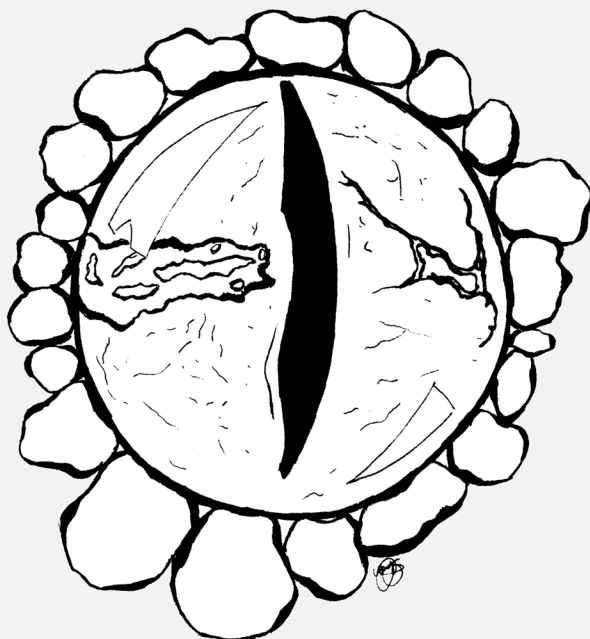


SERPENTS BELOW

ALOST AGE ADVENTURE

for

Use With Swords & Wizardry White Box



VINCENT FLORIO IN ASSOCIATION WITH WILD GAMES PRODUCTIONS
AND BRIAN "FITZ" FITZPATRICK WITH MOEBIUS ADVENTURES
PRESENT

**A CINEMA8
PRODUCTION**

**SERPENTS BELOW
A LOST AGE ADVENTURE**

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Last update: 31-MAR-2015
This product is compatible with the rules of
Swords & Wizardry: White Box.

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FADE IN

EXT. SWAMPY ISLAND COVERED IN CRUMBLED AND COVERED
STONE RUINS - DAY

A long, slow zoom of a small lump of land in the
middle of the swamp.

Two men and a woman are clearing vegetation from
one large stone in a pile of large stones that may
have been part of a beautiful stone building once.
Anchored nearby we see a crude, but strong raft. The
sound of the workers' laughter and work-day banter
grows louder as we zoom in.

Sudden shake and a loud CRACK as three of the stone
blocks crash into the open space below, carrying
one of the men with them. His coworkers rush to the
edge of the ragged hole and find themselves staring
into a morass of packed earth, and rubble, with
their friend in the middle... but he's not alone.

Spears stab from the darkness, piercing their
friend's body violently from all around him. The
survivors scramble off the island, onto the raft,
and paddle furiously away from the site...

QUICK CUT AND CLOSE ZOOM

On one ragged edge of the hole, a scaly humanoid
hand grabs hold...

INTRODUCTION

Welcome back to the lands of the Lost Age!

As with all times, many ages have come before, leaving evidence of prior habitation and buildings behind. And many of those living today have found the old ruins to be perfect sources of building material for new construction... reclaiming the old to support the new.

The villagers of the town of Fenmont have been discovering and reclaiming building material from the nearby marsh that gives the village its name. As the water rises and falls, explorers hunting and fishing in the area often find ruined stone buildings from older settlements. And those ruins are ripe for the plunder of stone...

What they didn't count on was the fact that an entire world exists beneath those same fens they were exploring.

Serpents Below is an adventure designed for 3-6 Swords & Wizardry White Box rules characters between 3rd and 4th level, but it can easily be adjusted for use with any edition of your favorite fantasy RPG.

About Fenmont

Fenmont is a small village near the saltwater fens fed by the the Western Run and the Red Bear River before the freshwater flows into Corrag's Sea. The village itself is built on a small, but sturdy mound and surrounds a well-constructed temple. There are perhaps 50 to 60 settlers here ranging from young to old in a handful of family groups. The village is led by a trio of ELDERS who are based at the temple.

The people here are very kind, adhering to the tenets of Mitra's teachings - simplicity, brotherhood, and service. There are no weapons visible, only tools for wood- and stone-working.

Enter the Heroes

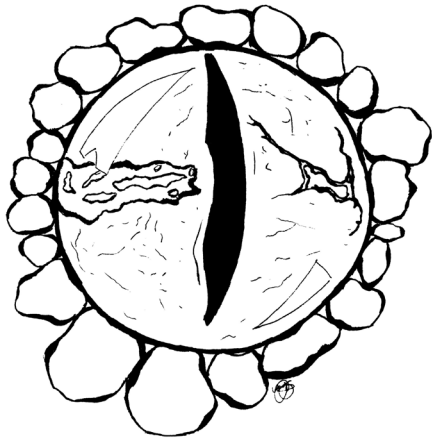
As our HEROES are entering Fenmont, one of the workers from the opening scene is running and yelling on her way into town. She is wild eyed, soaked, and covered in mud and scratches. If stopped, she will protest quickly but ask them to follow to the town elders if they can help.

Background

That world beneath the fens, known as the Darkfen to those who live there, has been home to a tribe of snake-like humanoids adapted for life below ground. They have lived in darkness in their own little world in peace for decades, forgotten by the surfacers. But when the surfacers accidentally open a hole into that world, they rush to defend their people.

Before the seas rose a few feet and caused a wave of devastation, there was another village here where a cell of the Cult of the Snake formed a community under the leadership of Mellan Kree. Kree is a charismatic man who had trained in the east and come back with a magic artifact - the Stone of Set. This roughly spherical stone was carved with the vertical slit like a snake's eye and represented the watchful eye of the Goddess.

Over time, Kree's appearance began to change. His skin changed in color and texture, more like the bright green scales of a tree snake. And his people took this as a sign that he was blessed by the Goddess, so they became even more devout followers of the old ways. Kree began to call them the "Cecrops" after an ancient mythological king described as becoming half serpent during his reign.



At the urging of their oracle, Qijian, the community built an underground temple and fortified it as their Nest, granting their blessed leader a throne and constructing a magnificent altar for the Stone. So when the flood came from the sea, they were ready.

Kree ordered his people into the ground for protection where they were safe from the destructive waves above. The waters rushed over their hidden temple and they continued with their lives, eventually building an entire village underground.

They learned to survive by consuming what their new home granted them: fresh water in an underground stream, burrowing creatures and insects, small fish, and roots. They expanded and built their own caves, reinforcing walls and ceilings with mud, sticks, and bones. They discovered steam vents which they used to warm themselves and help grow mosses, ferns, and fungi to supplement the meager proteins they could find.

In such an enclosed place and in regular contact with the Stone's magical abilities, all members of the cult began to change, becoming more like their revered leader, more like snakes and less like people. As the community grew organically, newer generations have been even more snake-like and less human, growing tails and forked tongues.

For three generations they have been beneath the ground and all but a few have forgotten they were once human. And at the heart of it all, the Stone of Set watches with its unblinking eye.

But the changes for their leader never stopped. As the first of his kind he continues to protect his flock with a vengeance, but now sports the head and torso of a man and the lower half of a large python. In his temple throne room, granting counsel to his people, he is always flanked by his two snake guardians - Yig and Apep. All together the community is nearly 60 strong now, with more on the way.

All this time, they have lived peaceful lives beneath the ground. They have not sought to contact the outside world, instead choosing to listen to their leaders Kree and Qijian. Their oracle peers into a slithering nest of their kindred spirits - the snakes they raise as pets and guardians - to anticipate the will of the Goddess.

It is said that Qijian waits for a sign that it is time to reclaim the world for their patron deity, but until then they have been content in the dark... until now. This invasion by the surfacers may be the sign they have been waiting for.

Preparing for the Adventure

The referee is encouraged to read the full adventure before running it at the table. Most of the encounters feature snakes, crocodiles, and Cecrops (a new race of snake men for the Swords & Wizardry: Whitebox). Be sure to check the Bestiary for all the necessary stats. Though the players may charge in headstrong and ready for battle, there are a few twists that could cause them difficulty. The referee should encourage players to look before they leap or they may make things more difficult.

The Cecrops have lived quiet lives for decades and only become aggressive after the surface world crashes through the ceiling. It is possible that the players can talk their way out of this with a significantly different outcome than is detailed in this book. If not, remember the Cecrops are protecting their home and their way of life. They will defend it to the end.

MEETING OF THE MINDS (The First Encounter)

EXT. VILLAGE OF FENMONT - DAY

The village is abuzz with activity as the female WORKER runs in yelling for the ELDERS. The HEROES are viewed warily, sized up with each step closer to the TEMPLE OF MITRA at the heart of the village.

One man and two women emerge from the TEMPLE and try to settle down the frantic woman.

Setup

The WORKER's name is UHARI and she, along with her fellow workers ZOHİ and BARERO, were reclaiming stone from a new location they'd found in the fens.

UHARI

Out of breath, still wild eyed and panicked, UHARI finds it difficult to tell her tale. ELDER FEMALE #2 covers her with a blanket while patting her and whispering calming words in her ears...

THEY KILLED ZOHİ!

ELDER MALE

Who killed Zohi? And where is Barero?

ELDER FEMALE #1

Calm child... Take a breath and tell us from the start.

UHARI

THEY did... (Taking a breath)

We found some old stones past the grove of Maidenhair Trees to the west... Great stone. Perfect for strengthening the walls near the road... and we almost had the first stone cleared enough to move onto the raft when the ground gave way.

Zohi crashed through into an open space under the mound.

We rushed to help him back up but saw green spears flash out of the darkness... (She breaks into tears.)

ELDER MALE

Turning to the HEROES while the ELDER FEMALES comfort UHARI.

And who might you be? Is it a coincidence you would come to Fenmont on this day of all days?

Continue...

Obviously the HEROES have many options here. They can tell the truth, lie, or roll with the situation and accept whatever comes up.

The ELDERS are calm through all of this, doing their best to assess the situation and find the best course of action.

UHARI, if calmed, will recall a few other details if asked:

- The other WORKER, BAHARI, was with her until they hit solid land and he told her to run to get help in FENMONT.
- The raft was left intact and can hold as many as eight people (it was built to haul large stone blocks to solid land).
- UHARI can lead the HEROES back to the hole where the trouble started.

UHARI and one other WORKER from town will accompany the HEROES back to the hole in the fens. If pressed, the ELDERS mention that the HEROES will be rewarded if they can find their lost WORKER and discover what has happened.

DEATH ON THE ROAD

(Encounter #2)

EXT. ROAD LEAVING FENMONT HEADING TOWARDS THE FENS

The road slithers along the terrain, rising and falling through trees and eventually flirting with the edge of the fens. A group of crows has gathered near a bloody mess up ahead...

Setup

As the HEROES follow UHARI to retrace her path back to where the trouble began, they stumble across the body of BARERO, the other worker who narrowly escaped the initial encounter. He didn't make it far as she did.

If the HEROES are perceptive, they realize that the crows are staying a few feet away from the corpse, though it's obviously ripe for the picking. The body has been torn apart - almost as though he was examined by a scholar after death a piece at a time.

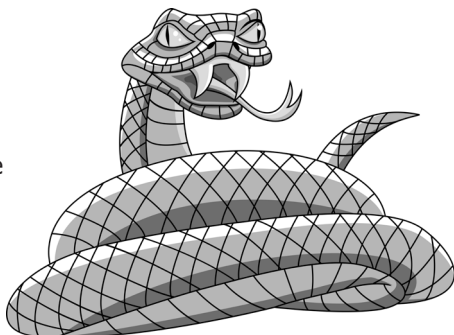
As soon as the body is disturbed, a group of five [5] snakes will attack. They have been consuming some of the discarded entrails from the body and will be angry when discovered.

Antagonists

Snake [5]: HD 1+2; AC 7[12]; Atk 1 bite (1d6); Move 12 (Swim 18); HDE/XP 1/15; Special: None

Aftermath

Strange tracks on the road lead back into the fens combining footprints and the dragging of something behind them like a tail. With the back and forth path of the dragged portion, it's impossible to tell the number of assailants as the footprints blend together into a long dragged line back towards the water. (Note: Though these particular Cecrops have not yet developed tails, they use a branch to disguise their tracks to hide their numbers.)



FLOATING THE FENS (CUT SCENE)

EXT. FENS ON RAFT

The raft UHARI leads the group to slides into the water easily. She and her fellow WORKER are easily able to pole the broad craft through fens... but it's possible their progress has not gone unnoticed.

Setup

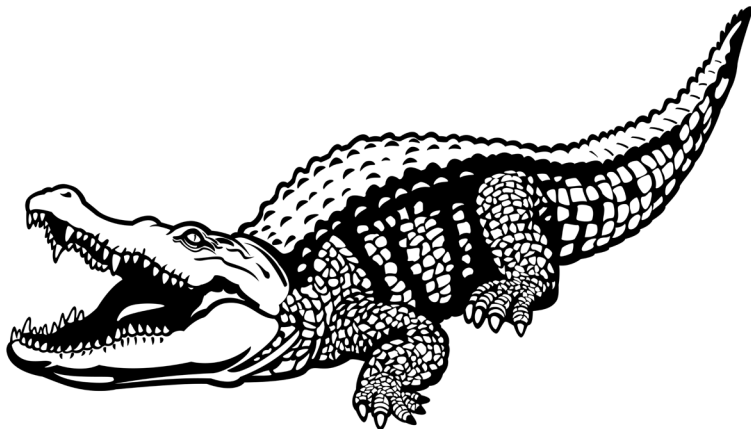
Once the HEROES are on their way into the fens, they will attract the attention of a particularly aggressive crocodile. There is a chance (25%) that he's hungry enough to attempt to jostle the craft to knock one of its passengers into the water for a quick meal.

Antagonists

(The referee can determine whether this particular beast is normal sized (up to 15') or longer (giant).)

Normal Crocodile: HD 3; AC 4 [15]; Atk 1 bite (1d6); Move 9 (Swim 12); Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; Special: None.

Giant Crocodile: HD 6; AC 3 [16]; Atk 1 bite (3d6), 1 tail (1d6); Move 9 (Swim 12); Save 11; AL N; CL/XP 6/400; Special: None.



Aftermath

Should the HEROES pause to deal with the crocodile, they may attract the attention of a group of CECROPS left to watch for any activity. Once the crocodile is engaged, the HEROES may hear a small series of rhythmic thumping echoing through the trees. This is the scouts communicating via vibrations and sound through the fens. UHARI will not have heard that before but dismiss it as other alligators bellowing.

During the combat, a group of three CECROPS will attack from beneath the water and use vines to sweep UHARI off the raft. She was an accomplice to the destruction that rained down into their complex and they want revenge.

Cecrops [3]: HD 2+1; AC 5[14]; Atk 1 weapon (1d6+1); Move 12 (Swim 18); Save 16; AL C; HDE/XP 3/60; Special: None

If they don't capture her at this time, they will take her and the other worker when the HEROES enter the complex through the hole. If they are unsuccessful, they will slip into the water and disappear rather than attack the HEROES. They may choose to attack the party when they arrive at their destination.



ENTER THE DARK

(Encounter #3)

EXT. SWAMPY ISLAND COVERED IN CRUMBLED STONE RUINS

In the heart of the marsh on a small lump of land in the middle of the swamp, the HEROES see a pile of large stones left from what might have once been part of a beautiful stone building. As they disembark from the raft, they approach the edge of the large hole at the top leading down into the dark below...

Setup

The hole leads to a 15 foot drop into the first room of the complex. A steam vent has been covered with a small pile of stones.

This was a nursery of sorts, where CECROPS were tending to their young and beginning to teach them about the Goddess. When ZOH1 crashed into the room with three large stones, a number of children were killed, as were two teachers. Guards rushed in and slaughtered the man without thinking - as retaliation for the deaths of their own.

ZOH1's body is still here - investigated much as BARERO's was and left to rot in the moist air.

A number $[1d8 + 2]$ of poisonous snakes have been let loose in this room.

Note: Once the HEROES go beyond this room with the gaping hole in the ceiling, the rest of the complex will be in complete darkness. The CECROPS will attempt to put out light sources, but are not adversely affected by them.

Antagonists

Poisonous Snake $[1d8 + 2]$: HD $1+2$; AC $7[12]$; Atk 1 bite ($1d6 + \text{poison}$); Move 12 (Swim 18); HDE/XP $1/15$; Special: Lethal poison (+2 save)

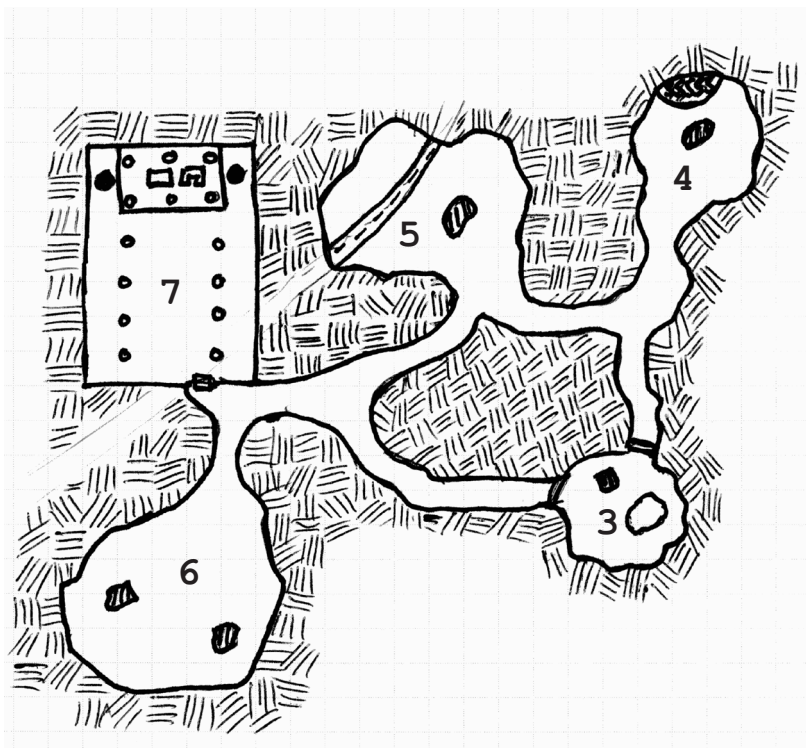
Aftermath

Both doorways out of this room have been blocked with mud and sticks. It will take a few rounds (1d8) to clear either exit.

THE COMPLEX MAP

As described in the Background material at the beginning of the adventure, the Cult of the Snake has had a few decades to construct their underground complex. When they started, they had only a few hastily constructed rooms, but over time they reinforced their passageway and cave walls with mud, sticks, and bones. The nursery where the HEROES begin is the most recent room to be constructed.

(Map is a work in progress. May end up collapsing Encounters #5 and 6 into a single event/area.)



PIT OF SNAKES

(Encounter #4)

INT. ORACLE'S CHAMBERS

Minimal light from torches or other light sources barely enters this room, reflecting off the steam that fills the space. The heat is oppressive and you can hear a hissing from beyond the fog. You can't tell if the hissing is coming from the vent or from the writhing hole beyond it...

QIJIAN

From behind the steam...

Yesssss... we knew you would come. Come! Come! We will share the Goddessssss' plan for you after a bit of hosssspitality...

Go and greet our guesssssts my friends!

Setup

This is the oracle QIJIAN's room, complete with a pit of snakes for scrying. She will know the HEROES are coming and be standing in the pit of snakes, ready to set them upon her attackers.

Each round of combat, QIJIAN will share a bit of information with her attackers:

- "Why do you sssspoil the darknesssss with your sstench?"
- "The Goddesssss knowssss you, yessss..."
- "Remember Naroa? The Goddesssss doesss!"
- "Your kind ssssquashed our children and for that you mussst die!"

QIJIAN will let her minions do the dirty work and hide at the back of the room slinging spells such as Cause Disease, Cause Wounds I or II, Curse, Dark I or Dark II, Hold Person, and Protection from Law I.

Antagonists

Poisonous Snake [1d10]: HD 1+2; AC 7[12]; Atk 1 bite (1d6 + poison); Move 12 (Swim 18); HDE/XP 1/15; Special: Lethal poison (+2 save)

Snake [1d20]: HD 1+2; AC 7[12]; Atk 1 bite (1d6); Move 12 (Swim 18); HDE/XP 1/15; Special: None

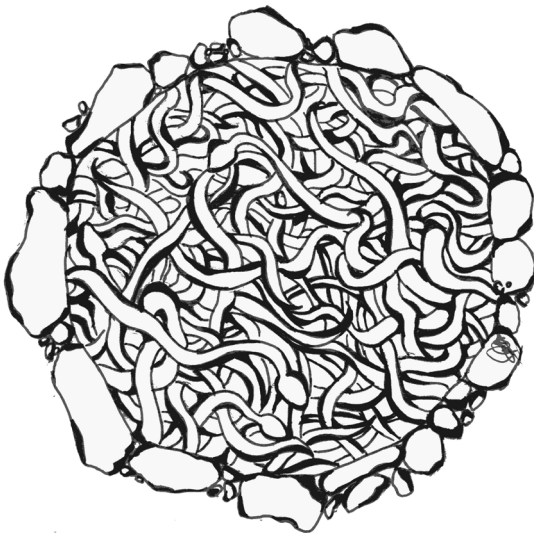
Qijian: HD 2+2; AC 6[13]; Atk 1 weapon (1d6); Move 12 (Swim 18); Save 16; AL C; HDE/XP 3/60; Special: Magic Use, Control Snake Minions, Amulet/Holy Symbol (+1 to all saves and AC)

Aftermath

The HEROES will find a small cache (1d4) of healing potions in the snake pit and a small book of strange raised dots containing her predictions.

With 1d10 (minus Intelligence bonus) days of study, a scholarly character will be able to decipher the markings. The raised dots are a form of braille QIJIAN defined so she could write down her prognostications and share them with KREE.

The last entry reads "A flood of light brings evil to the Nest that must be extinguished..."



COMMON and SLEEPING AREAS (Encounter #5/6)

Introduction

The Common Area and Sleeping Area serve different purposes in the complex but represent similar encounters for the HEROES. Depending on which cycle the Nest is in - DAY or NIGHT - the majority of the cultists will be found in one location or the other.

The HEROES must decide whether the non-combatants (unarmed Cecrops) are considered enemies to be destroyed. As soon as any of the guards are struck, half the non-combatants will join the battle and attack with improvised weapons or their bare hands. The other half of the non-combatants will protect the children and the elderly.

Common Area (Area #5)

INT. COMMONS AREA

The sound of flowing water and a slight hiss of steam from the steam vent add to the cacophony of many humanoid figures at work here. As the HEROES step into the room, they will immediately be attacked by guards watching over their charges.

SETUP

This is the food preparation and common area, with a running freshwater stream running through a portion of the room.

Sleeping Area (Area #6)

INT. SLEEPING AREA - NIGHT

Within this room, piles of Cecrops men, women, and children occupy the floor space. The hissing piles inhale and exhale as one...

SETUP

Here is where the cult sleeps, usually in family-related piles for warmth and protection. Depending on the time of day, the snake-men will either largely be in the Commons Area or here.

Antagonists

Cecrops [8]: HD 2+1; AC 5[14]; Atk 1 weapon (1d6+1); Move 12 (Swim 18); Save 16; AL C; HDE/XP 3/60; Special: None

Cecrops - unarmed [12]: HD 2+1; AC 5[14]; Atk 1 hands (1d6); Move 12 (Swim 18); Save 16; AL C; HDE/XP 2/40; Special: None

Aftermath

Other than the weapons held by the snake-men and some food preparation materials or a few trinkets, there is nothing of consequence here.

It may offer the HEROES a chance to reflect on their decisions, depending on whether they kept their violence to the guards or it spilled over to the rest of the Cecrops population.



TEMPLE/THRONE ROOM

(Encounter #7)

INT. THRONE ROOM

Of all the rooms in the complex, this is definitely the most well constructed - built of fine stone instead of crude wood, mud, and bone. A long line of columns leads to a raised dais upon which a half-man, half-snake waits flanked between two giant snakes. Upon a magnificent altar sits a round stone in the shape of an unblinking eye, watching your entry.

KREE stands proud and ready for the battle, flicking his forked tongue at the HEROES.

KREE

Foul hairy monkeyssss! Come witnesss the glory of the Goddessss!

Setup

This is where KREE has been waiting for the invaders, with his guardians and the Stone of Set. The Throne room is actually the heart of the old temple - with a throne on a raised dais surrounded by Greek columns. The snakes (and Kree) will use the columns to wrap around and strike from above.

QIJIAN will let YIG and APEP do the dirty work and move quickly jabbing with his spear and casting spells such as Cause Disease, Cause Wounds I or II, Curse, Dark I or Dark II, Dispel Law, Hold Person, and Protection from Law I and II.

Antagonists

YIG and APEP - Snake (Giant): AC: 5 [14], HD: 4, Atk: Bite or Constrict (1d6), Move 12, HDE/XP 4/75; Special: Constrict

Kree: HD 3; AC 4[15]; Atk 1 weapon (1d6+1); Move 12 (Swim 18); Save 16; AL C; HDE/XP 4/120; Special: Constrict, Magic Use

Aftermath

SUCCESS!

KREE has an amulet of the Goddess around his neck and a ceremonial dagger in a shoulder-worn sheath. Beyond these items and the Stone of Set there is nothing else of value.

However, the HEROES may notice that the Stone of Set “blinks” and changes color briefly from yellow/green to a fiery red after Kree is dispatched. The Stone will be worth several thousand gold to a collector in the right market.

If the HEROES return to the village of Fenmont, the villagers will cheer their return. If UHARI is among them, the ELDERS will celebrate their deeds and good fortune. If not, they will ask for a full description of the events that led to her demise and what happened to BARERO.

The HEROES will be given a bag of gold (5d10 + 5), gain fame for their bravery and be sought for other impossible deeds...

FAILURE!

KREE will take the HEROES invasion as a sign from the Goddess that it is time to return to the world. The poor villagers in Fenmont will be slain or captured and given the choice to join the Cult. The rise of the Cult of the Snake will go unopposed for some time until new HEROES rise to the challenge.



A small, stylized signature or logo, possibly reading "JHS" or similar, located in the bottom right corner of the page.

Bestiary

Several beasts and beings appear in this adventure. Here's a summary of their stats for your use.

- Cecrops: HD 2+1; AC 5[14]; Atk 1 weapon (1d6+1); Move 12 (Swim 18); Save 16; AL C; HDE/XP 3/60; Special: None
- Crocodile: HD 3; AC 4 [15]; Atk 1 bite (1d6); Move 9 (Swim 12); HD/XP 3/60; Special: None
- Crocodile (Giant): HD 6; AC 3 [16]; Atk 1 bite (3d6), 1 tail (1d6); Move 9 (Swim 12); HDE/XP 6/400; Special: None.
- Snake (Giant): AC: 5 [14], HD: 4, Atk: Bite or Constrict (1d6), Move 12, HDE/XP 4/75; Special: Constrict
- Snake (Poisonous): HD 1+2; AC 7[12]; Atk 1 bite (1d6 + poison); Move 12 (Swim 18); HDE/XP 1/15; Special: Lethal poison (+2 save)
- Snake (Non-poisonous): HD 1+2; AC 7[12]; Atk 1 bite (1d6); Move 12 (Swim 18); HDE/XP 1/15; Special: None

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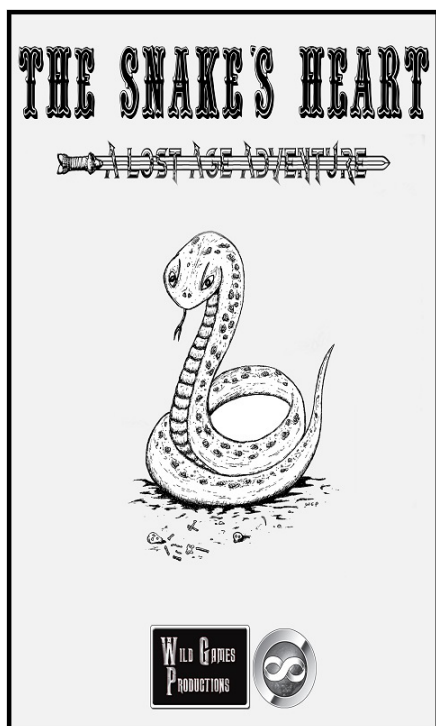
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