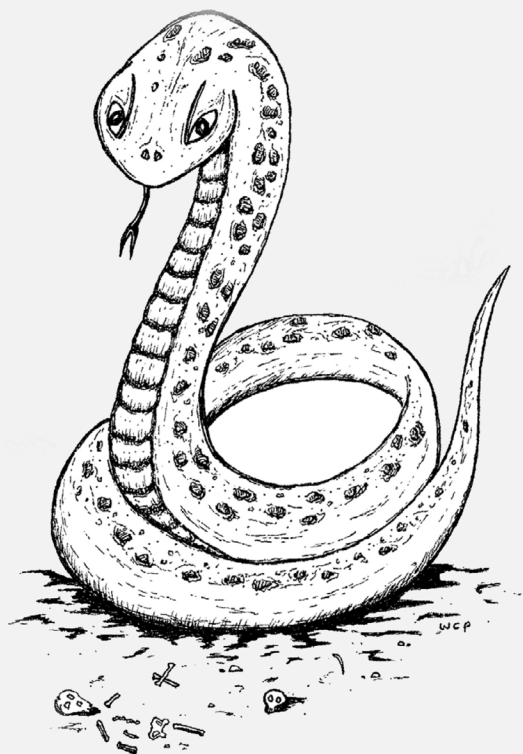


THE SNAKE'S HEART

ALSTAGE ADVENTURE



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

**A CINEMA8
PRODUCTION**

THE SNAKE’S HEART
A LOST AGE ADVENTURE

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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 finds themselves attacked by raiders of the local warlord Naroa...

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the lands of the Lost Age, a time of barbarism and magic, gods and grief.

The Snake's Heart is an adventure designed for 3-6 Swords & Wizardry Whitebox rules characters between 2nd and 3rd level, but it can easily be adjusted for use with any edition of your favorite fantasy RPG.

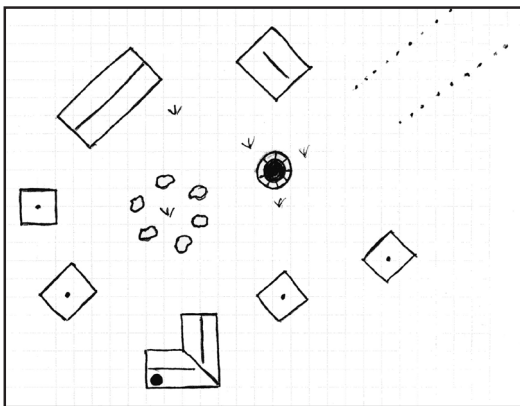
The HEROES are the adventurous souls of this day and find themselves riding near the village of Elhann, home to shepherds, gardeners, horsemen, and a few aged warriors. One day these HEROES too may retire to a pastoral life on the plains, but not today.

Instead they find the village attacked by a group of raiders. At the edge of the village, they see four riders guarding a cage filled with children and the warriors nearby seem intent on adding to their catch.

The village consists of one longhouse, several small huts, a well, and a blacksmith. The village only consists of a dozen or so adults and a handful of children, but though a few of the adults may once have been warriors they are no longer in the shape needed to protect themselves against these aggressors.

Preparing for the Adventure

The referee is encouraged to read the full adventure before running it at the table. Most of the encounters feature traditional bandits and beasts, but there is a new monster detailed on page 16. 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 Village of Elhann

MEETING THE ENEMY (The First Encounter)

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!

Setup

Upon seeing the HEROES, the group of raiders (1 BANDIT LEADER and 4-6 BANDITS) charge and attack as they pose the most obvious threat. The rest of the band (another 4-6 BANDITS) continues searching the village, attacking adults and bundling screaming children into their cage.

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

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 Health, 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 3 rounds the BANDITS have the party engaged, they will grab a child and thrust him or her into the cage.

When all four children have been collected, one of the BANDITS with the cage will issue a whistle and any surviving BANDITS will retreat.

When the BANDITS leave the village, they will head in the direction of NAROA'S TOWER.

Antagonists

BANDIT LEADER: Human; HD 3; AC 5 [14]; Atk Battle axe (1d6+1), Longbow (1d6); Move 12; HDE/XP 3/60; Items - Battle axe, Long bow (20 arrows), Chain armor

BANDIT: Human; HD 1; AC 7 [12]; Atk Long sword (1d6), Long bow (1d6); Move 12; HDE/XP 1/15; Items - Long sword, Long bow (20 arrows), Leather armor

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 (3d8) to divide among themselves. The 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 that would certainly fetch a high price in one of the bigger city markets.

CUT SCENE - 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, I 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...

Setup

The old man will not see the HEROES unless they make themselves known to him, as he is quite blind. Initially, he is not forthcoming with details and gets distracted easily. If plied with food and wine however, he will share the following bits of information with the HEROES:

- "The Goddess" is an ancient snake goddess 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.
- And the Snake's Heart is a beautiful gem. Ruby red and as big as a man's head.

THE APPROACH (Encounter #2)

EXT. GREAT PLAIN - DAY

As our 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.

Setup

Naroa's Tower stands tall in the distance and the HEROES can approach in one of two ways.

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.

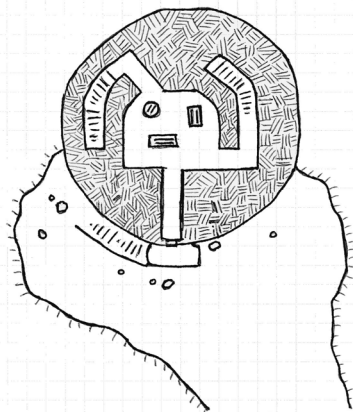
If they take the stealthy approach, they can wait until nightfall and use the cover of darkness.

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.

A successful Hide in Shadows check will allow them to sneak to the base of the tower unseen.

If spotted during the daytime, the HEROES will be allowed to state their business as they approach the front door.

If spotted at night, the HEROES will be attacked. Use the same stats for the BANDITS in the first encounter. There is a 15% chance that one of the BANDITS will be carrying a key to the front door.



The 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 pass ever closer to some impending doom...

Setup

When the HEROES encounter the enemy and the enemy has an opportunity to sound the alarm, a timeline 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 a powerful evil.

Mark off one "X" 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.

Victim 1					Chanting	Victim 2					Chanting	Victim 3					Chanting	Goddess Awakes
Rounds of Combat																		

THE ENTRY (Encounter #3)

EXT. NAROA'S TOWER

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

Setup

If the HEROES approached to this point without raising any alarms, they will not find anyone 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.

As soon as the HEROES enter the front door, the COMBAT COUNTER begins...

Unlocking the Door

It's possible that the HEROES have acquired a key by this point (see THE APPROACH), but will most likely have to pick the lock.

This is a difficult door to get through and will require some intense work to pick. It will require the HEROES at least 3 rounds to unlock it. On an unsuccessful check, there is a 25% chance that the attempt was heard and the GUARDS will be notified.

Disarming 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 the trap to move forward.

If the trap goes off, a pot of boiling oil will splash the ten foot area directly in front of the door. Any character directly in front of the door will take $d6+2$ points of damage, with ongoing 2 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 an ongoing 1 each round thereafter.

Opening the Door

If the HEROES have been stealthy up to this point, they can open the door and get one surprise round prior to the start of combat.

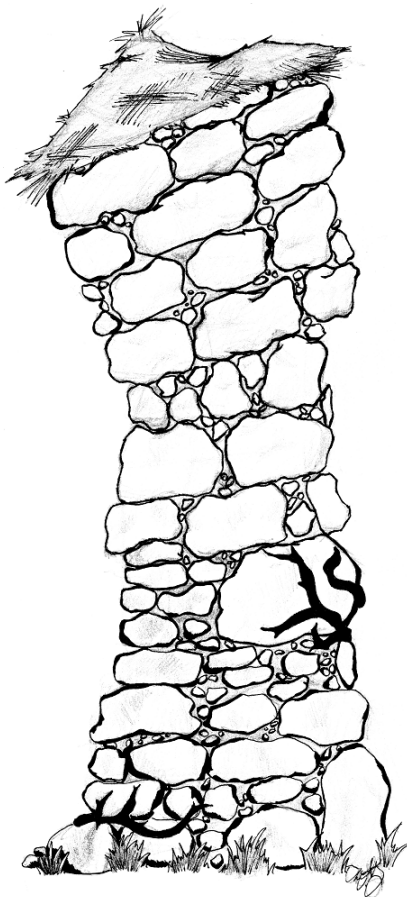
Beyond the door a group of 6 GUARDS are on duty (1 GUARD LEADER and 5 GUARDS).

Once alerted to the HEROES presence, the GUARDS will turn over two heavy wooden tables. The tables will add an additional cover to combatants on either side.

Antagonists

GUARD LEADER: Human; HD 3; AC 4 [16]; Atk Spear (1d6), Long sword (1d6), Crossbow, light (1d6-1); Move 12; HDE/XP 3/60; Items - Spear, Long sword, Light crossbow (20 bolts), Chain armor

GUARD: Human; HD 1; AC 6 [13]; Atk Spear (1d6), Long sword (1d6), Crossbow, light (1d6-1); Move 12; HDE/XP 1/15; Items - Spear, Long sword, Light crossbow (20 bolts), Leather armor



CUT SCENE - DECISION TIME

INT. NAROA'S TOWER

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

The sounds of chanting in an unintelligible language drift down from above...

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



THE TINY PRISON (Encounter #4)

INT. BASE OF STAIRS IN LOWEST LEVEL OF TOWER

The sound of childrens' crying has grown in volume with each step into the dimly lit lower levels, occasionally punctuated by the guttural shout of a guard attempting to silence them.

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

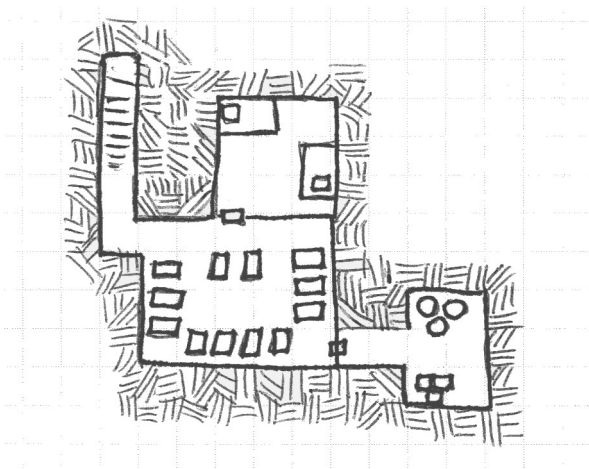
Setup

Only a handful of PRISON GUARDS (1d8 in number) are here guarding the children.

There is very little in the way of cover and low ceilings add difficulty to swinging large weapons (all armor classes are increased by +2 while in close quarters with any weapons longer than short swords).

Antagonists

PRISON GUARD: Human; HD 1; AC 5 [14]; Atk Spear (1d6), Short sword (1d6-1); Move 12; HDE/XP 3/60; Items - Spear, Small sword, Leather armor



The Tiny Prison

THE SLITHERING TEMPLE

(Encounter #5)

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 statue 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.

Setup

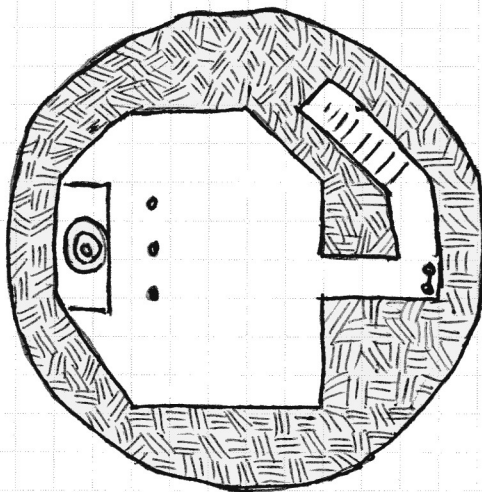
As the HEROES enter the temple, they are immediately beset upon by NAROA and his CULTISTS (12). The three sacrificial victims have been tied securely to three posts before the raised dais.

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...

Antagonists

NAROA: Human; HD 5; AC 3 [17]; Atk Dagger (1d6-1) (Ceremonial dagger attack, when hit and save failed, take extra d4 bleeding damage); Save 11; Move 9; MU/XP 5/75XP; Special: Spells (L1) Charm Person, Detect Magic, Hold Portal, Light, Protection from Chaos, Read Languages, Read Magic, Sleep (L2) Detect Thoughts, Phantasmal Force, Web (L3) Fireball, Lightning Bolt; Equip: Chain armor, ceremonial dagger, Belladonna bunch, Garlic (1 lb), goddess amulet/holy symbol (+2 to all saves and AC), holy water vial, steel mirror, spell book

CULTIST : Human; HD 1; AC 7 [12]; Atk Dagger (1d6-1); Move 12; HDE/XP 2/15; Items Spear, Long sword, Light crossbow (20 bolts), Leather armor



The Temple Level

THE GODDESS AWAKES

(Encounter #6)

INT. TEMPLE ROOM in NAROA'S TOWER

A hush falls over the entire room as a crack opens beneath the goddess statue. It widens to release a huge snake head that rises in a rush to swallow the red gem and escape whatever prison has held it firm for centuries...

Setup

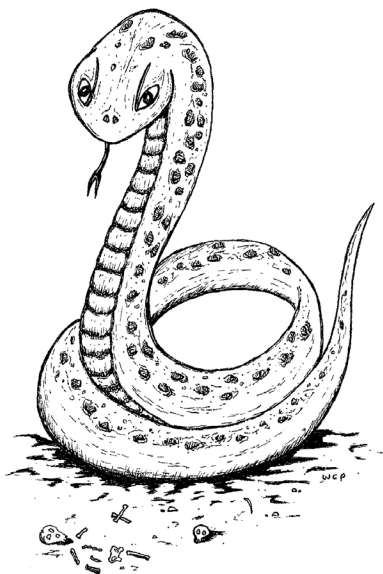
The GODDESS appears as a giant snake towering over everyone else in the room and brushing the ceiling with her head at her full height. She will attack indiscriminately at first, going after anyone who moves. But if she is attacked, she will go after whatever targets have done the most damage in the last round.

If all the VICTIMS in the COMBAT COUNTER have been dispatched and the HEROES have not yet arrived, the GODDESS will begin dispatching cultists one at a time. If there are no more CULTISTS, she will go after NAROA. And when NAROA is finished, she will escape into the rest of the tower.

Antagonists

Same as THE SLITHERING TEMPLE
PLUS

GIANT SNAKE (DIVINE): AC: 5 [14],
HD: 4, Atk: Bite or Constrict (1d6),
Move 12, Special: Constrict: When a snake successfully makes a constrict attack against a single foe no larger than a human, it may automatically inflict that constrict damage on that same foe for each additional round unless target succeeds in a saving throw or the snake is slain. While constricting, the snake may also bite the target. HDE/XP 4/75



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 Elhan 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. 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 finally consume the world to gain her ultimate revenge...

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