BLOOD FOR THE SERPENT KING

A Level 2 Adventure

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INTRODUCTION

Remember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics adventures don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you remember, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.
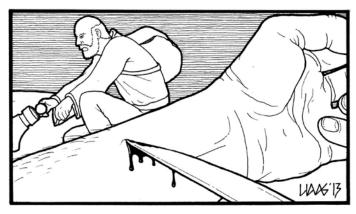
Blood for the Serpent King is designed for 6 to 8 2nd level characters. Danger awaits the adventurers in this thrilling dungeon crawl set in a mysterious jungle crypt. The PCs must win through fearful denizens and traps both magical and mundane, discover a way to reach the Great Ziggurat, defeat the Emerald Cobra, and escape with his crown!

BACKGROUND

The crypt holds the Emerald Cobra, a long-dead serpent-man named Xiuhcoatl, who first appeared in *DCC #16: Curse of the Emerald Cobra*. Judges also may reference *DCC #35: The Known Realms* for additional information. If the PCs win through to his resting place, they will find him in repose at the top of a great ziggurat. Once disturbed, his spirit will return to battle the transgressors.

Unknown to the players, a group of serpent-men and their shaman will arrive soon. On this night of double full moons, they aim to make an important sacrifice. While the party tackles the various static locations of the crypt, the serpent-men close with them, and attack from behind. During playtesting, the location of this encounter varied. Ideally, it should happen in area 1-3 or area 2-1.

Players could find their way to the crypt by following a treasure map or pursuing rumors heard in a tavern, or they could discover it in a swamp or jungle.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

Area	Type	Encounter
1-1	C	8 savage serpent-men hunters Winged serpent swarm
1-2	T	Pit trap
1-3	C	5 skeletal serpent-men
2-1	P	Undulating bridge
2-2	T/C	Crushing doors 4 guardian statues
3-1	C	Water serpent
3-2	C	The Emerald Cobra Bones of the sacrificed

MAGICAL DEVICES

The crypt contains three Traveling Stones (white, green, and black), three Teleport Circles (also white, green, and black), and two Sending Statues (white and green). A Sending Statue is activated by inserting one of the Traveling Stones into a socket in its base, and then putting blood into a sacrificial bowl. Each Teleport Circle has its own color, linked to the Traveling Stone of the same color. On the ceiling above each Teleport Circle is a mural done in its identifying color and with images related to that destination (Black for area 2-1; White for area 2-2; Green for area 3-1).

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Area 1-1—Crypt Entrance: *After mile upon mile of slogging through deep jungle, the party has finally reached its destination. Ahead of you lies a half-buried ruin of dark stone, overgrown with thorny vines and rank fungi, and bathed in the light of the two moons, both of which are full. A great tree stands athwart the ruins, and you can see small winged shapes silently flitting among its branches.*

Tall steps lead up to a large, stone door engraved with blocky carvings of serpents, men, and things that are something of both. In the center of the door is a colorful mosaic in the likeness of a serpent-man. In his left hand he holds a crudely rendered humanoid figure, dripping what appears to be blood into a bowl in his right hand. The bowl projects outward from the door itself. It is empty except for some blackish muck and a few leaves.

In the branches of the gigantic tree atop the crypt are dozens of small, feathered and winged serpents. They are non-venomous insectivores, and won't attack unless the PCs attack them first; then, they attack as a swarm.

Winged Serpent Swarm: Init +4; Atk swarming bite +1 melee (1d3); AC 10; HD 4d8; hp 20; MV fly 50′; Act special; SP bite all targets within 20′ x 20′ space, half damage from non-area attacks; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will -2; AL N.

To open the crypt door, the PCs must shed fresh blood into the bowl sticking out from the mural (1 hp damage is sufficient). With this blood sacrifice, the door glows with a fiendish green light, recedes inward, and rolls out of the way.

Eight hunters from a tribe of savage serpent-folk watch from the nearby jungle. The ruin is sacred to their people. They watch and wait unless the party manages to open the door, in which case they attack immediately. The survivors attempt to flee if the PCs kill 4 of them.

Savage Serpent-folk Hunters (8): Init +1; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4 + poison, DC 14 Fort save or paralysis 1d6 rounds) or dagger +3 melee (1d4+1), or short bow +3 missile (1d6); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 4, 8, 9, 7, 10, 4, 6, 9; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SP +10 to move silently; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; AL L.

Another group of serpent-men are traveling toward the crypt bringing, as sacrificial victim, a princess of the savage wood elves who also inhabit this jungle. They arrive 1d4+3 rounds after the party opens the crypt. The group consists of a cobra shaman, four asp-men, and two great python serpent-men. The shaman carries a wooden scepter bearing chips of the Traveling Stones used to activate the crypt's Sending Statues (these function just as the stones themselves), and frequently visits the site to cast sacrifices into the Great Well. The cobra shaman knows the crypt's secrets.

Cobra Shaman (1): Init +1; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4 + poison DC 20 Fort or death), or spit +3 missile (range 40′; DC 14 Fort save or target blinded for 1d3 turns), or +6 spell; AC 14; HD 6d6; hp 20; MV 30′; Act 1d20+1d14; SP +10 to move silently, harmful spell 4 times per day (drain 1d4 each from Strength, Agility, and Stamina, DC 13 Will save or avoid); SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +3; AL L.

Great Python Serpent-men (2): Init +1; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4+1) or claws +3 melee (1d4 plus crushing grasp); AC 14; HD 2d10; hp 11, 12; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SP +7 to move silently in jungle, crushing grasp 1d4+1 each round, DC 15 Strength check to escape; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +2; AL L.

Asp-men (4): Init +1; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4 + poison DC 14 Fort or death within 1d3+1 rounds if not healed), or spear +3 melee (1d8), or short bow +3 missile (1d6); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 4, 12, 11, 6; MV 30′; Act 1d20; SP +10 to move silently; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; AL L.

Area 1-2—The Long Stair: *Shallow stairs slope downward into the darkness. Roots from the mighty tree above have broken through the ceiling in places, casting wavering shadows in the torchlight.*

The stairway descends to a landing, where can be found two recessed areas (4x4″ and 6″ deep), about 7′ up, on both the north and south walls. These are difficult to see due to shadows cast by the tree roots (DC 10 Intelligence check to spot). Each recess has a metal ring. Pulling the northern ring deactivates the pit trap below the landing, locking it in place with a distinct "thunk" sound, and pulling the southern ring flush to the back of its recess. Pulling the southern ring reactivates the trap and draws the northern ring flush. Currently, the pit trap is ACTIVATED.

Beyond the landing, the stairs descend to a bronze door decorated in a serpent motif. These stairs cover a pit trap. If it is not deactivated (see above), then the stairway pivots once half the party has passed the center of the span, dumping them into a pit full of obsidian spikes (2d6+4 damage).

Area 1-3—Antechamber: *The door opens into a large chamber with walls intricately carved to depict serpent-folk led by a cobra-hooded figure. Inside, a large, elevated altar stands, flanked by two statues of spear-wielding serpent-men. On the altar you see a small reliquary made of green stone. On the wall behind the altar is an inscription in the ancient tongue of the serpent-folk.*

The inscription reads (if translated):

Come unto Him bearing the jewels of the winds.

Ride the ghost serpent to the white traveling ground.

Make there an offering first of stone and then of blood.

The sacrifices shall feed the black storm.

The faithful shall follow the emerald road to His kingdom.

The returning pilgrim shall be borne home upon white wings.

Come humbly unto Him in worship,

But disturb not the god-king in His slumber.

The reliquary sits atop a thick slab of dark basalt. It is trapped, but can be disarmed using levers located on the back of each statue. If the trap is not disabled, opening the reliquary causes the statues to turn rapidly, thrusting their spears toward the area in front of it (2d8 damage, DC 14 Ref save for half).

The reliquary holds the three Traveling Stones: black, white, and green. Each of these magical artifacts is spherical and the size of a fist. A chip has been taken from each stone (these are in a medicine pouch attached to the scepter of the cobra shaman).

Three secret doors lead to the north, south, and east.

The northern and southern doors may be opened simply by pressing inward against the doors themselves. They close automatically.

The northern chamber contains partially collapsed shelves of rotted wood, and a variety of pottery vessels, both broken and whole. Most contained long-spoiled foodstuffs, but among them can be found 55 gp, 175 sp, and 1d10 gems worth 2d4 x 10 gp each.

The southern chamber contains the skeletal remains of 5 serpent-men laid atop stone biers. They are clad in robes and wear holy symbols (worth 15 gp each). If disturbed, they rise and attack.

On the floor lie the bones of a dead, dwarven adventurer. He wears rotted leather armor and a bronze circlet with a hinged monocle but no lens. He carries a short sword and a wooden box holding four glass lenses, with space for a fifth lens. He also carries 43 gp. The missing lens can be found on the ground near the door. The bronze circlet and monocle, when fitted with the proper lens, allow the wearer to understand the following languages: celestial, demonic, serpent-man, common, and elven (the loose lens is for serpent-man). Using the circlet without a lens makes the user disoriented (-4 to all rolls) for 1d4 turns (DC 12 Will save to avoid).

The eastern secret door is behind the altar. It pivots on a hub at its left side and opens inward to a steep stairway leading downward to unlocked double doors.

Skeletal Serpent-men (5): Init -4; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4); AC 9; HP 12, 15, 15, 9, 17; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead; SV Fort +4, Ref -4, Will +2; AL C.

Area 2-1—The Great Well (top): *Double doors open upon a vast chamber of black stone, lit by dim light from two large statues atop small shelves on the north and south walls (serpent-men with raised lanterns). Lurid carvings of the serpent king's exploits and martial prowess are prominent, and a mural on the ceiling surrounds a thick disk of black stone carved with serpentine script. It depicts humanoid figures plummeting from the sky above a ziggurat.*

The floor in front of you ends in a gaping chasm, across which is another stone ledge, with two massive columns rising to the ceiling, and a squat, triangular doorway leading into the regions beyond.

The Black Teleport Circle, a thick disc of black stone covered in arcane symbols, is on the ceiling of this chamber. If the PCs put the Black Traveling Stone in either of the Sending Statues (found in 2-3 and 3-1), stand in its Teleport Circle, and activate it by shedding blood into the sacrificial bowl, anyone standing in the circle is transported to this location and will fall into area 3-2 (33d6 damage).

In the chasm, 100' below, is sea of swirling black clouds and frequent flashes of red lightning. Falling from the ledge lands its victim in area 3-2, dealing 25d6 damage.

An invisible bridge crosses to the platform on the other side. A *detect magic* spell reveals it. Though something like chalk or dust can show its presence, the ground here does not have either in quantity.

The bridge undulates like a serpent crawling across sand. A PC crosses automatically by standing on it and letting it draw him to the other side. Those attempting to aid or resist this movement must make a DC 10 Ref save or fall.

Narrow ledges cross the chasm along the north and south walls, intersecting shelves holding the illuminating statues. Crossing this way is dangerous (DC 15 Agility check).

Across the chasm, a ledge juts out between two massive columns. An open doorway beyond them leads to the east. The doorway is a squat triangle, 15' high and 40' wide.

The players could climb down to area 3-2, but passing through the cloud level is perilous. It takes 3 rounds to pass through the layer. Each round, the climber must make a successful Luck check or be struck by lightning (1d8 damage, DC 20 Ref save or fall) and pass a DC 15 Will save or suffer major corruption (save for minor corruption).

Area 2-2—Guardian Statues: *The north and south walls beyond the doorway are decorated with bas-relief murals in alabaster, of gigantic serpent-men armed with great spears.*

Checking for traps at the door (DC 12) reveals that the two large slabs of stone are engineered to close when triggered (trigger is between the last two Guardian Statues in area 2-2).

There is a pressure plate located between the second pair of statues. Stepping on it causes the triangular doorway from area 2-1 to release two stone slabs from above. Characters standing in the doorway must make a DC 12 Ref save or take 1d10 damage. Two cranks are hidden behind separate panels in the walls on each side of the doorway, and two more in the columns on the area 2-1 side. They raise the doors and reset the pressure plate. This requires 3 rounds, and the doors only lock into place after the last round. PCs may crawl under the doors as they are being raised.

The area contains bas-relief murals of oversized serpent-men on the north and south sides. Guardian statues emerge from the bas-relief images once a PC has reached the area just west of the trigger for the door trap.

Guardian Statues (4): Init +0 (surprise); Atk great spear +5 melee (1d10+2); AC 16; HD 5d8; hp 19, 17, 21, 25; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP surprises 50% of time; SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will -2; AL N.

Area 2-3—White Traveling Ground: *The chamber beyond consists of three rising levels connected by stairs. The first flight of stairs climbs to a landing upon which is set a large, white stone circle with an altar in its center. Beyond, more stairs climb to a gigantic statue of a cobra-man holding a macuahuitl. It gazes down upon the altar. The walls of the chamber are brilliantly white, and adorned with intricate carvings of the skeletons of a veritable bestiary of creatures. On the ceiling, above the white stone circle, is a mural of a white, feathered and winged serpent flying among clouds and stars.*

The first flight of stairs leads to a large circular platform of white stone. In its center is a carved altar of the same stone, with a sacrificial bowl carved into its top. This is the White Teleport Circle. The White Sending Statue stands at the top of the chamber. A prominent socket of bronze juts from its base.

As described earlier, a Traveling Stone must be placed in the socket and blood must be shed into the sacrificial bowl (1 hp damage) to trigger the teleport effect. With both conditions met, beings or objects on the Teleport Circle are bathed in brilliant green light, disappear, and then reappear in the Teleport Circle of the same color as the Traveling stone used (i.e., green goes to green, white to white,

etc.). Using the Black Traveling Stone sends sacrifices to the Black Teleport Circle (on the ceiling of area 2-1), from which they plummet into the depths of the Great Well, down to area 3-2. The Traveling Stone used also accompanies the travelers to their destination, reappearing in the socket of the destination's Sending Statue. However, there is no Sending Statue associated with the Black Teleport Circle. The Black Traveling Stone remains in the socket where it was placed, if used.

Area 3-1—Green Teleport Circle and Sending Statue: *It is as if each of your bodies has been dispersed like dust into a hurricane and then suddenly crushed back together. You find yourselves standing upon a round platform of greenish stone. An altar with a carved bowl in its top stands in its center. A vivid mural around the platform shows a green ziggurat above which floats a smaller pyramid with an eye at its apex. Behind you looms another Sending Statue.*

To the east lies a dark lake and a massive ziggurat of green stone, a smaller pyramid of the same stone floating unsupported above it. Above you is a boiling sea of black clouds crackling with red lightning.

A narrow rope bridge crosses to the Great Ziggurat.

The characters must cross the bridge single file, and the water serpent attacks when they do, its weight breaking the bridge. Anyone crossing at that time will fall into the water, but may make a DC 12 Ref save to grasp a rope. It is possible to sneak across to the ziggurat (DC 15 Agility check). On a successful attack, the water serpent will retreat with its prey into deeper water.

Water Serpent (1): Init +4; Atk bite +10 melee (1d6 +constrict); AC 18; HD 8d8; hp 35; MV 30' on land, 40' in water; Act 1d20; SP constriction 1d6+2; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; AL N.

Area 3-2 – Great Ziggurat: *The ziggurat looms above the black waters of the lake, bathed in the light of the glowing, green orb at its apex. Tendrils of glowing mist stream down from it, and up into the swirling black clouds. Occasional flashes of red lightning can be seen among them. Steep stairs climb each side of the ziggurat to its flattened summit.*

As soon as the PCs start to ascend the stairs, read the following:

There is a disturbance in the waters behind you as the bones littering the lake's bottom begin climb out of the lake in a growing horde, closing in from all sides.

The bones of the sacrificed attack as a swarm, affecting any target in contact, until the Emerald Cobra is slain.

Bones of the Sacrificed: Init -2; Atk swarming +3 melee (1d3); AC 9; HD special; MV 15'; Act special; SP claw or bite all targets in contact with swarm; un-dead; can only be defeated by destroying Emerald Cobra; SV Fort +0, Ref -2, Will +0; AL C.

Once the PCs have reached the summit of the ziggurat, read the following:

A stone bier carved from green stone supports a large serpent-man with the hood of a cobra. His skin is rough and gray. He is clad in a feathered cape and wears a crest-like crown of gold set with onyx, diamonds, and emeralds. The body lies in an attitude of repose, one hand gripping a scepter of black metal, topped with a ruby-eyed skull. The other holds a long dagger with a plain bronze hilt and an obsidian blade. A light greenish-gold mist drifts down from the floating pyramid's "eye," curling in tendrils around the body. They thicken and stream into the body before you, making it glow with a baleful light. A large gem centered on its crown blazes blue-white, and then dims to the poisonous green of the thickening mist. The creature's stony, gray skin cracks, revealing brilliant green scales and golden eyes. It rises with a hiss, brandishing its weapons toward the sky. A great gust of wind seems to come from the Emerald Cobra himself, blowing you toward the edge of the platform, and red light beams from the scepter.

PCs not standing on the stairs must make a DC 10 Ref save or be blown off the platform and fall to the next level of the ziggurat (taking 1d6 damage). Those who save are blown back from the bier, but do not fall. He also attacks one of the party's warriors with the scepter's missile attack.

The floating pyramid preserves the body against the ravages of time. He also can use it to drain hit points from PCs standing within a 10' radius at a rate of 1d4 hp per victim, until he is slain.

The Emerald Cobra: Init+4; Atk bite +5 melee (1d4+2 plus poison) and others (see below); AC 16 (18 against missile attacks); HD 8d12; hp 50; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP see below; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +3; AL C.

The Emerald Cobra has many special attacks, but may only make two per round:

- *Bite:* +5 melee (1d4+2 plus 1d8 poison damage, DC 15 Fort save for half)

- *Death Scepter:* +6 melee (1d4+1) or scepter beam +3 missile (drains 1d6 Strength)

- *Blood Drinker (dagger):* +6 melee (1d4+1 special; dagger causes an additional 1 hp damage per round until PC is healed)

- *Call the Red Lightning:* +8 missile (1d8+3, DC 15 Will save or minor corruption, +1d8 damage and major corruption on critical hit)

- *Call the Winds:* Creates a whirlwind around him (PCs within 20′ must make DC 12 Ref save or are blown back 20′)

- *Drain Vitality:* Use both attack dice to drain 1d4 hp from each character within 10′ radius and add them to his hp total.

The Emerald Cobra's Raiment

- *Death Scepter:* A small mace made of black metal. Its head is a skull with ruby eyes. As a melee weapon it is +1 to hit and does 1d4+1 damage; or it can project a beam from the eyes of the skull. The beam drains 1d6 Strength from the target unless DC 15 Fort save is made. Using it drains blood from any living user (-1 hp per wielder level, per use).

- *Blood Drinker:* This obsidian dagger is +1 to hit and-damage, and causes wounds that continue to bleed (-1 hp per round) until healed magically.

- *Feather Cape:* as leather armor, but +2 AC against normal missile attacks.

- *Crown of Xiuhcoatl:* The crown worn by the Emerald Cobra holds the blue-white gem in which his soul has been imprisoned, and allows him to control the body of anyone wearing it. If the body is slain, his soul returns to the gem in this crown. The crown's gold and gems are worth 500 gp, not counting the blue-white gem. The value of the intact artifact (or just the blue-white gem) is left to the judge's discretion, but discovery of such an artifact draws the attention of powerful enemies.

Area 3-3 – Subterranean Lake: *A still, black lake surrounds the ziggurat, its waters extending into the darkness.*

The lake is from 5 to 50′ deep. A search of the lake bottom on the bridge side of the ziggurat reveals a variety of animal and humanoid bones, and small items of crude jewelry worth 5d100 gp (total). A mostly-submerged, sealed door is on the south side of the ziggurat. It's up to the judge to determine what might open it and what the adventurers find beyond it.

CRYPT OF THE EMERALD COBRA

1-1

1-2

trap controls

1-3

2-1

black teleport circle

2-2

2-3

white teleport circle

3-1

3-2

3-3

10 FT

UP

DOWN

W   E

BOTTOM OF THE GREAT WELL

UPPER LEVELS

THE ZIGGURAT

□ =10'

black teleport circle on ceiling

trapdoor reset triggers

white teleport circle

green teleport / sending station

1-1
1-2
1-3

2-1
2-2
2-3

3-1
3-2
3-3