AC 7; Atk Sword (1d6), Long bow (1d6); Move 120'; Items - Sword, Longbow (20 arrows), Leather armor
- **Conclusion:** Bandits ride off. Villagers ask PCs to rescue their children.



The Village of Elhann

The Battle...

The bandits will employ a basic strategy to attack one-on-one, thinking their opponents are not up to the challenge. When the leader gets to half his HP, he will signal a retreat. If the leader dies or more than half the bandits attacking the heroes are dispatched, any surviving bandits will signal a retreat as well.

There are four children in the cage at the beginning of the encounter. There are four additional children in the village. For every two rounds the bandits have the party engaged, they will grab a child and thrust him or her into the cage.

If they have not already retreated, one of the bandits will signal the others to leave when all four children have been collected.

When the bandits leave the village, they will head in the direction of Naroa's Tower at speed.

The Aftermath

Once the battle is over, any surviving villagers will ask for the heroes' help to retrieve their children from Naroa's tower. If the children are recovered, the villagers will give the heroes a handful of gold (3d10) to divide among themselves. That gold represents all the wealth of the village.

Though the villagers can't pay the heroes much, they do tell of a giant ruby -- The Snake's Heart - rumored to exist in Naroa's Tower, which would certainly fetch a high price in one of the bigger city markets.

Antagonists

- Bandit Leader: Human; HD 3; AC 5; Atk Battle axe (1d6+1), Longbow (1d6); Move 120'; Items - Battle axe, Longbow (20 arrows), Chainmail armor
- Bandit: Human; HD 1; AC 7; Atk Sword (1d6), Long bow (1d6); Move 120'; Items - Sword, Longbow (20 arrows), Leather armor

The Cart

The cart driven by the bandits is about 6' wide by 10' long and 3' high. There is one large cage (5' x 5' x 3') in the bed of the cart. The cart is pulled by two draft horses and a driver sits on a low bench

to steer the horses. Normal speed for the cart is 180' but it can go as fast as 360' for short distances.



The kids in the cage are from another nearby village. They are all between 9 and 13 years old, and a mix of boys and girls.

Extras

Roll a d6 - on a 1 or 6, roll a d10 on the table or throw one into the battle when it seems appropriate.

Random Events During The Battle (d10)

d10 Roll Result	Random Encounter
1	An elderly villager knocks a bandit unconscious with a cooking pot.
2	A bandit critically injures a parent trying to save his child.
3	The blacksmith uses hot coals to set a bandit on fire.
4	One of the children jumps into the well to avoid capture.
5	A pair of villagers manage to kill a bandit and have blood on their hands.
6	A bandit critically misses a villager and breaks his weapon.
7	An infant can be heard screaming for its mother above the din of battle.
8	A child runs towards the heroes, chased by two bandits.
9	One of the huts catches on fire. You can hear a villager trapped inside.
10	A bandit dumps a wounded villager into the well.

Combat Rounds   Bandits Flee!

↑ ↑ ↑ ↑
Cages Cages Cages Cages
a kid a kid a kid a kid

The Combat Counter



Interlude 1: The Crazy Cultist

● EXT. ROAD TO NAROA'S TOWER

On the road, our HEROES come across an old hunched man heading towards them. He's loudly having a conversation with himself.

● OLD MAN (Muttering loudly to self.)

Yes, we know full well the goddess will not be happy being summoned in this way...

● No, you're perfectly right - NAROA is a fool for tampering with powers beyond his control...

No, I have no idea what we're eating for lunch...

- Her cult grows strong and prepares to bring her back.
- Innocent blood. That is the secret.
- Our name is Legion.
- Stop the words. Stop her arrival.
- The Heart is thirsty.

He will continue down the road when the PCs are done with him.

Extras

The heroes may notice that there are a few spiders wandering in the area that they haven't noticed before.

Referee notes: The blindfold is a magic item (Detect Magic). It is a trademark of followers of the Many-Eyed God. If the heroes attack him, he dissolves into a pile of spiders. He is carrying two poisoned daggers.

If a PC casts Detect Magic, they will see the glow of many eyes surrounding the crazy man. All those eyes will stop looking around and immediately focus on the character who cast the spell.

Ten Things the Crazy Old Man Says (d10)

d10 Roll Result	Random Dialog
1	Yes, of course he sees it all!
2	Legs are nice. We should keep them moving.
3	It's very bright out here.
4	Will you all, please, be quiet?
5	Let's hold it together, shall we?
6	Do they see us?
7	We can't wait to sink our fangs into a good meal.
8	Step carefully together... one... two... one... two...
9	Naroa didn't believe us. He will soon.
10	The Goddess seeks revenge for being left in the cold...

The Encounter

On the road to Naroa's Tower, they will encounter an old man slowly coming their way. He will not be aware of the heroes unless they make themselves known to him, as he appears to be quite blind. He wears a dark cloth or bandage across his eyes and is quite distracted by the ongoing conversation he is having with himself.

His name is Legion and he speaks of himself in the plural as "we," not "I."

Initially, he is not forthcoming with details. However, if pried with food and wine, or kindness, he will share a few bits of information with the heroes:

Ten Things the Crazy Old Man Could Tell the PCs

- "The Goddess" is an ancient snake deity of incalculable power.
- She was banished centuries ago and will seek revenge on the world if she finds her way back.
- Sacrifices will be made.
- The Snake's Heart is a beautiful gem, ruby red and as big as a man's head.
- The Goddess was banished generations ago to the Beyond.

Encounter 2: Approaching the Tower

EXT. GREAT PLAIN - DAY

As the HEROES continue down the road towards where Naroa's Tower is supposed to be, they will see the tip of the old structure over a rise. Flying in the wind high atop the tower is a black flag with a green snake and a splash of red.

The Approach

Naroa's Tower stands tall in the distance. Stairs climb from the ground about five feet to a small platform at the top of the stairs. The door opens inward.

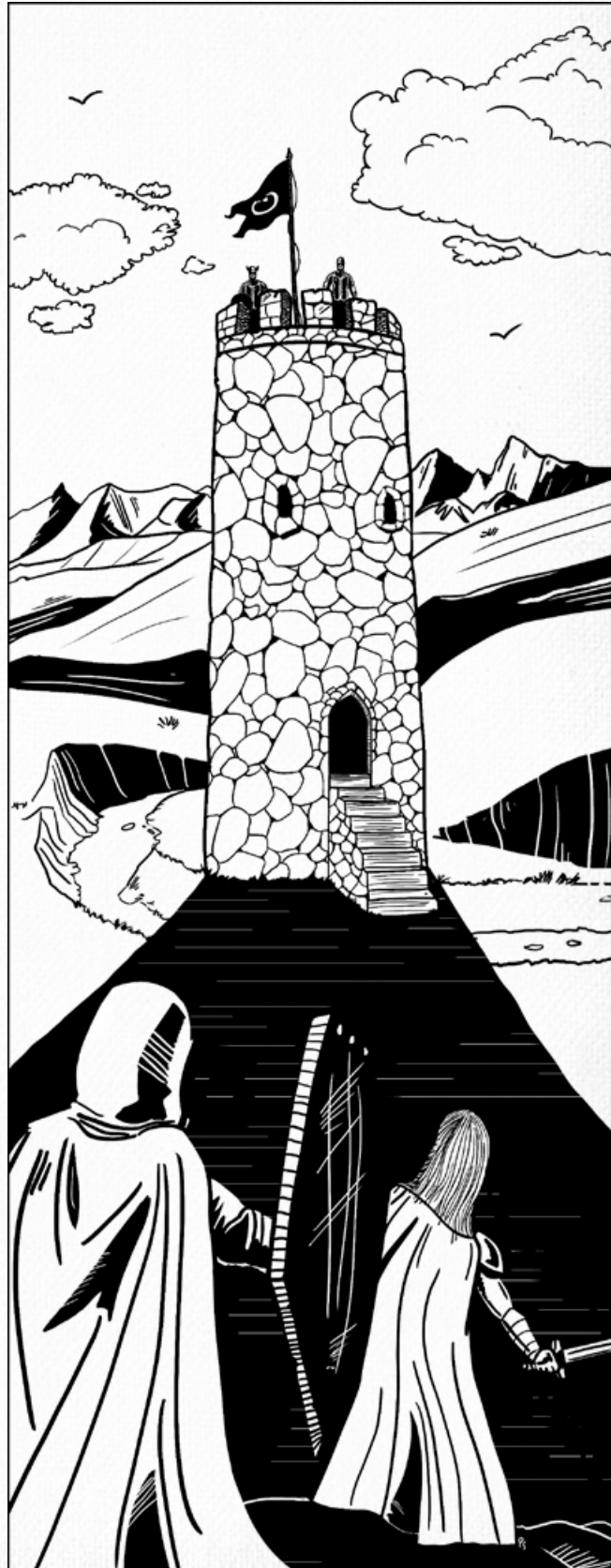
The ground in the area is worn with cart tracks. The same cart with the cage from the first encounter is parked here unless the PCs stopped it earlier. Two horses are tied to a post and nibbling on some hay in the corner.

A listen check may reveal children crying, chanting, or guard chatter (see Extras for ideas).

The Heroes can approach in one of two ways: Direct or Stealthy.

Summary

- **Hook:** PCs approach the warlord's tower where the kidnapped children were rumored to be headed.
- **Combatants:** d6 bandits in a roving patrol (same # of bandits as the PCs)
 - Bandit: Human; HD 1; AC 7; Atk Sword (1d6), Long bow (1d6); Move 120'; Items - Sword, Longbow (20 arrows), Leather armor
- **Conclusion:** If any bandits in the patrol escape, they may sound the alarm. They may have additional details about the tower for the PCs to learn.





Closing The Distance

If they take the straightforward approach, they can march right up the road and knock on the door. They will be easily spotted by watchers at the top of the tower and Naroa's men will be prepared.

- 90% chance of being spotted by watchers during the day
- 50% chance at night

If they take the stealthy approach, they can wait until nightfall and use the cover of darkness.

A successful Hide in Shadows check will allow them the chance to sneak to the base of the tower unseen. After the first failure there is a -10% chance (with another -10% added for each further failure). If they are discovered, they will be attacked.

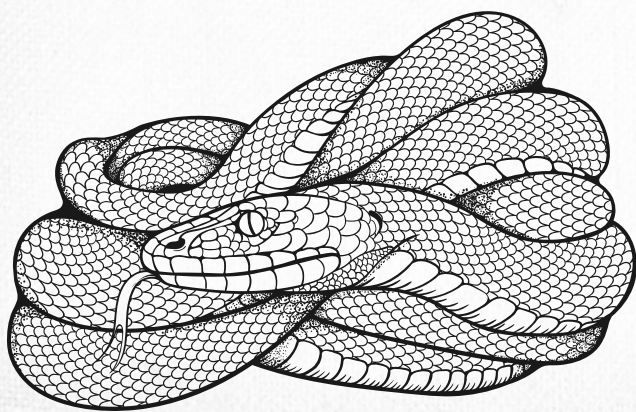
If spotted during the daytime and not attempting to be sneaky, the heroes will be allowed to state their business as they approach the front door.

If spotted at night, the heroes will be attacked without questions. There is a 15% chance that one of the bandits will be carrying a key to the front door.

Antagonists

A roving patrol (same number of combatants as the Heroes) is set up at night and searches an area every 30 minutes out to about 25 yards from the base of the tower.

- Bandit: Human; HD 1; AC 7; Atk Sword (1d6), Long bow (1d6); Move 120'; Items - Sword, Longbow (20 arrows), Leather armor



Extras

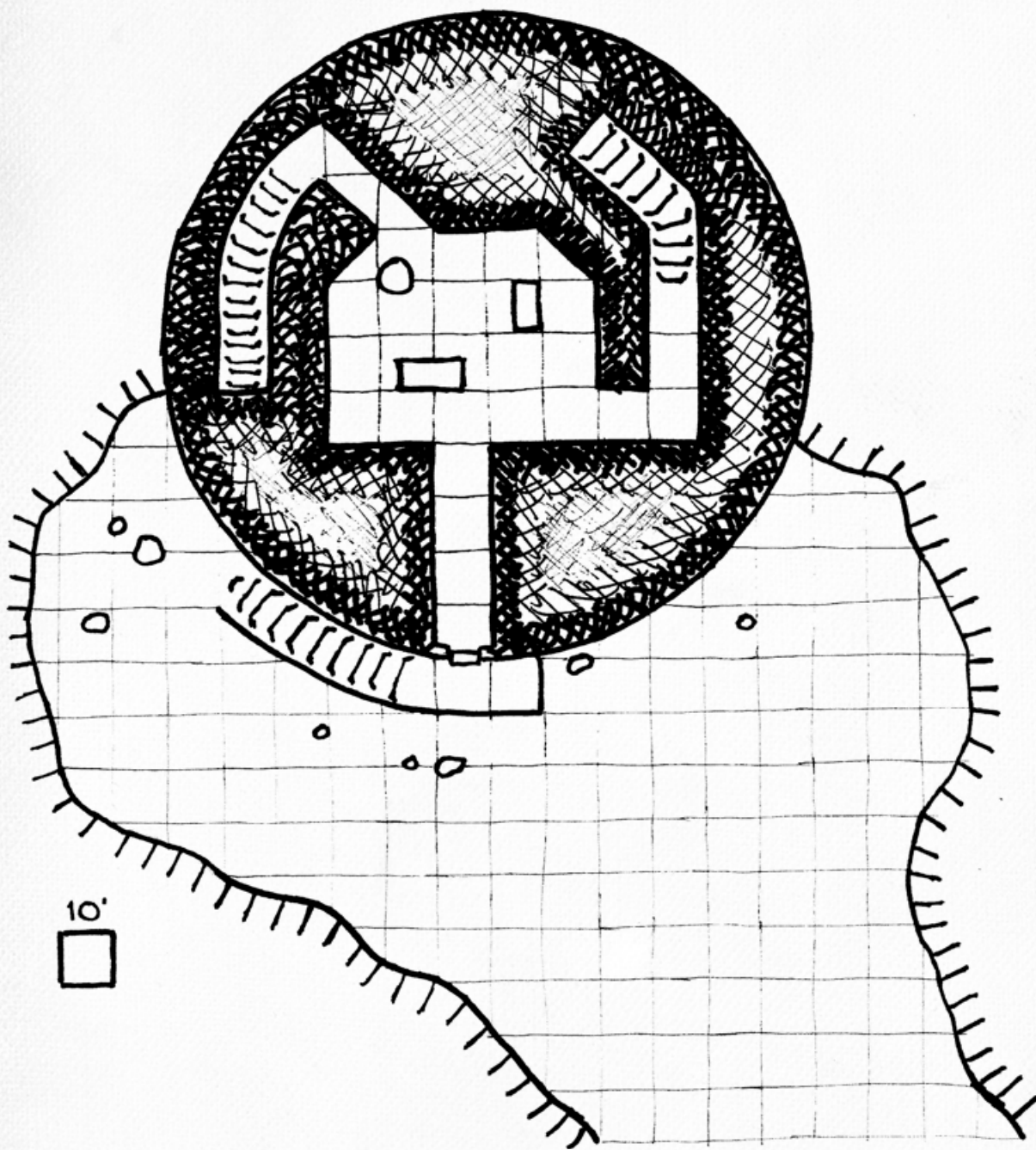
10 things guards say (d10)

d10 Roll Result	Random Dialog
1	Do you think this will work?
2	Can you believe that guy cheated at dice?
3	What do you think about that creepy old guy?
4	Was the last meal even edible? We need a new cook.
5	I feel bad for those kids, but the Queen needs her blood, I guess.
6	How long before those kids stop crying?
7	Nobody's dumb enough to attack us.
8	As soon as the Goddess is here, we'll get what's ours.
9	The world will bow before us!
10	Do you get a little creeped out by the chanting?

10 things found in guard possessions (D10)

(May also be used to identify possessions on the bandits from the first encounter.)

d10 Roll Result	Random Possession
1	A die.
2	Loose coins - 1d20 copper
3	Loose coins - 1d10 silver
4	Snakeskin belt
5	Knife with ornately carved bone handle
6	Small snakeskin pouch
7	Small snake skull token
8	Chain necklace with copper cult symbol
9	Bone carved into a snake's eye token
10	Belt buckle with snake symbol



Approach and Entry

The Combat Counter

NARRATOR (Voice-over)

As soon as our HEROES see their final destination on the horizon, it's almost as though the Gods have set an hourglass in motion, laughing as the sands push them ever closer to some impending doom.

How to use it?

All too often we get into the habit of thinking we have all the time in the world during encounters. The Combat Counter can be used to crank that tension back up at least a notch or two.

Each round of combat after a particular event, mark off one box. At regular intervals, other events happen. And after a few events, a bigger event can happen. This concept can be used outside combat as well, to initiate an event in town or some bigger plot point in the grand scheme of things in your world.

In this case, it's a bit like winding up a Jack-in-the-Box.

After the Heroes engage with the enemy and sound the alarm, whether they are outside the tower or inside, the cultists are going to start the ceremony. Naroa can see the writing on the wall, and if he can free the Goddess, the balance of power changes significantly.

The countdown should not begin until you feel a NPC may have broken away to sound the alarm, but as soon as that milestone is reached, it's time to start the madness.

Ticking the Boxes

When the heroes encounter the enemy and the enemy has an opportunity to sound the alarm, the clock starts ticking down. Every round of combat from the moment the group gets through the front door brings things closer and closer to the release of the Goddess from her prison in the Beyond.

Mark off one "X" for each round of combat the heroes complete AFTER the alarm has been sounded. It's quite possible they may prevent any word from reaching the temple, thus preventing things from getting too far too fast -- but it's more likely that someone slips through during the chaos to alert Naroa.

When the "Chanting" round comes, let the heroes roll Listen checks to hear the rise of chanting above the din of battle. And if any of the "Victims" boxes become completely filled, use that information when describing The Slithering Temple scene to indicate that a victim has been dispatched.

If the heroes are in the room when a victim is killed, they will see Naroa catch the blood in a bowl and ceremoniously dump it atop the ruby that is the Snake's Heart. After the first "taste" of blood, the gem will begin to glow with inner light, pulsing to the cadence of chanting.

Chanting

To increase the tension and difficulty even further, you can give the cultists the edge in the next few combats. As soon as the first victim is slain, there will be more power in the tower. For each victim killed, give the cultists +1 to hit, +1 to damage, or both. After all three victims perish, in the moments before the Goddess herself awakens, the cultists may have a total +3 depending on how you structure the bonuses.

As soon as the Goddess appears, those bonuses disappear in the chaos that follows. Essentially she absorbs all the extra energy, reducing the cultists back to their normal stats.

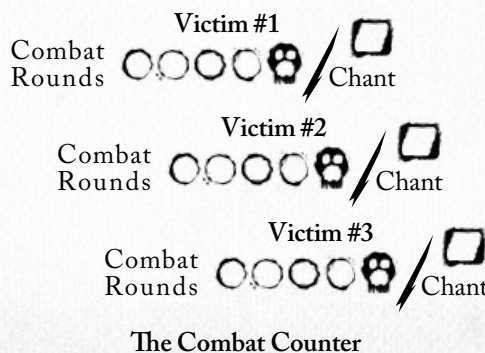
The chants themselves may be sung in a monotone and sound something like the following verse, over and over until all the victims are slain and the Goddess emerges:

Oh Goddess without end we call you...

Oh Goddess we prepare your heart to come...

Oh Goddess return to the world you left behind...

Oh Goddess we implore you to accept our sacrifice...



Encounter 3: Breaching the Gate

EXT. NAROA'S TOWER

At the base of the tower, our HEROES find themselves at a closed door. It is a mighty gate, built to repel any unwanted visitors.

It Begins...

Whether or not the PCs get to the front door unnoticed, this is where the madness begins.

If the heroes approached to this point without raising any alarms, they will not find anyone ready and waiting for their impending arrival. The door will be locked, but not trapped.

If the heroes were not successful in a stealthy approach, they will be attacked from above and the door will be both locked and trapped.

Either way, as soon as the heroes enter the front door, the Combat Counter begins, if it hasn't already.

Summary

- **Hook:** PCs attempt to get into the tower.
- **Combatants:** 1 guard leader and 5 guards
 - Guard Leader: Human; HD 3; AC 4; Atk Spear (1d6), Sword (1d6), Crossbow, light (1d6-1); Move 120'; Items - Spear, Sword, Light crossbow (20 bolts), Chain armor
 - Guard: Human; HD 1; AC 6; Atk Spear (1d6), Sword (1d6), Crossbow, light (1d6-1); Move 120'; Items - Spear, Sword, Light crossbow (20 bolts), Leather armor
- **Conclusion:** If any bandits in this group escape, they will sound the alarm. Any guards taken prisoner may have additional details about the tower for the PCs to learn.

The Door

The front door to the tower is locked when the heroes arrive. It is a sturdy wood-and-iron construction built to withstand a great deal of damage. It's possible that the heroes have acquired a key by this point (see Encounter 2), but will most likely have to pick the lock.

This is a difficult door to get through and the lock will require some intense work to pick. To get past this lock, the heroes must make one successful attempt of the Pick Locks skill. On an unsuccessful check, there is a 25% chance that the attempt was heard and the guards will be alerted. After each failure, the guards will gain an additional 10% chance to hear the heroes at the door.

If the guards are alerted to the PC's presence at the door, they will not only sound the alarm but prepare for the invaders and get a surprise round as soon as the door opens.

Remember to start the Combat Counter as soon as the guards have an opportunity to sound the alarm.

The Trap

If the trap has been armed, the heroes are in for a surprise when they get to the door. The heroes will need to detect the trap and disarm it to move inside the tower.

To disarm the trap will require a successful attempt of the Find/Disable Traps skill. A character can attempt to search for and disable traps as many times as they want, but each failure causes the next attempt to be at a -1% disadvantage.

If the trap goes off, a pot of boiling oil will splash the ten foot area directly in front of the door. Any character in that direct area will take d6+2 points of damage, with 2 points of ongoing damage each round thereafter until the oil cools (2 rounds) or they find some way to stop the burning. Any character standing 10-20 feet from the door will take d3 points of damage with 1 point of ongoing damage each round thereafter.



Opening the Door

If the heroes have been stealthy up to this point and manage to pick the lock (or use the key), they can open the door and get one surprise round prior to the start of combat.

Beyond the door, a group of 6 guards are on duty (1 guard leader and 5 guards).

Once alerted to the heroes' presence, the guards will flip over two heavy wooden tables. Guards gain 50% cover if the tables are flipped before or during the combat, which grants them +4 to their AC while protected. 25% cover grants +2 to AC. 100% cover grants +6 to AC.

Additional Details

Prior to being interrupted, the guards inside were playing dice games on the table and sitting on a few wooden boxes. There is a 30-minute hourglass in the center of the table they use for sending out regular patrols. Though it is dark inside, the room is dimly lit by four wall sconces at the corners, each containing a lit torch.

Antagonists

- Guard Leader: Human; HD 3; AC 4; Atk Spear (1d6), Sword (1d6), Crossbow, light (1d6-1); Move 120'; Items - Spear, Sword, Light crossbow (20 bolts), Chain armor
- Guard: Human; HD 1; AC 6; Atk Spear (1d6), Sword (1d6), Crossbow, light (1d6- 1); Move 120'; Items - Spear, Sword, Light crossbow (20 bolts), Leather armor

Interlude 2: Decision Time

INT. NAROA'S TOWER

Now inside, amid the remains of battle with the gate guards, our HEROES must choose their next actions carefully...

The sounds of chanting in a monotonous tone drift down from above, hinting at unknown terrors...

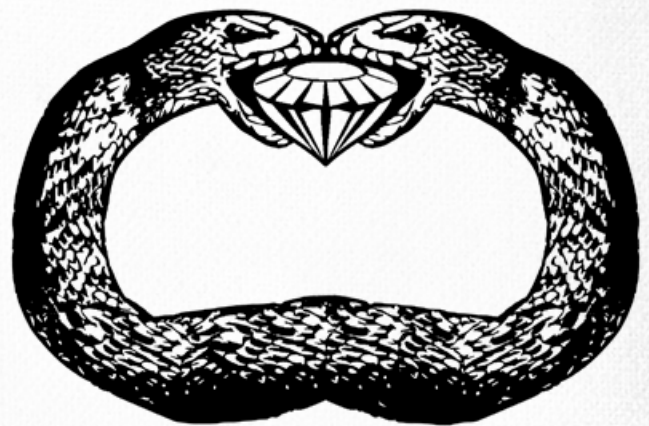
From below, the cries and whimpers of several young voices rise in pitch...

The Situation

Once the heroes are past the front door, the clock is definitely ticking. Each moment brings three sacrificial victims closer to certain doom. And each victim who perishes brings the destruction of the world closer and closer.

The heroes can clearly hear chanting coming down the stairwell from above. And they can hear the cries of children coming up the stairwell from below.

If they have stealth on their side, they have a bit more flexibility in their decision, but they must choose whether to free the prisoners below or stop the chanting above.



Encounter 4: Caged Children

INT. BASE OF STAIRS IN LOWEST LEVEL OF TOWER

The sound of children crying has grown in volume with each step into the even more dimly lit lower level. Their cries are occasionally punctuated by the guttural shout of a guard trying to silence them.

Peering carefully around the corner, our HEROES see a collection of twelve tiny cages, each containing a single small figure crouched in fear.

The Setup

Only a handful of Prison Guards (1d8 in number) are here guarding the children. Low ceilings (only 6' high) add difficulty to swinging large weapons (all ACs are increased by +2 while in close quarters against any weapons longer than short swords).

There are no windows here and it is very dark. Some light dances from a small room off to one side where the guards are waiting. The whole area smells awful.

The guard room has a small oil-burning heater they use to prepare food for the prisoners. There is a good chance (1-4 on d6) that all guards will be huddled around the heater for warmth when the heroes arrive. If not, one guard will wander the room with cages and ensure that the prisoners are behaving.

The storage room contains barrels and bags. Among the supplies are bags of uncooked rice, containers of salted pork, torches, and oil for the heater.

Summary

- **Hook:** PCs attempt to rescue the kidnapped children.
- **Combatants:** 2d4 Prison Guards
 - Prison Guard: Human; HD 1; AC 5; Atk Spear (1d6), Short sword (1d6-1); Move 120'; Items - Spear, Small sword, Leather armor
- **Conclusion:** If any guards in this group escape, they will sound the alarm. Any guards taken prisoner may have additional details about the tower for the PCs to learn, as will any children who are freed.

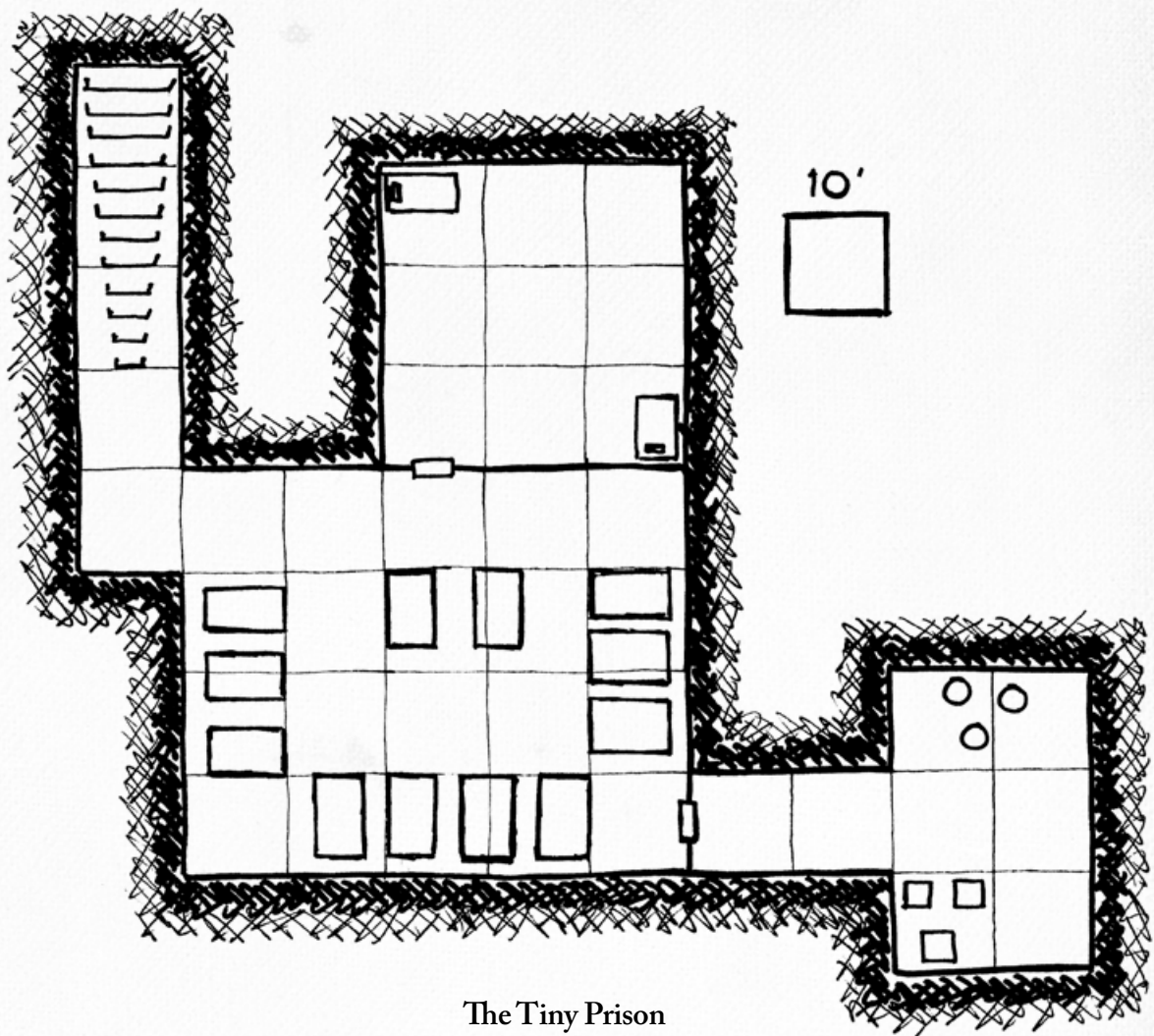
The Children

The children will begin to cry louder as soon as they see the heroes. The PCs may be able to convince them to be quiet while they dispatch their captors. There are 2d6 prisoners here and there is a good chance that one or more of the children taken from Elhann may be found here.

The prisoners are in bad shape. The oldest among them is filthy and bruised. The most recent acquisitions (from Elhann) are cleaner, but definitely terrified of whatever is to come.

Antagonists

- Prison Guard: Human; HD 1; AC 5; Atk Spear (1d6), Short sword (1d6-1); Move 120'; Items - Spear, Small sword, Leather armor



The Tiny Prison

Things the Prisoners Can Tell the Heroes (once safe)

- The guards are just following orders.
- Naroa personally chose the three prisoners taken as sacrifices.
- Naroa talks funny. He hisses.
- They were fed rice and pork. (Salted pork and uncooked rice can be found in the storage room.)
- A visitor came and caused a loud conversation upstairs. Whatever was said, Naroa didn't approve and threw the visitor out.
- Some of the guards have weird eyes.
- Naroa has strange scars and weird skin.
- The guards prefer to huddle around the fire in the other room for warmth, but it's not cold here.
- There are no rats or spiders in the tower at all.
- The kids here the longest have only been here a week or so.

Encounter 5: The Slithering Temple

INT. TEMPLE ROOM in NAROA'S TOWER

The chanting has grown in volume with each step higher in the tower. Within the torchlit room are many figures bowed in prayer, rising and falling with different passages of whatever unholy words they utter.

Tapestries hang throughout the hall, featuring a pair of intertwined snakes around a red jewel.

At the front of the room stands an imposing pedestal holding a huge red gem that glows from within with an unnatural light. And three stone columns rise before it, each with an unconscious child chained to its base.

And finally, a towering man wearing brown robes covered in ancient runes stands ready, sacrificial knife in hand, waiting for the chanting to reach its deadly finale.

The Setup

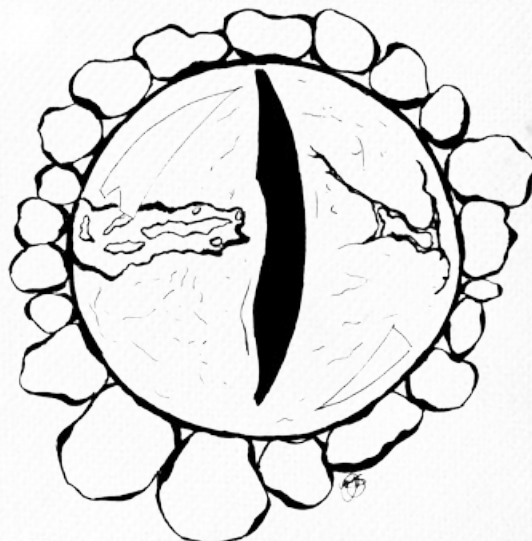
Naroa and the cultists are chanting and focused on the ritual at hand. They may not attack the heroes right away, unless engaged. Naroa stands near the three sacrificial victims tied securely to the three pillars before the raised dais. Behind the pillars is a small pedestal upon which rests a blood red ruby - the Snake's Heart!

The cultists are on their knees, meditating and chanting in three perfect lines of four (12 total). Slithering between them on the floor are dozens of snakes of many varieties.

The cultists are in a trance-like state and will not fight unless disturbed by the heroes. Their chanting will continue throughout the battle, though any cultists disrupted from their task will be free to attack. If any guards have survived to this point, they will also join the battle.

Summary

- **Hook:** PCs attempt to stop Naroa and rescue the victims chained as sacrificial victims.
- **Combatants:** Naroa and 12 Cultists
 - Naroa: Human; HD5; AC3; Atk Dagger of the Serpent (1d6-1), does poison damage - must Save vs. Poison or take 1 point of ongoing damage each round; Move 100'; Cleric of the Serpent 5; Special: Spells (casts as 5th level Cleric - 2/2/1); L1 Snake Charm, Cure/Cause Light Wounds, Protection from Good; L2 Speed Poison, Serpent's Tongue, Bless/Curse, Silence 15' Radius; L3 Summon Serpents, Cure Disease, Speak with Dead; Items: Chain armor, Dagger of the Serpent, goddess amulet/holy symbol (+2 to all saves and AC), holy water vial
 - Cultist : Human; HD 1; AC 7; Atk Dagger (1d6-1); Move 120'; Items Dagger
- **Conclusion:** If the PCs stop the ritual, the Goddess will not emerge as a giant snake. If not, the PCs will not only face Naroa and the Cultists, but the Giant Snake as well.



Who is Naroa?

Naroa was once a poor day laborer in the City State of Fiohan to the west. When he was visited by the Goddess in a dream, he was forever changed. She granted him a purpose and drive he'd never possessed before.

In just a few weeks, he managed to recruit others to his side with a simple message: The rich and powerful priests of Fiohan never had the interests of their workers in mind, but SHE does. The Goddess protects those who support her goals. She keeps their young safe and the old healthy. Her priests speak truths and guide their people to better times. And when she returns to the world, she will ensure that her people are safe, fed, and warm for all eternity.

Naroa himself is tall, muscular, and scarred from years of hard labor. His hands are rough and calloused from stonework, but his eyes are the first thing you notice. When he looks at you, you can see the Goddess looking back. And when you hear him speak, you can hear her conviction in his voice.

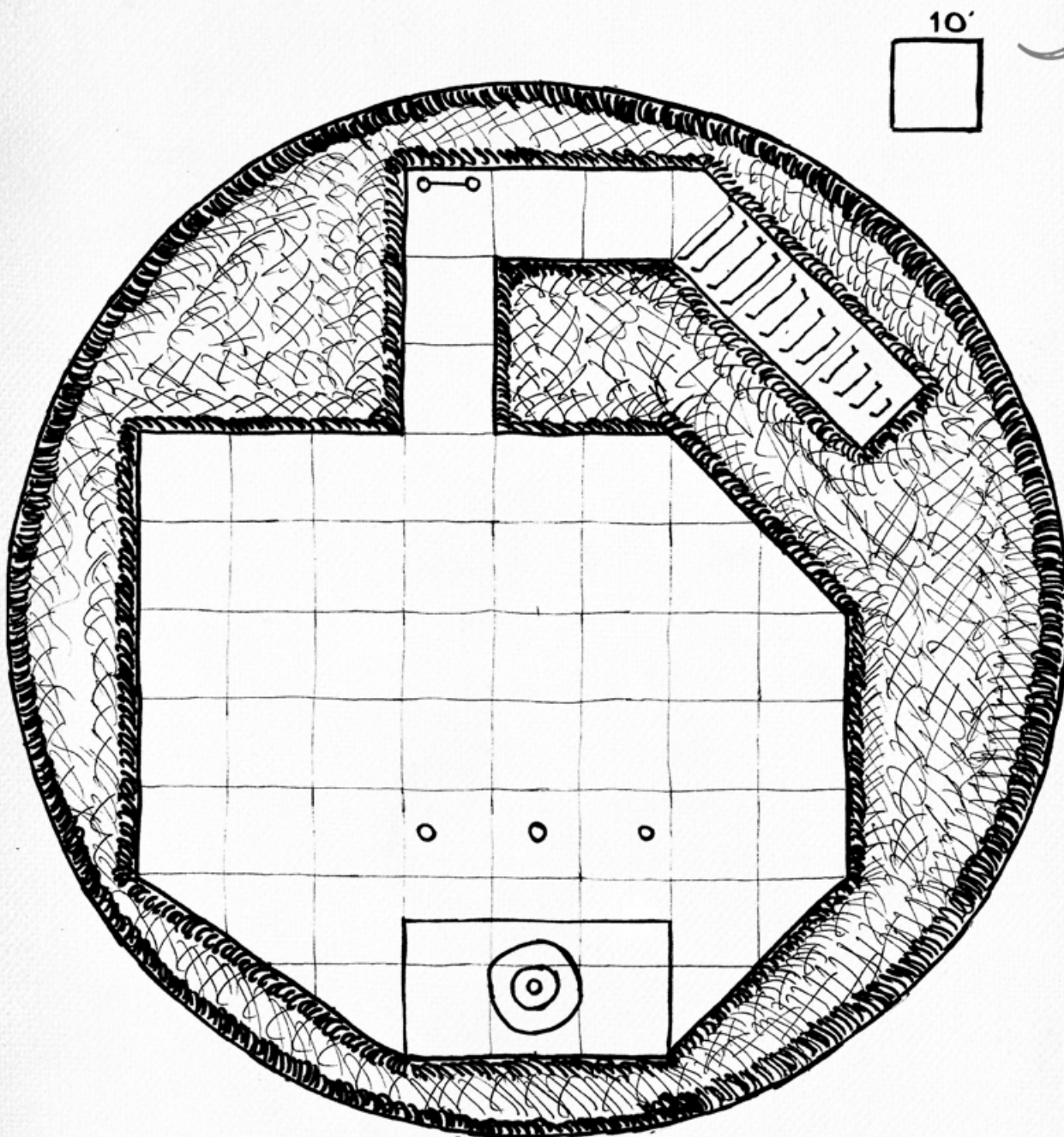
He believes in the Goddess and will do anything to bring her back. There are parts of the ritual of the Snake's Heart that he has glossed over in an attempt to hurry her return. As a result, the Goddess will not be quite as strong in the world to restart her quest for her people. This will anger her. She hoped to return at her full divine strength, and only a part of her celestial essence will make it into the world, slowing her progress considerably.

Even so, Naroa is willing to risk her wrath to bring her back to the world more quickly.

The Ritual

The chanting of the cultists is meant to create a vibration through time and space into the Beyond. When enough energy exists in the room, Naroa will sense it and sacrifice an innocent, pouring the child's blood over the Snake's Heart to channel that energy into opening a doorway. When all three sacrifices are made, the Goddess will come through the gem and form a physical avatar in the mortal realms -- the incarnation of a great serpent.





The Temple Room

The Battle - Phase 1

When the heroes enter the room, there is a good chance (1-3 on d6) that Naroa will be so focused upon the ritual that he will not react to their intrusion. The cultists will continue to chant unless they are disturbed in some way.

Note: If the heroes blindly charge in, they will likely (1-3 on d6) brush past one or more cultists on their way to the dais to confront Naroa.

Be sure to include any details that have changed based on the state of the Combat Counter when describing this scene. Any victims (the children) who have been dispatched by Naroa will be beyond saving. And it is possible that the ruby will already be pulsing with an inner light if sacrifices have already been made.

If any bandits or guards from earlier encounters are still alive, they will come to Naroa's aid as soon as they realize that the heroes have entered the temple.

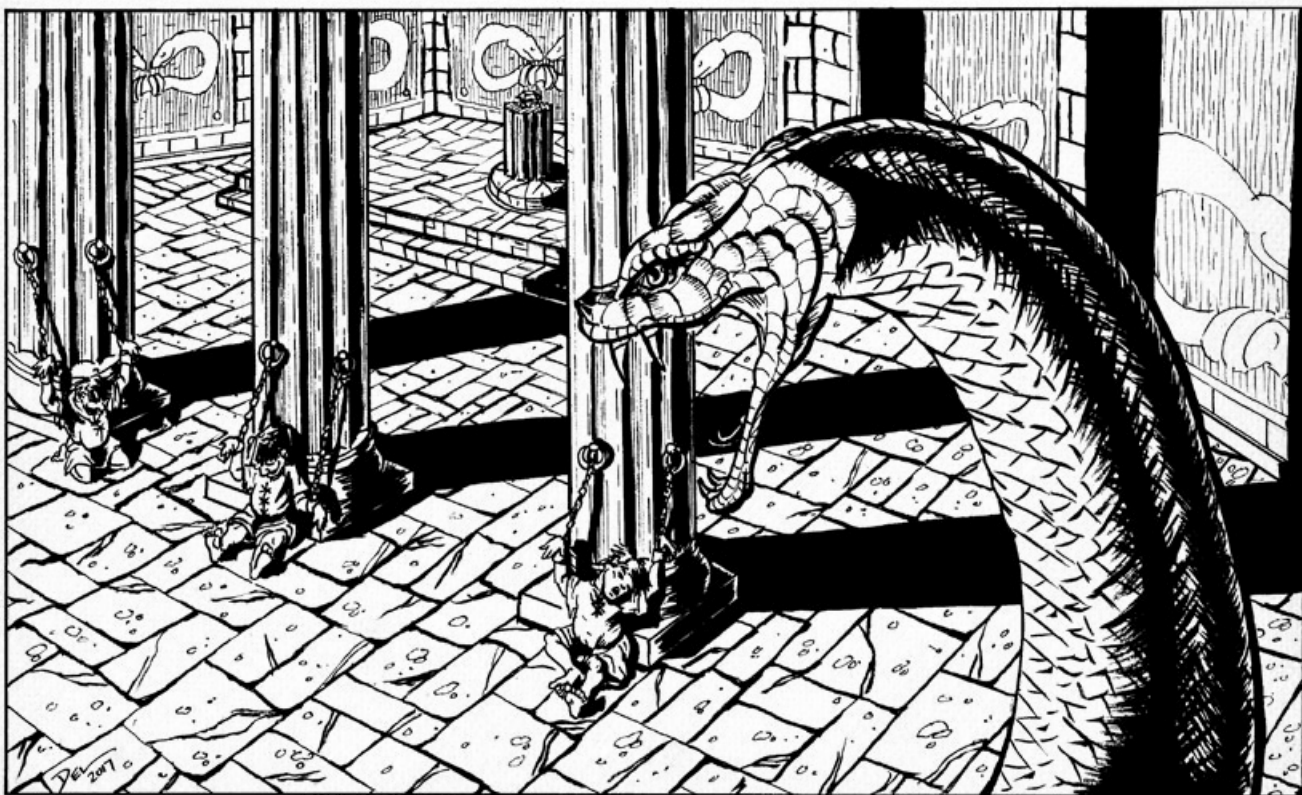
If the heroes disturb any of the snakes on the floor, there is a chance they will get bitten or entangled to

slow them down. (1-2 on d6, 1 = bitten for 1 point of damage, 2 = wrapped and slowed)

If the heroes engage Naroa directly, they may keep him from completing the ritual. If the battle gets away from him, he will shout a command to any remaining cultists to stop chanting and kill the intruders.

Antagonists

- Naroa: Human; HD5; AC3; Atk Dagger of the Serpent (1d6-1), does poison damage - must Save vs. Poison or take 1 point of ongoing damage each round; Move 100'; Cleric of the Serpent 5; Special: Spells (casts as 5th level Cleric - 2/2/1); L1 Snake Charm, Cure/Cause Light Wounds, Protection from Good; L2 Speed Poison, Serpent's Tongue, Bless/Curse, Silence 15' Radius; L3 Summon Serpents, Cure Disease, Speak with Dead; Items: Chain armor, Dagger of the Serpent, goddess amulet/holy symbol (+2 to all saves and AC), holy water vial
- Cultist: Human; HD 1; AC 7; Atk Dagger (1d6-1); Move 120'; Items Dagger



The Battle - Phase 2

INT. TEMPLE ROOM in NAROA'S TOWER

A hush falls over the entire room as the final blood is spilled over the pulsing red gem. The flesh of writhing snakes flies to the gem, beginning to writhe and breathe until it forms the body of a giant snake taking a deep breath of fresh air. The Goddess is FREE!

The Goddess appears as a giant snake towering over everyone else in the room and brushing the ceiling with her head at her full height. If she is attacked, she will go after whatever targets have done the most damage in the last round.

If all the victims in the Combat Counter have been dispatched and the Heroes have not yet arrived, the Goddess will begin with Naroa. She is displeased with her priest and will devour him whole. Once Naroa is swallowed, she will begin dispatching cultists one at a time. If there are no more cultists, she will escape into the rest of the tower and eventually head outside.

The Goddess

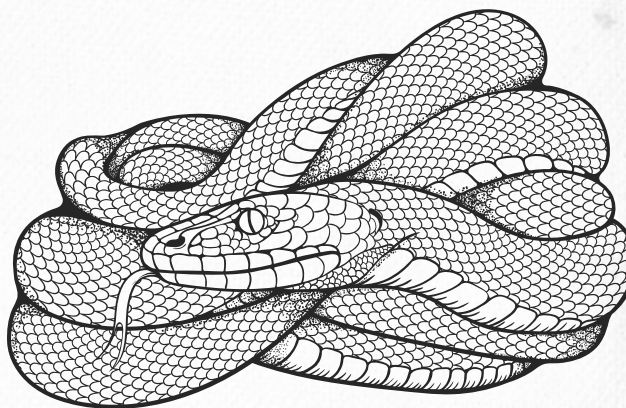
Hundreds of years have passed very slowly in the Beyond, a prison plane where every physical movement is magnified a million times over. Taking a single step can feel like it takes a year. She quickly found herself focusing on a meditative existence. In that state, her mind was free to plot, scheme, and explore the multiverse. In that state, she found ways to visit the mortal realms and guide her people towards her eventual release.

Though proud of her priest Naroa, she is angry that he is forcing her hand. She badly wants to return to the world, but she wants to do so on her terms and in the proper time. Naroa's impatience will cost her time in her ultimate plan. And Naroa will indeed help in her quest, but not in the way he would like.

To make up for the power she left behind in the Beyond, she must consume the world -- and she will start with her impudent priest.

Summary

- **Hook:** PCs attempt to stop Naroa, his Cultists, and the Giant Snake that just emerged.
- **Combatants:** Naroa, 12 Cultists, and Giant Snake
 - Naroa: Human; HD5; AC3; Atk Dagger of the Serpent (1d6-1), does poison damage - must Save vs. Poison or take 1 point of ongoing damage each round; Move 100'; Cleric of the Serpent 5; Special: Spells (casts as 5th level Cleric - 2/2/1); L1 Snake Charm, Cure/Cause Light Wounds, Protection from Good; L2 Speed Poison, Serpent's Tongue, Bless/Curse, Silence 15' Radius; L3 Summon Serpents, Cure Disease, Speak with Dead; Items: Chain armor, Dagger of the Serpent, goddess amulet/holy symbol (+2 to all saves and AC), holy water vial
 - Cultist : Human; HD 1; AC 7; Atk Dagger (1d6-1); Move 120'; Items Dagger
 - Giant Snake (Divine): HD 5; AC 5; Atk Bite or Constrict (1d6); Move 120'; Special: Constrict attack* (* see later description)
- **Conclusion:** If the PCs stop Naroa, the Cultists, and the Giant Snake, the world is saved!





Her Appearance

As soon as the last sacrifice is complete, the bodies of any cultists and any live or dead snakes in the room will suddenly fly towards the gem to surround it like a growing wall of flesh.

The pattern of her skin reflects the shades and hues of the snakes she used to form the body she now calls her own.

She is unable to form words at this time and is enraged beyond the point of rational thought. She has an equal chance of attacking Naroa or the Cultists before she engages with the PCs.

Antagonists

- Cultist : Human; HD 1; AC 7; Atk Dagger (1d6-1); Move 120'; Items Dagger
- Giant Snake (Divine): HD 5; AC 5; Atk Bite or Constrict (1d6); Move 120'; Special: Constrict attack

* **Constrict:** In the event that the snake attacks and hits a single foe no larger than a human being (maximum of 7 feet tall), the snake wraps itself around the foe causing 1d6 damage each round until the victim escapes or the snake is killed. Foes with a strength of 16 or higher may attempt to break free doing a Strength check. While constricting the foe, the snake may also bite the victim, causing an additional 1d6 points of damage.

The Aftermath

SUCCESS!

If the heroes defeat Naroa and the Goddess, peace will fall across the lands of the Lost Age for a time. They may gut the beast and retrieve their ruby prize at their leisure.

If the heroes return to the village of Elhann with children in tow, the villagers will cheer their return and the return of their children, throwing an epic feast with the best of food and wine they can muster. The heroes will gain fame for their bravery and be sought for other impossible deeds.

FAILURE!

If the Goddess defeats the heroes and is allowed to escape into the world, she will usher in an age of darkness and destruction. She will roam the lands seeking bodies to fill her belly and moult every 8 days to become larger and larger until she can consume the world and continue her quest to swallow the sun.

Adventure Event Checklist

- ☐ Bandits attack the village of Elhann
- ☐ Bandits flee with child prisoners in tow
(____ prisoners ____ bandits)
- ☐ Heroes meet the Crazy Cultist
- ☐ Heroes find Naroa's Tower
- ☐ Heroes defeat roving patrol (optional)
- ☐ Heroes arrive at Tower door
- ☐ Heroes defeat guards at entrance
- ☐ Warning reaches Naroa and the Cultists
(☐ Start Combat Counter)
- ☐ Heroes fight Prison Guards
(____ prisoners freed) (optional)
- ☐ Heroes fight Naroa and Cultists
- ☐ Naroa finishes ritual
- ☐ Goddess appears
- ☐ Heroes defeat Goddess

Appendix 1: The Serpent Queen

Alignment: Chaotic Evil

Domains: Life, Nature

When the plagues struck mankind, Sinnix, minor goddess of Serpents, offered a solution to her worshippers.

"Let my venom heal you and make you whole.

Let my brood protect you from the filth.

*Keep them warm and together we will find a way
to rise above the plague and rot spread by the rat."*

Her priests allowed themselves to be bitten by the Sinnix Serpent, a poisonous green snake with red eyes and as a result became immune to the plague being carried across her domain by the servants of Yxnus, the Rat God. Those priests gained insight into making a medicine to help the sick and dying. Sinnix's flock was made whole again and word quickly spread of the miracle she gave her people. Many joined her flock and eventually the plague died out. For a time there were no rats or mice found anywhere in her domain.

As her legend grew, so did her stature. The Goddess grew and grew until she was an enormous green serpent at the Coiled Temple. Her priests went forth and spread the word and her domain continued to expand. She became simply "the Goddess" and the Sinnix Serpent became simply her most prevalent avatar in the world of men. Wherever the serpent was found, she was too.

*"The Goddess wraps her coils around you and
gives you the kiss of life.*

*She will protect you from disease. She will
protect you from your enemies.*

*She will protect your brood if you protect hers. She
reveres all her children.*

*Allow her in your home and your hearth will be
forever safe.*

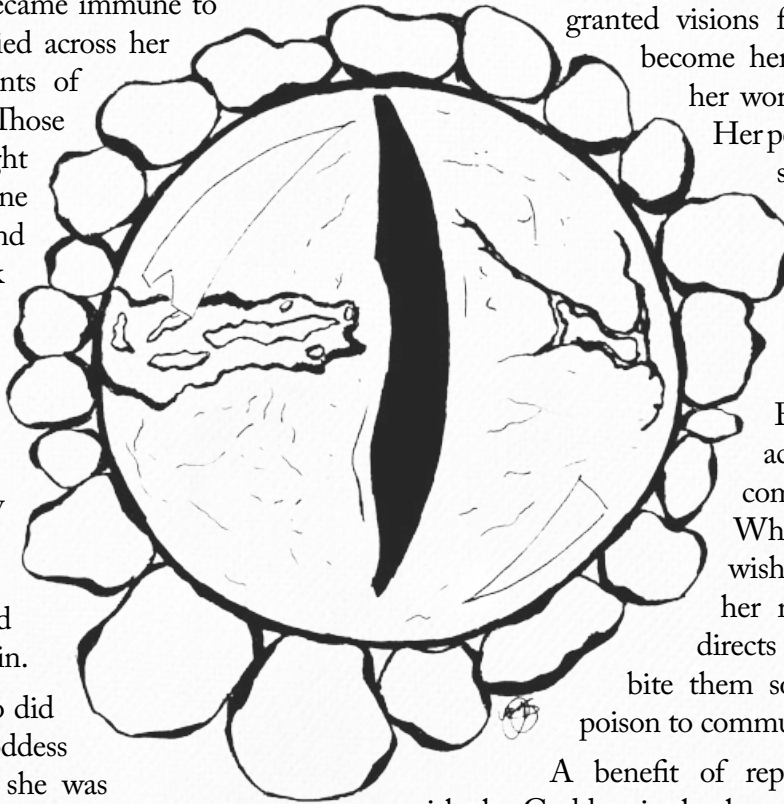
Her priests speak her words and grant you wisdom."

All of her flock are "snake kissed" and her venom flows through their veins. They are protected from sickness and natural poisons. Some are granted visions from her kiss and become her priests, spreading her word across the lands.

Her people use snakeskin, snake bones, snake organs, and many other parts of the animal in ceremonies and rituals.

Each priest is usually accompanied by a companion serpent. When the Goddess wishes to speak with her representatives, she directs those serpents to bite them so she can use the poison to commune directly.

A benefit of repeated communing with the Goddess is slowly toughening skin that becomes more like snakeskin (+1 AC) and eyes that slowly change to mimic her own with the ability to see heat (Infravision, 60'). A downside to the tougher skin is that the priest must find bigger, stronger serpents to successfully puncture it. Priests must repeatedly go on quests to find bigger and bigger snake companions, much like a snake changes its skin as it gets bigger and bigger.



Appendix 2: The Cult of the Serpent Queen

Though much of the Cult of the Serpent Queen disappeared after their Goddess was banished from the world, not all forgot her. And once she discovered the ability to visit her people in their dreams, even from the Beyond, she worked tirelessly to recruit more to her cause and find a way to release her from her prison.

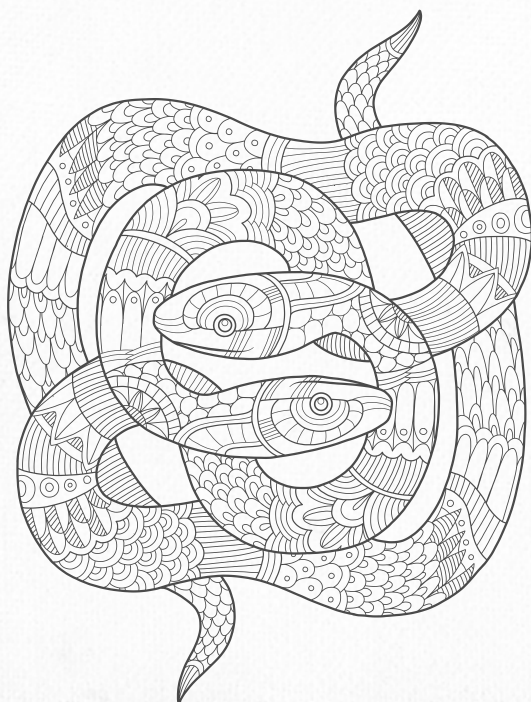
Cult members fall into one of many roles:

- **Believers:** These are the lowest level of cult members and do the majority of the grunt work as guards, builders, and general labor.
- **Followers:** These are the more devout members who take part in larger rituals and are invited to commune with the Goddess infrequently.
- **Priests:** These are the Goddess' mouthpieces among her people, helping guide, inspire, and lead her children to greatness in her absence.
- **Handlers:** These are the wise among the priests, with special knowledge of how to milk snakes for venom and use it for salves and potions to cure the faithful.

Though each member is "snake kissed" with a visible set of fang marks on their neck or wrist, all members are encouraged to express their love and devotion for the Serpent Queen through art, jewelry, clothing, and so on.

Distinguishing Features Among Cult Members (d10)

d10 Roll Result	Random Encounter
1	Ear pierced with snake skull earring dandling.
2	Nose pierced with snake bone.
3	Eyebrow pierced with snake fangs.
4	Necklace prominently features a string of snake skulls.
5	Necklace strings together snake vertebrae in a unique pattern.
6	Bracelet is made of a colorful snakeskin.
7	Prominent tattoo of the twin snakes and red gem is found on the back of the neck.
8	Snakeskin-like pattern is tattooed around the bicep.
9	A copper band shaped like a snake is coiled around the wrist.
10	A belt is worn from the skin of multiple snakes.



Level of Fanaticism Found Here

The Snake Cult of Naroa is extremely devoted to their cause.

Venom from the Sinnix viper has a strange effect on non-priests in the group. Where priests use the venom's effects to commune with the Goddess, the non-priests simply become more pliable to their serpentine masters. Some have only been bitten once, while others may have been bitten many times.

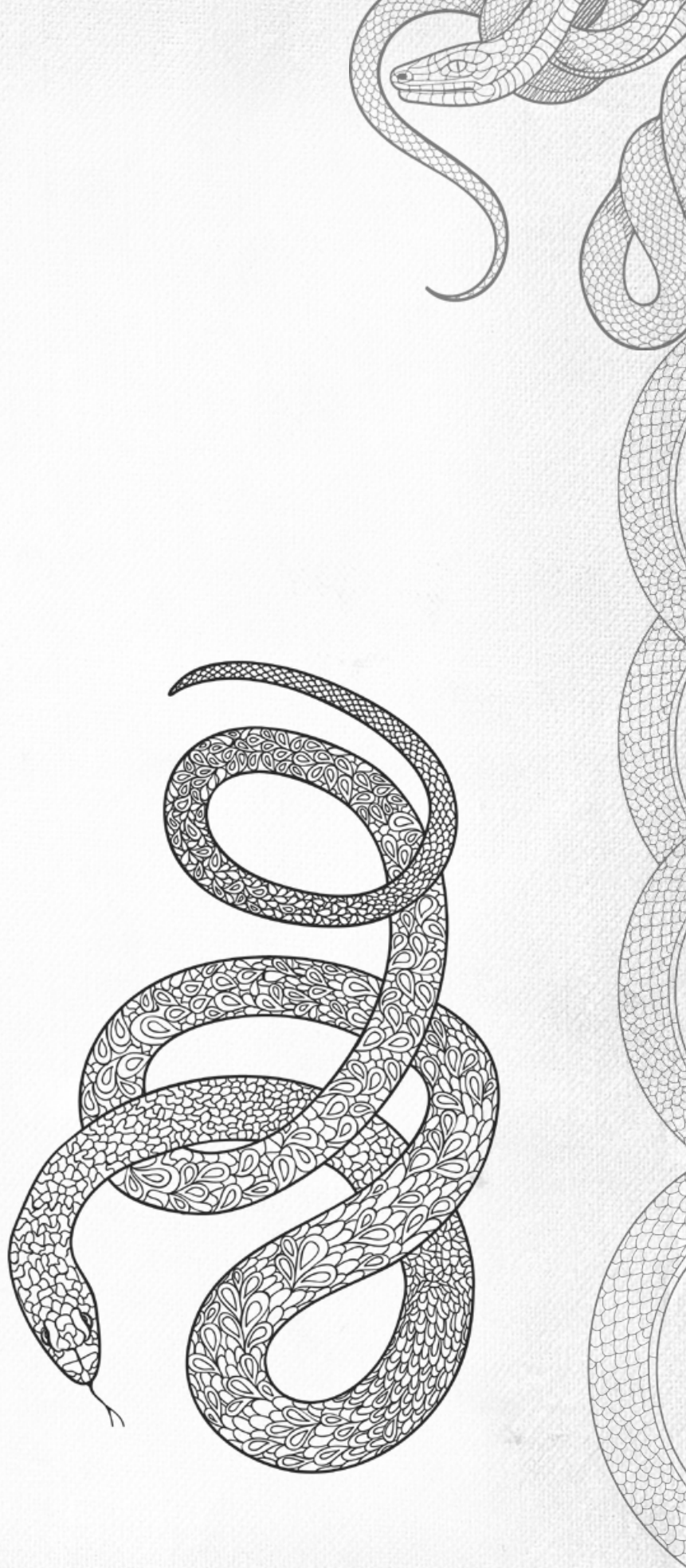
The cultists chanting in the temple will remain focused on their task of chanting their Queen into the world until Naroa needs them to fight. Should Naroa perish or be knocked unconscious, his cultists might awaken in a confused state, unable to remember where they are or how they got there.

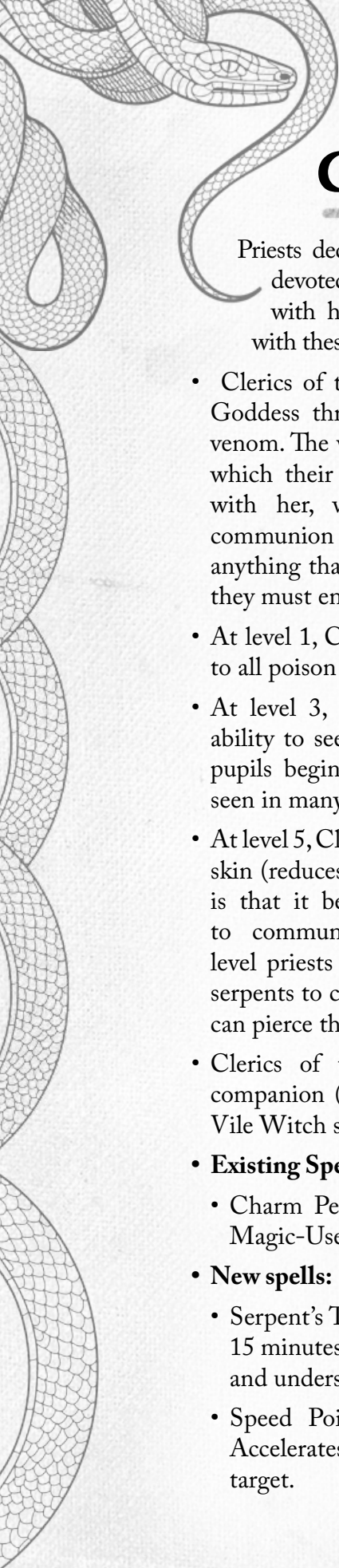
The bandits themselves are still mostly free-thinking individuals. They will fight for their lives, their master, and their Queen. They are tough opponents, but still men and women in the end.

Naroa however has been irrevocably altered by the Queen's magic. He has the slit pupils of a snake (granting 60' Infravision) and hardened skin (+1 to AC) as rewards for his devotion. He will do everything he can to finish the ritual.

Additional Cult Details

- Snake bones, skulls, fangs, skin, venoms, and husks will be found in many rituals
- Designs based on coils, rattles, fangs, and scaling patterns are found in all clothing and jewelry worn by cult members
- Many members will have piercings and use those piercings to show even more jewelry with snake designs -- ears, nose, lips, elsewhere
- Arm bands from coiled snakes done in metal are common
- The coiled snake design will also be found around the handles of knives, daggers, swords, axes, spears, and tools
- In some cults, different snakeskin patterns signify rank among the more militant members.





Appendix 3: Cleric of the Serpent

Priests dedicated to the Serpent Queen are devoted and changed by their direct link with her divinity. Treat them as Clerics with these abilities:

- Clerics of the Serpent commune with their Goddess through the use of Sinnix serpent venom. The venom puts them into a trance in which their mind can directly communicate with her, wherever she may be. During communion a priest is unable to react to anything that happens in the mortal realm, so they must ensure that they are safe to return.
- At level 1, Clerics of the Serpent are immune to all poison and disease.
- At level 3, Clerics of the Serpent gain the ability to see heat (Infravision, 60') and their pupils begin to change into the vertical slit seen in many snakes.
- At level 5, Clerics of the Serpent gain a tougher skin (reduces their AC by one). The downside is that it becomes more and more difficult to commune with the Goddess. Higher level priests must seek stronger and stronger serpents to continue their communion so they can pierce the skin.
- Clerics of the Serpent can gain a snake companion (use the Familiar Rules from the Vile Witch supplement for details).
- **Existing Spells:**
 - Charm Person (level 1) - Same as level 1 Magic-User spell "Charm Person."
- **New spells:**
 - Serpent's Tongue (level 2) - Range: Self. For 15 minutes, the Priest has the ability to speak and understand any language.
 - Speed Poison (level 2) - Range: Touch. Accelerates the effects of any poison in the target.

- Summon Serpents (level 3) - Range: 90'. Summons 2d6 snakes from the surrounding area to fight on their behalf. Enemies will get bitten or entangled to slow them down. (1-2 on d6, 1 = bitten for 1 point of damage, 2 = wrapped and slowed to ½ speed)
- At level 7, Clerics of the Serpent gain the ability to attack their enemies at a great distance as with a magical snakebite. Range: 90'. The priest has so much poison in his system they have the ability to inject poison directly into the veins of a distant enemy and causing an additional 1d6 poison damage for 3 rounds. They can only do this twice a day.
- At their highest levels, a Cleric of the Serpent becomes a Naga - a Saint of the Cult of the Serpent and even closer to the Goddess herself.

Poison Effects

Poison in *Mazes & Perils* is left ambiguous to that GMs can enforce their own ideas for how it should affect characters in the game. Some may choose to have poison be more deadly than others. To provide some guidance, here is a definition of how it might work for the serpents in Encounter 5.

- **Animal Venom:** Many creatures use venom injected into a wound to subdue and even help digest their victims. This same venom can be carefully extracted from some of these creatures and used to temporarily cause additional damage when used to coat piercing weapons such as daggers, swords, or even arrowheads. Any target subjected to venom must make a Save vs. Poison or take 1d6 damage (standard size), 1d8 (large), or 1d12 (giant). This applies equally to snakes, spiders, scorpions, and other venomous creatures. If a successful save is made, only half damage is taken.

Appendix 4: Magic Items

Staff of the Serpent Queen

Obvious benefit: better to-hit and damage bonuses (+1 for each) plus the ability to coil around an enemy on command.

When the Queen of Serpents (also known as “the Goddess”) ruled the world of man, she had an army of priests to keep her subjects under her control. A few of those high priests were given items imbued with a few of her own abilities to aid in that task.

The Staff of the Serpent Queen offers three key benefits.

- If necessary, a wielder could strike down her enemies with speed and strength to remind them of her own mighty power. This ability was to be used against her enemies, not her faithful, and if misused would turn upon its wielder. The Goddess knows when her people have strayed from her path and will take care of them swiftly. (+1 to Hit and Damage quickly becomes -1 to Hit and Damage and the staff will bind its owner)

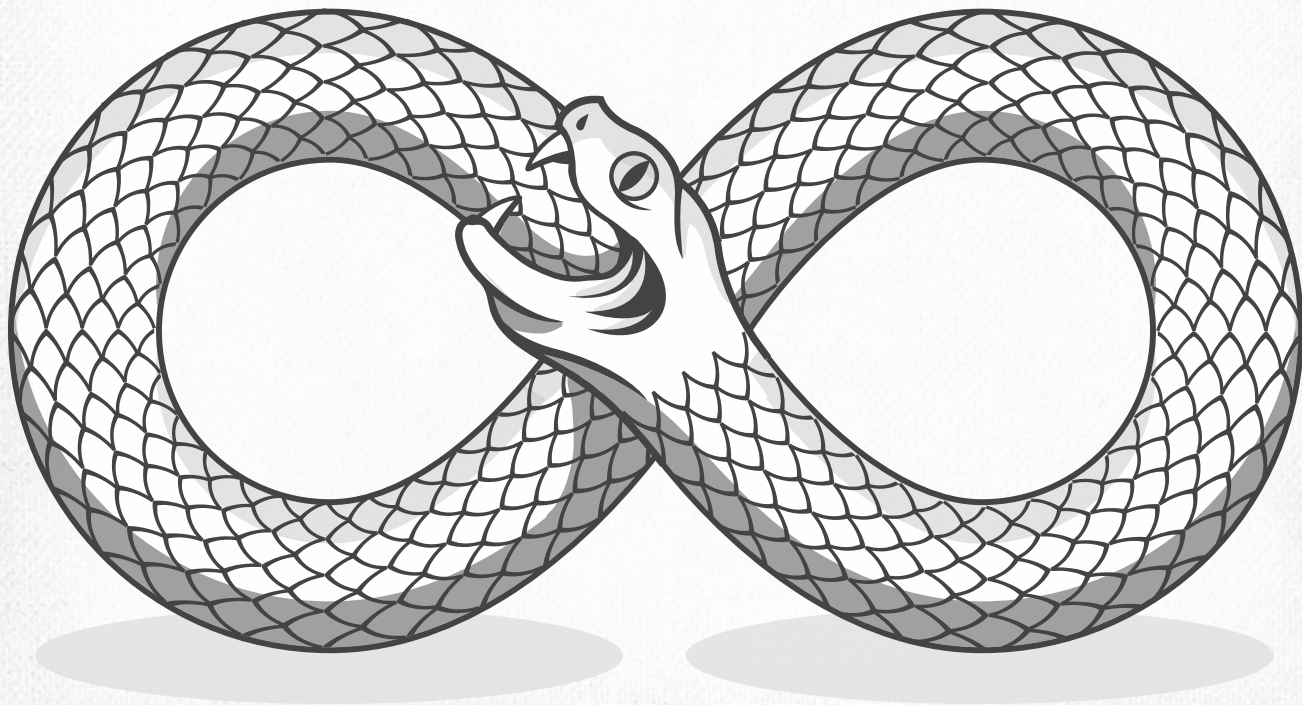
- On command, the staff will attack a target within reach and coil around it like a snake. This renders the target helpless and prevents a counterattack for 1d4 turns. At the end of that duration, it then crawls back to the priest and into his hands, turning back into a staff.
- Lastly, the staff will “bite” the priest when the Goddess desires an audience. The bite injects a venom that enables the priest to hear her words, even from her banishment in the Beyond.

Only a handful of these staves remain intact from the time before the Goddess’ banishment. Most were destroyed in the madness of that time.

Dagger of the Serpent

The Dagger of the Serpent is a much more minor artifact, but still blessed by the Goddess herself. Each dagger has a poison that “recharges” every three rounds and can be used to cause ongoing damage to the Goddess’ enemies.

The poison causes 1d4 ongoing damage to any victim who does not Save vs. Poison.



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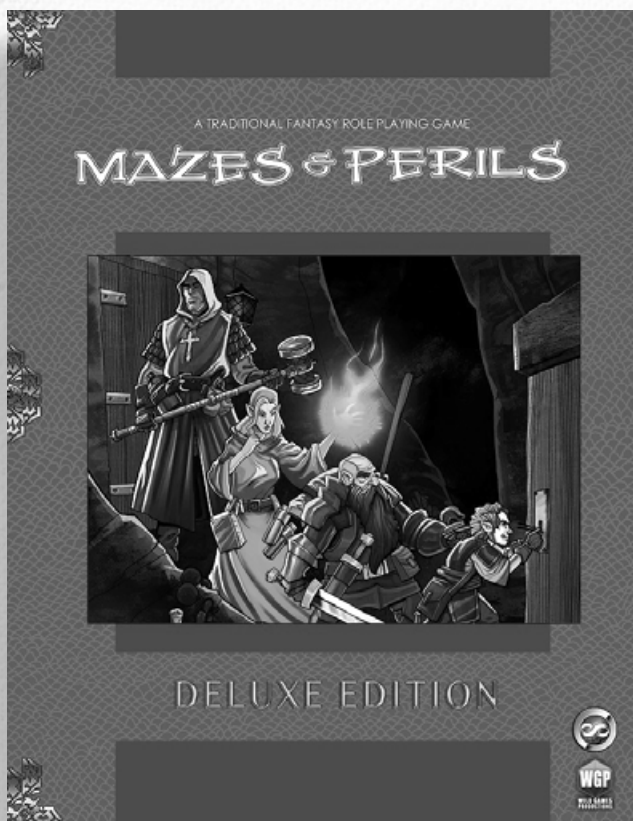
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