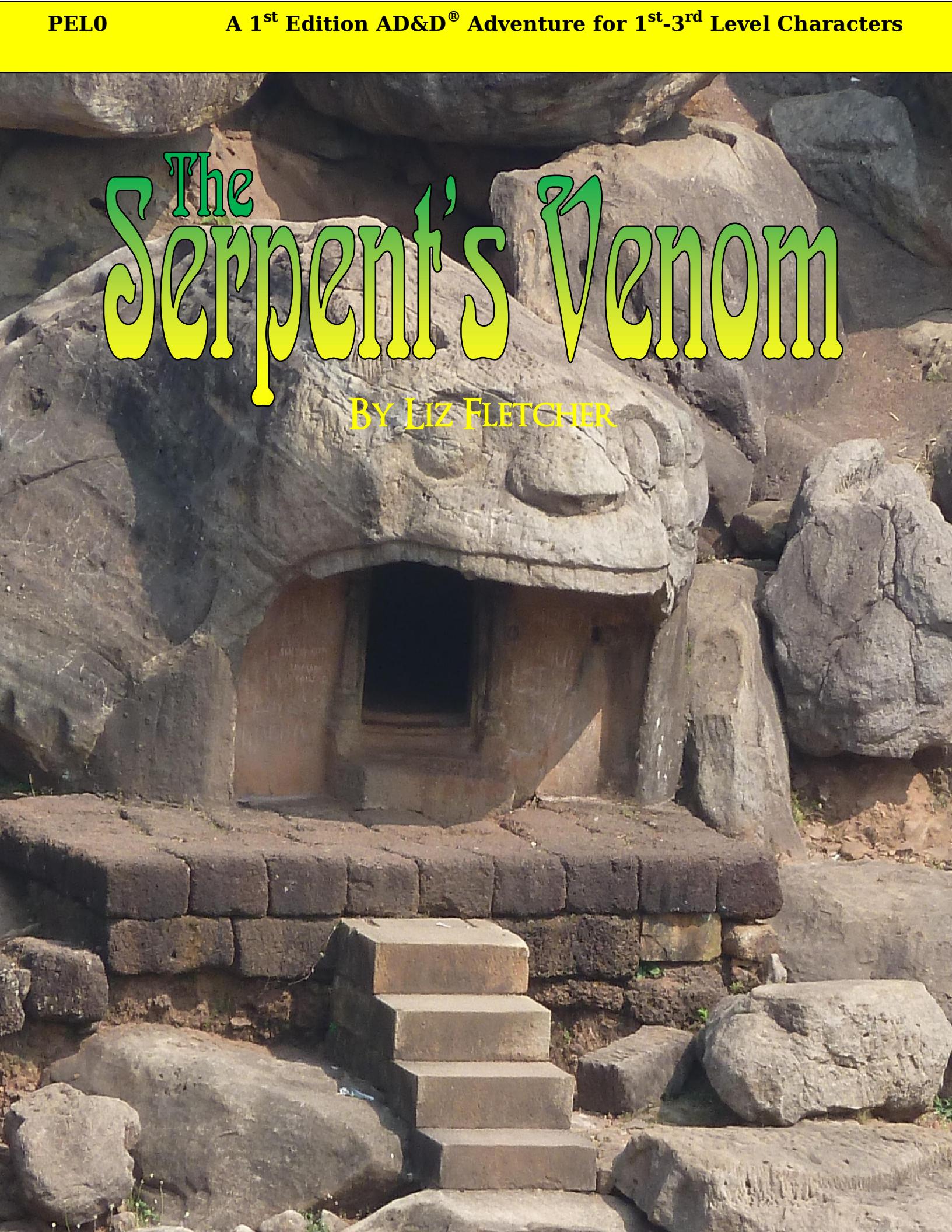


The Serpent's Venom

BY LIZ FLETCHER



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A 1ST EDITION AD&D SCENARIO FOR BEGINNING CHARACTERS OF 1ST-3RD LEVELS

ADAPTED FOR THE PELINORE CAMPAIGN BY KELLRI

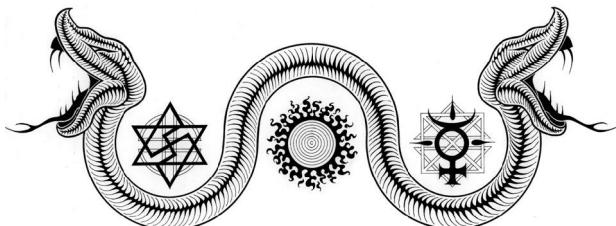
PLAYERS INTRODUCTION

Finding themselves somewhat impoverished, the PCs enter the town of Jarhalter in County Cerwyn one cold evening and are forced to make do with only a meagre supper of bread and cheese at the Black Rose Inn. Naturally, then, they should be quick to accept when a tall, slender raven-haired beauty in robes of green and grey approaches and invites them to dine with her. *'I am Galadria the Gifted,'* she says. *'I know what it is to be down on one's luck so I extend this charitable hand to a group of fellow adventurers.'* The charitable hand in question glitters with a number of heavy gold rings. She sweeps gracefully between the benches where the common patrons of the inn sit drinking, and leads the characters to one of the partitioned tables off to one side of the room. She orders stew and mulled wine for them for them all before explaining that she is a magic-user who has been looking for a party of suitable adventuring companions to help her deal with an unusually awkward situation.

As the food is brought, there is a brief lull in the conversation, and the PCs cannot help but overhearing something of what is being said by the group at the next table. The word 'treasure' is mentioned several

times. Discreetly listening at the thin wooden partition, they hear snatches of discussion - the other group are also adventurers, planning to explore and loot an abandoned temple a day's ride to the north. The temple appears to be located in an underground complex hidden beside a lake surrounded by weeping willows. Galadria whispers that she knows the lake, having recently passed that way - it is called Willow Lake. Suddenly one of the men at the next table rises to leave - Galadria and the PCs immediately pretend to be chatting to one another. The man who has risen says goodbye to his friends and leaves. At the door, he turns and calls back: *'I'll get some horses and see you back here in two days, then!'* before walking into the night.

Galadria leans forward and speaks in hushed tones, glancing from time to time at the next table as if to reassure herself that the eavesdropping has not been detected. *'Luck has delivered us an excellent opportunity, or so it seems, if this group aren't planning to depart for another two days, we can steal a march on them. I hope that none of you consider this dishonourable - they do look rather disreputable types themselves, and honour must go by the board when one's pocket is almost empty of gold.'*



DM'S INTRODUCTION

This has actually been a con - an elaborate charade enacted to dupe the player characters. Galadria is the accomplice of the men at the next table. She and they are worshippers of the evil god/goddess Abex-Sritanna. The abandoned temple to the north was their own, but it was attacked almost a year ago by a group of paladins from the cult of Saith. Galadria and the others were the only ones to escape. They would like to retrieve the idol of Abex-Sritanna and the coffers from the temple, but have been unable to do so because several of the skeleton guards of the temple were not destroyed by the paladins and now patrol parts of the complex following their original orders: to attack anyone not accompanied by a full Priestess of Abex-Sritanna (at least 5th level).

For some time, Galadria and the others lured several adventuring parties to the temple in order to whittle down the number of undead guards without risking themselves. Then events were complicated by a group of goblins led by a doppelganger posing as a hobgoblin moving into the abandoned temple. The doppelganger instructed the goblins to board up the skeletons into one section of complex. Although many goblins died in the attempt, this was achieved, and the skeletons do not have the orders or the intellect to dismantle the barricade.

The remaining worshippers of Abex-Sritanna know about the goblins, but not the nature of their leader. They have evolved new tactics: Galadria will take the PCs into the temple and make a drive straight for the main shrine in order to get the sacred idol. On the way out, Vorgus and the others plan to mount an ambush - whereupon Galadria will reveal her true

colours and (they intend) the PCs will be slain.

Galadria; MU4; LE; hp 9; AC 8;
staff, whip

Human Female

S	8	▪ Attractive with flowing dark hair. Wears robe of green and grey. Has a
I	15	ring of protection +1 in the form of
W	9	a coiled serpent
D	12	▪ Lay-Follower of Abex-Sritanna
C	10	▪ Charming when useful, B otherwise cold, calculating and ambitious
Ch	14	▪ Unknown to the locals. A minor figure in the Abex-Sritanna hierarchy

Spells:

1: *Shield, Burning Hands, Magic Missile*
2: *Web, Ray of Enfeeblement*

THE JOURNEY TO THE TEMPLE

The ride north takes the party through rolling, green countryside, through vales and gentle hills, past small hamlets and farms where peasants till the fields. At one point, they espy a sombre black monastery across the valley. Even at this distance, it is easy to see that it is deserted, overgrown and sinking into the mud. This monastery was the home of the paladins of Saith who had raided the temple of Abex-Sritanna. So many were slain in the endeavour that the wounded who returned were forced to abandon their monastery and move south. The PCs may decide to explore it later. If so, see the **Sinking Monastery** mini-adventure.

Finally the party will reach sight of their objective. As the party rides toward the lake, however, they are suddenly attacked by a party of 5 goblins who were out foraging.

Goblins (5): AC 6, Mv 60'; HD 1-1; hp 4, 6, 2, 8, 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (short sword) or 1-4 (sling); Sz S; Int Low~Avg; AL LE; XP 10+1/hp (MM)

These goblins will not attempt to reach the temple, (if they try to escape, it will be into the wilderness) because they

know the goblin look-out there will have seen the party approaching and will have given the alarm, so the way will be barricaded (see below). Galadria will not try to use her spells unless absolutely necessary. She does need at least 3 of the PCs to carry the idol out of the temple, however, so she will bear this in mind.

The entrance to the temple is a cave mouth on the lake shore. This is concealed behind the trunk of a weeping willow, but Galadria will soon 'stumble across' the entrance if the characters don't spot it. Once inside the temple, her aim will be to lead them directly to the major shrine and the temple treasury. This will involve Galadria noticing several secret doors, and although she will try to pretend that she is just doing this by luck, her eagerness to complete the mission may make her find the secret doors suspiciously quickly.

THE TEMPLE COMPLEX

1. ENTRANCE PASSAGE: Crudely hewn steps lead up about 6' behind the willow tree. The passage then levels out and carries on for another 5' or so - just more than the range of torchlight.

2. ENTRANCE HALL: Barricades to the left and right block the exit passages from this room. Sturdy ropes lead across from behind the left barricade and are secured to the other. As the characters enter, they can see several goblins peering out from behind the left-hand barricade. Suddenly the ropes go taut and the right-hand barricade is pulled down. There is a noxious tittering from the goblins as four skeletons advance through the collapsed barricade and attack the characters. There are a total of nine skeletons in the temple complex, previously trapped in the passage to rooms 12,13 and 14; they will issue forth to attack the characters at the rate of 1d3 a round until all have been killed. They will also attack

Galadria, even though she is a worshipper of Abex-Sritanna, because she is not accompanied by a priest of the god.

Skeletons (9): AC 7; Mv 120'; HD 1; hp 4, 3, 4, 3, 5, 2, 2, 2, 6; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SD Immune to *sleep/charm/cold/sleep*, $\frac{1}{2}$ dmg from edged wpns; Sz M; Int Non; AL CE; XP 20+1/hp. (MM)

The barricades are made of logs and branches. The left-hand one must be broken down for the characters to reach the goblins. This will take 1d3+3 rounds, with the goblins sniping at the players all the time. Galadria will prefer to take the party this way even if all the skeletons have been destroyed, because she knows about the nightmare guarding the armoury and regards it as the safer of the two routes.

THE GOBLINS AND THEIR LEADER

The goblins occupy the section of the complex covering rooms 3, 4, 5 and 6. Their leader is a doppelganger who has taken the form of a hobgoblin.

Goblins (5): AC 6, Mv 60'; HD 1-1; hp 3, 2, 4, 6, 2, 2, 7, 3, 2, 1; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (short sword) or 1-4 (sling); Sz S; Int Low~Avg; AL LE; XP 10+1/hp (MM)

Doppelganger: AC 5; Mv 90'; HD 4; hp 13; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-12; SA Surprise on 1-4; SD *ESP*, immune to *sleep, charm*, Save as F10; Sz M; Int Very; AL N; XP 382. (MM)

3. STOREROOM: This was originally the temple store room. Some game hangs from hooks on the ceiling for a banquet the goblins were planning. The smaller chamber off the passage is where the food is prepared.

4. REFECTIONY: There are plain wooden benches and a table.

5. DORMITORY: This is where the lower-ranking worshippers slept (Galadria, Vargus and the others). It is now the goblins dormitory, of course. One goblin lies in bed here - he has a fever, and could not join his fellows in defending their lair. Anyone who

touches him has a 5% chance of contracting the disease (which is a mucus membrane infection).

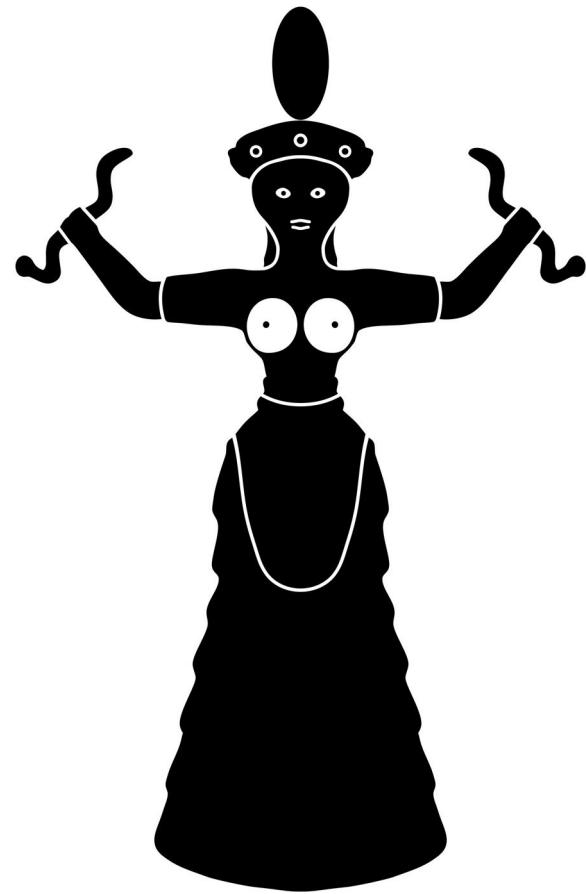
6. OUTER SHRINE: There is a bas-relief of a lizard-headed man/woman on the opposite wall. Originally the room was hung with tapestries and was a place for silent prayer to Abex-Sritanna. It is now the doppelganger's private chamber, and he uses the tapestries for his bedding.

7. ROBING ROOM: Several black robes with a coiled serpent design in white over the abdomen hang on hooks around the room. A wooden cupboard contains six serpentine head-dresses with veils of silver gauze. There are five mouldering corpses in the room, two of which wear rusting armour. (There's a 5% chance that a PC will notice that Galadria is unusually disturbed by the sight of these corpses. The three unarmoured ones were, of course, priests of the temple; the other two were paladins slain in the attacks.

8. MAJOR SHRINE: This is a large chamber of black marble veined with quartz. On the altar stone there is a gold and lapis-lazuli idol in the form of a priestess holding two serpents. (Note: as a worshipper of Abex-Sritanna, Galadria *should* perform a genuflection as she crosses the threshold of this chamber. She won't actually do this because it would be an obvious giveaway, but from that point on she will be -1 on all rolls - and enemies will be +1 on Saves vs. her spells - until she is ritually absolved by a full cleric of Abex-Sritanna.

There are two traps on the idol that even Galadria doesn't know about. Firstly, if touched anywhere except behind the head, it will shoot out its arms holding serpentine needles to strike any character standing directly in front of the altar stone (unless they have taken specific precautions against this); the needles do 1-8 points and are poisoned. Secondly, a 5' x 5' trapdoor will

open directly in front of the altar, dropping anyone standing there down a sloping chute to room **17**. The idol is worth 1,000gp and radiates an aura of Evil.



9. PRIESTESS' DORMITORY: There are five beds with decaying linen. There are two corpses here - it seems that an armoured knight slew one of the sleeping priestess' but was then struck down from behind.

10. HIGH PRIESTESS' ROOM: Two decomposing bodies lie together on the floor. The armoured knight thrust his sword through the High Priestess. But the latter locked his hands around the paladin's throat and choked him even in death. The paladin's sword has not rusted, unlike his armour. A serpent staff hangs on the far wall. The High Priestess was trying to reach her **staff of the serpent (adder)** when the chief paladin caught up with him. The paladin's corpse still holds a **longsword +1**.

When the characters have been in this room for two rounds, a shadowy form will rise from the High Priestess' corpse. It will

attack anyone except a worshipper of Abex/Sritanna. It is the High Priestess's wraith.

Wraith: AC 4; Mv 120'/240'; HD 5+3; hp 21; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA Energy Drain; SD +1 wpn or silver to-hit, Immune to *Sleep*, *Charm*, *Hold*, Cold; Sz M; Int Very; AL LE; XP 701 (MM)

If this wraith is struck with the paladin's sword it will take 2d10 points of damage immediately, because some of the paladin's goodness has remained in his weapon which was the cause of the Priestess' death.

11. LIBRARY: Shelves around the room are stocked with numerous books, all of which deal with the revolting and terrible rituals of the priesthood of Abex/Sritanna. Any good character who reads one of these books through completely must Save vs. Spells or lose a point of Wisdom.

12. BARRACKS: A bare room. This is where the skeletons remained when 'off duty'.

13. TOMB CHAMBER: Two sarcophagi contain the mortal remains of earlier High Priestesss of this temple.

14. CELLS: Manacles hang from the walls. There is a decayed corpse chained here. This is where victims were kept awaiting sacrifice to the deity.

15. ARMOURY: A *nightmare* guards the special weapons of the temple.

Nightmare: AC -4; Mv 150'/360'; HD 6+6; hp 34; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 2-8/4-10/4-10; SD Smoke cloud (-2 to-hit); Sz L; Int High; AL NE; XP 600+8/hp. (MM)

The nightmare will attack anyone except the High Priestess, so Galadria knows better than to enter the room. The nightmare will not leave this room, even to pursue intruders, as its orders were to stay and guard the room at all costs.

The special weapons and armour are: a **+1 mace**, a **+1 warhammer**; a suit of **+1 chainmail**; two **+1 shields**.

16. TREASURY: The temple coffers contain 6,000gp and 2,000sp, guarded by two zombies

Zombies (2): AC 8; Mv 60'; HD 2; hp 7, 8; THAC0 16; #AT 2; Dmg by wpn; SD 1/2 dmg from blunt wpn, immune to *Charm*, *Hold*, *Illusion*, *Sleep*, death magic; Sz M; Int Non-; AL N; XP 34, 36 (MM)

17. A DANK CHAMBER: Contains the temple's special guardian which will attack any who fall down the chute into its lair. It is a *hook horror*:

Hook horror: AC 3; Mv 90'; HD 5; hp 20; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 1-8/1-8; Sz L; Int Low; AL N; XP 190. (FF)

It usually subsists on small creatures such as rats and moles which burrow into its lair. The priests used to feed it regularly. A human should provide quite a feast!



LEAVING THE TEMPLE

As the characters leave the complex, they are ambushed by Vorgus and the other male Sritanna cultists. Galadria will turn on the PCs now, if she hasn't been killed in the temple. Since the sacking of their temple by the paladins of Saith, these remaining cultists have devoted their efforts to recovering the idol and the temple coffers. Losogon, although but an acolyte, is their

spiritual leader now - but he is not a leader of men, so it is Vorgus, as an officer of the temple guard, who gives the orders.

Galadria, by virtue of her intelligence and personal power, wields much influence, but the others do not see her as leader because she is sorceress and not a true priestess of Abex.

ABEX/SRITANNA CULTISTS

Name	Class/Lvl	HP	Notes	AC	Weapon
Vorgus	F2	11	Streak of green hair in beard	4	Longsword
Losogon	C1	5	Carries fig-wood staff in snake form	4	Morning-Star
Anabat	F1	4	Coiled scar over left eye	5	2-handed Sword
Finbal	F1	7	Uses gilded scimitar	7	Scimitar
Rish	As1	4	Sword has serpentine hilt	7	Broadsword

