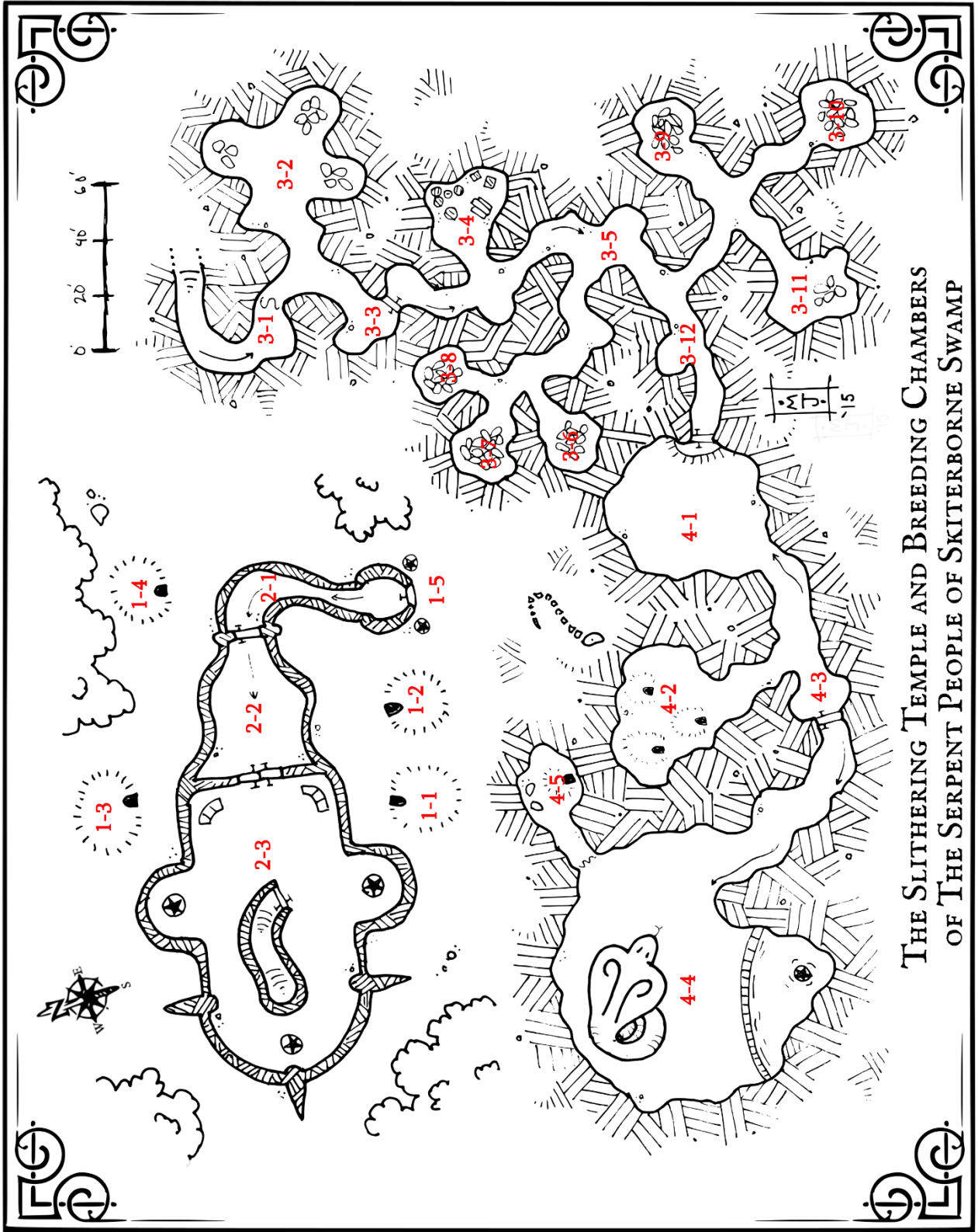


The Serpent People of Skiterborne Swamp

A Dungeon Crawl Classics Module for Characters of 1st Level

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THE SLITHERING TEMPLE AND BREEDING CHAMBERS
OF THE SERPENT PEOPLE OF SKITERBORNE SWAMP

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Background

Aeons ago before the world's seas settled and the ice caps were born the surface was a much hotter, primordial place. It was at this time that the serpent people ruled the lands of the world, active in the perfect conditions. They were ruled by the priesthood to the great Serpent God, Athississ who led the civilisation from strength to strength.

The great cities of the serpent people dominated the lands for three millennia until the world began to cool and the seas began to settle. The lands had almost formed into the lands that the people of today would recognise. The Great God Athississ recognised the decline of his people were near and warred with the other gods to return the heat to the soil to no avail.

Heroes of the people that would rise came from the coasts into the deserts at the will of the young Gods to chase the serpent away from the surface. Envoys of these young Gods were so successful that the great God imbued an Avatar of itself in defence of the secret high temple's libraries in the jewel city of Ssarth. Here a great battle was fought for the future of the serpent people and they were defeated. The still beating heart of Athississ' avatar was carved from its chest and imprisoned in a crystal chest of great size.

The body of the avatar crawled away into the darkness below the surface, leading its people into the darkness to carve out dens beneath the surface so that the race could enter a torpor that would end when the great God Athississ was again at full strength. The heart that was now stored in the chest of crystal stored the essence of Athississ and maintained the ever beating heart. If the seals that bound the chest were ever to be broken then Athississ would be returned to full power and with his rise the serpent people could rise to rule again.

With the exodus of the serpent people and the rise of the young races much of this lore

was lost. The crystal chest was entombed in the heart of the library of Ssarth and the city was set to burn, falling to rubble. Cities of the serpent people all over the world fell to ruin. The young races came across them as ancient discoveries and tried to fathom the origin of such ruins but few scholars ever accurately identified these ruins for what they truly were.

For every ruined city that was discovered there were three that collapsed and were swallowed whole by the world or the young races cared not for the history and simply built on top of the civilisation of ancient times.

Athississ has been ever present though and building in strength by lies and falsehoods. His active agents insinuated the young races societies and disguised their God in the guise of those races so that he could build worshippers again. Every prayer and offering allowed Athississ that smallest grace, that little push back to power. Over a millennia he became capable of discerning the location of his lost essence finally. With that power returned to his form he would be greatly empowered and the serpent people could begin their rise again.

Of Recent Occurrences

The agents of Athississ had narrowed down the location of the crystal chest and manipulated a seer and great sorcerer Xantor the Insane with promises of texts ancient and arcane. Xantor sought a group that could go in his stead as he rarely left his own towers deep in the swamps of Bischoof. The promise of gold and fame drew many with Xantor forming a group of the best that arrived.

Through the directions that the agents had given Xantor the adventurer's struck out deep into the underworld of the city Goff, which sat atop the ruins of the once great city of the serpent people, Ssarth.

The group were badly beaten by creatures drawn to darkness and only three of the eight

survived. From the sewers of Goff they climbed out with the specific books that Xantor had been after, strange weapons shaped like fangs and entwined with poison magic and a giant crystal chest with the still beating heart of a God's avatar, though they did not know this.

Xantor paid them their due and allowed them to keep all that they had found apart from the chest and the books. Devouring the books, first as alinguist and then secondarily as a sorcerer Xantor the Insane used his knowledge to unwind the threads of the magic that had sealed the chest. The threads were tenuous but his magic was strong and a few short weeks ago Xantor released the final thread of magic and the crystal chest flung open.

The heart of the chest stopped beating as the essence of the avatar was released and overpowered Xantor, possessing his body and leaving his tower as a ruin. In a short week the essence was devoured again by the remnant of the avatar and Athississ was once again whole.

Throughout the underworld of the continent, indeed the planet, the restoration has been felt in the minds of those high priests of Athississ. They have slowly been awakening from their torpor like state and one by one leading their brethren back to the upper layers of the world. They must first restore the race and restore the temples for the numbers of the young race are now many and the serpent people are weak. In time they will again be strong.

[The Hamlet of Briarton](#)

Briarton is a sleepy little hamlet on the marshy river Brimble. It is the last stop for many wilderness adventurers who hear of ruins amongst the marshes of Skiterborne Swamp. Truth is though that of the ruins in the swamp, they have well been picked over and nothing new has been unearthed from the area in over a decade. Even the usual

marsh monsters seem too lethargic to be a challenge in this area any longer.

The folk of the hamlet have said nothing in regards to this for some make their living selling "adventuring" equipment to those that come through, and a good number still do.

Last week though there was concern amongst the good folk of Briarton as the son of a local fisherman went missing after taking to Skiterborne to camp in some old ruins and go hunting. The fisherman organised a search party of four (the crew of his barge) and the next morning they were also not returned.

The third search party came across the scene of a battle not too far from a strange bulging structure made of dried out swamp clay that had not been there a month before. They found the body of the boy's father, Hephatus, pierced with many strange wounds, curved and circular. The tracks lead to the building and seemed to be made by giant serpent like creatures.

The Hamlet leader, Sereth, has called for calm amongst the community and sold the barge of Hephatus, being that he and his son were the only family they had. With the 800 Gold that the sale netted Sereth hopes to entice a group of adventurer's coming to the Briarton to explore the ruins of Skiterborne Swamp to instead rid the area of the new intrusion, so close to Briarton.

The characters of the players have heard of a lucrative little Hamlet on the edge of Skiterborne Swamp that is a good base for exploration. As they approach the hamlet they are given a warm welcome from the head of the town. A lovely lady by the name of Sereth...

The Skiterborne Swamp Serpent People

The serpent people of Skiterborne Swamp were amongst the first of the under-world caches of serpent people to awaken when the essence of Athississ was returned to its Avatar. They have been breeding in the chambers beneath the Skiterborne Swamp that they have hollowed out. As the first of the young are now breaking the shells the serpent people have built their staging point for the reclamation of the surface world. For now they hunt for food for the young but as their numbers swell, this will be an important staging point for the return to the surface.

The Serpent People are cold blooded creatures and are therefore sluggish when in the colder times. During the night the serpent people are at their slowest and therefore always act at the end of the initiative round (as if they had the *Slow* spell cast on them). They have an alien mind-set that sees the lesser races as food. If challenged by a lesser race member they will seek simply to kill it for the young to feast on rather than capture them, for they are considered unintelligent by their race.

Serpent People Hatchlings: Init +1; Atk bite +0 melee (1d3 + poison); AC: 12; HD 1d4; hp 2 each; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP darkvision, poison (weak); SV Fort -1, Ref +1, Will +1; AL C;

Hatchlings are the weakest and most uncontrolled of the serpent people. Thankfully they are also the least capable and carry the least venom. Hatchlings are the smallest of the serpent people and at this phase they have not developed arms for fine tool manipulation.

Serpent People Breeder: Init +2; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4 + poison) or shortsword +1 melee (1d6); AC: 13; HD 1d6; hp 4 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP darkvision, poison (medium); SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +1; AL C;

The breeders are the youngest of the serpent people and have one role, the creation of and the care of hatchlings. When copulating the breeder is completely unaware of its surroundings and is only dangerous if injured in which case it strikes with a bite.

Serpent People Acolyte: Init +2; Atk Fang of Athississ +1 melee (1d8) or bite +1 melee (1d4 + poison); AC: 12; HD 1d8; hp 5 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP darkvision, poison (medium); SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C;

The acolytes tend to the temple and breeding chamber awaiting instruction and training from the high priest. They wield the "Fang of Athississ" which is much like a pick except it is curved much more extremely, like the fang of a viper.

Serpent People Guard: Init +1; Atk longsword +1d3 melee (1d8+1d3) or longsword +1d3 melee (1d8+1d3) and shortsword +1d3 melee (1d6+1d3) or bite +1d3 melee (1d4 + 1d3, poison); AC: 12; HD 1d8; hp 5 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20+d3 or 1d16 /1d14; SP darkvision, poison (medium); SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; AL N;

The guards of the serpent people take joy in fine weapon handling and rarely ever attack with natural weaponry. They follow the word of their god Athississ through the high priest above all other directions and are rarely ever broken in a fight to even consider fleeing.

Serpent People Hunter: Init +1; Atk spear +1d3 melee (1d8+1d3) or shortbow +1d3 melee (1d6+1d3) or bite +1d3 melee (1d4 + 1d3, poison); AC: 12; HD 2d8; hp 9 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20+d3 or 1d16 /1d14; SP darkvision, poison (medium); SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +2; AL N;

It is the responsibility of the hunters to ensure that the enclave is well fed and that the hatchlings are well kept so that they can grow at a great rate. The hunters are rarely seen in the actual buildings of these serpent people preferring the natural world over the underground. The skin of the hunter is a mottled green colour providing a sort of natural camouflage in the wilderness.

Serpent People Sorcerer: Init +3; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4 + poison); AC: 14; HD 2d8; hp 11 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP darkvision, poison (Strong), spells (*Cantrip, Charm Person, Choking Cloud, Flaming Hands, Magic Shield*); SV Fort -1, Ref +3, Will +2; AL C;

The sorcerer is a valued position in the serpent people society. Seen as gifted from Athississ himself it is the position that the general populace turns to when they expect action. It is the sorcerers that lead the battles of reclamation in the name of Athississ.

Serpent People High Priest: Init +2; Atk Fang of Athississ +3 melee (1d8+1) or bite +1 melee (1d4+1 + poison); AC: 12; HD 3d8; hp 21 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP darkvision, poison (strong), Spells (1st: *Blessing, Detect Magic, Holy Sanctuary, Paralysis, Word of Command*, 2nd: *Curse, Lotus Stare, Snake Charm*) ; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4; AL C;

The High Priest is the leader of the cells of the Serpent People that are beginning to arise from the under-world. On the whole there are no hugely powerful High Priests currently as the effect of torpor has deskilled the priests and they must reconnect with their God to become all powerful again.

Flame Beetle: Init -2; Atk mandibles +3 melee (1d8+1) or ranged +3 flaming spittle(1d6); AC: 14; HD 2d8+2; hp 9 each; MV 30' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP flaming spittle (60' range of burning saliva) ; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will -3; AL C;

The serpent people tend to keep flaming beetles as pets and for maintaining heat in their warrens and hutches. They use the beetles to carry heavy items and tend the fires in the hatchery in the Skiterborne swamp area.

Serpent People Poison Chart

Poison Strength	Delivery	Fort Save	Successful Save	Failed Save	Recovery
Weak	Wound	DC 12	1 Agility (temporary)	1d4 Agility (temporary)	Normal healing
Medium	Wound	DC 15	1d3 Agility (temporary)	1d6 Agility (temporary)	Normal healing
Strong	Wound	DC 20	1d4 Agility (temporary)	1d6 Agility (permanent)	Does not heal naturally

Area 1: Skiterborne Swamp

The directions to the serpent people location are actually quite close to the hamlet of Briarton, less than a two hour trek. It takes the characters through the swamp of Skiterborne and makes travel difficult (half speed on the way there). You could hit them with a warm up encounter at this stage but there is plenty of hurt to come! The characters come to a section of the swamp that begins to see rocks braking through the mire and a few broken ruins from a previous settlement. The further they follow these the land becomes more solid and a rise comes out of the swamp of solid ground. Read the following as they come to the rise.

The stifling heat and humidity has been hard to bear and you have clung to the willows that fill the swamp to keep out of the direct sunlight. Ahead of you, past the ruins a large mound, nay, a hill rises out of the swamp, devoid of much vegetation like the crown of a bald giant. At the top, just near some low lying heather you see several strange mounds. Some small ones and one that stretches near a hundred feet in length. They are clearly unnatural as bundles of dried grass are laid over the top of each mound in an orderly fashion. The small mounds are just circular and no more than ten feet across, but the largest snakes its way along the crest and looks like some kind of bloated asp.

The hillock contains the entirety of the surface expedition for this serpent people community. The protrusions on the hill appear to have been in place for some time but in fact they have only been there for a few weeks. The smaller sections are storage places for the serpent people that are out hunting for food for the remainder of the group.

There are three hunters (p.4) in the vicinity of the temple currently, Ssorta, Thesss and Assiliass. They can be used as random encounters if you need to spice this section

up. They are solitary hunters and will not team up to take down a kill. Pride is a vice of the hunter.

Encounter 1-1 Cool Storage

A hole, just big enough for a human to climb into, leads into a dark cool room that contains a strange smell, a strong odour that almost smells like perspiration. Built into the hut is a crossbeam of branches from which several cloth wrapped packages hang from what looks to be reeds tied to the crossbeam.

The wrapped parcels are all human body parts. These ones in particular (of which there are 13) comprises the body of Barnaby, the fisherman's son. On unwrapping the parcels and understanding what it comprises of the characters need to make a Will save vs. a DC of 10 or have to fight the next battle with -1 die due to being shaken at the horror of the parcels. If the character is already or has been affected by the same situation from investigating area 1-3 they may ignore this save as they can no longer be shaken by the horrors contained within.

Encounter 1-2 Weapons Cache

You pull back the thin reptilian skin that covers the hole into this chamber and see the glint of metal reflected from the light within.

This enclosure is used to restock ammunition and replace blunted weapons by the hunters that seek food for the other serpent people. Carefully rested against the walls in this chamber are four quivers filled with twenty arrows each, fletched black from the plumage of ravens. There are three spears here that have obviously recently been sharpened and one that is dull (-1 die damage). There is a 20% chance that as the players leave this area that one of the hunters is returning, will spot them exiting and begin an attack.

Ssorta (Serpent people hunter p. 4).

Encounter 1-3 Bleeding Room

As you approach the reptile skin flap that covers this protrusion the wind whips it back

and you are hit with a strong pungent smell of rotting, acrid flesh.

Inside the hut hangs 30 odd pieces of meat that once was Kellog (Barnaby's father, the fishermen) and his crew that formed the search party. These pieces have been hanging for over a week and the blood from them has formed a thick slurry on the ground making it slippery. On understanding what is hanging from the ceiling the characters need to make a Will save vs. a DC of 10 or have to fight the next battle with -1 die due to being shaken at the horror of the way the bodies have been butchered. If the character is already or has been affected by the same situation from investigating area 1-1 they may ignore this save as they can no longer be shaken by the horrors contained within.

Encounter 1-4 Discard Chamber

A strong smell of rotting comes from this area and as you pull the screening flap back you realise why. In here are the remnants of clothing and gear that the search party and the fisherman's son had on them, along with a pile of livers sitting in a shallow depression. It appears that you are not the only explorer here though as the ghoul sitting next to the pile drops the liver and launches itself at you.

Area 2: Staging Area

This area is the initial part of the permanent settlement that the serpent people have created. It will one day house the temple that is temporarily kept in area 4-4 until such time that these serpent people have subjugated the local area and once again strengthened their numbers to be a force on the surface world.

The three rooms are refined and well kept. The structure is made from mined basalt in a brick like form, with oaken wood beams holding the shape of the buildings. The ground is scattered with a fine gritty sand that

Drawn by the smell a ghoul that has escaped from a nearby necromancer lair is feasting! **Ghoul** (p.414 DCC). **Treasure:** A machete is discarded here (treat as a dagger), three partially used torches, a lantern and 34 copper pieces.

Encounter 1-5 Entry

The largest mound lowers here and broadens to make the reeds covering it look like some form of giant snake head. To either side of a circular door stand two statues of a great hooded snake with eyes of ruby that seem to flicker in an absent flame. Coiled before the door is what can only be described as a large snake with arms with a pair of blades in cross sheathes on its back. It seems to be scanning the area for threats.

Serpent people speak their own version of the dragon's language and communication could possibly be established if that language is used. Mind you, the guard is likely to see them as a threat immediately and attack unless the characters are very novel in their approach. If things turn sour for the guard he will attempt to release the two flame beetles from area 2-1 to delay the characters as he slithers away to get help.

makes it easy for the serpent people to move along and also helps display the tracks of other unwanted creatures. The sections of this area move down the hill with the entrance being at the very top of the hill. Arrows on the map define the slope with the final room being carved partially into the hill to be level.

The ceiling of the building is constant at 10' in height in the rooms that slope but the final is grandiose and has a roof that starts at 40' at the East end but ends at 20' in the Western side.

Encounter 2-1 Backup

The circular door swings open into a dimly lit tight corridor that starts snaking its way down the gullet. It is a little bit of a surprise when you realise that the braziers keeping the room lit are situated on the roof.

The “braziers” are in fact two fire beetles that are situated here to provide support to the lone guard at 1-5 should they require it. If these two have already been encountered in the battle against the guard then the description needs to be adjusted as the room will be lit only by the open door.

Flame Beetle x 2 (P.4)

Encounter 2-2 Creche Entry

The room continues to slope down as the corridor broadens out significantly undulating outward in a strange unnatural way. Ahead of you two bronze doors are set amongst the basalt walls. The doors depict the same hooded giant snake as the statues outside by the entrance. It seems to be worshipped by thousands of snake people along the base of the door.

Standing by the doors in the room is a guard and a breeder. On the walls on either side of the room there are two Flame beetles. The next room is filled with hatchlings and the guard will fight to the death to protect them. The breeder will attempt to alert the two guards in the next room to come and assist whilst the guard and the Fire beetles defend the doors.

Serpent People Guard (p.4)

Serpent People Breeder (p.3)

Flame Beetle (p.4)

Encounter 2-3 The Nursery

Braziers hanging from the ceiling keep this room well lit and warm. It is a huge chamber with a serpentine head raising out of the centre of the floor. Its mouth open and bared contains a door that leads into the head. To the north, east and south there are great

statues of serpent people locked together in shows of strength as they reach for the ceiling which towers above them.

This chamber will one day serve as the centre of worship while the serpent people attempt to dominate the surface folk. Until that time though the number of serpent people is the most important consideration and so this chamber is used to allow the hatchlings get exercise and learn the art of hunting prey.

Currently there are 9 hatchlings in this room being looked over by two guards, a breeder and a fire beetle. On entry by the characters the hatchlings will seek to hide on, near or around the pillar statues while the guards and fire beetle seek to deal with the characters and the breeder moves to protect the hatchlings if the characters seek to do them harm.

Serpent People guard x 2 (p.3)

Serpent People breeder (p.3)

Serpent People Hatchlings x 9 (p.9)

Flame Beetle (p.4)

Treasure: The guards and the breeder in this chamber wear a lot of jewellery fashioned from copper and adorned with the image of the snake god Athississ. These collectively have a total value of around 18 Gold. Further to this the Breeder is wearing the *Band of the Asp*.

Band of the Asp

This copper ring is fashioned like a snake that coils along the finger and then its head grips its tail in its mouth. The head has a set of tiny emeralds that glitter in the light. The ring must be worn with the eyes of the ring facing the hand. When this is the case the wearer of the ring may control up to 5 HD of snakes, or reptiles. The ring in no way summons or draws snakes to it, the snakes must be in sight to be able to be controlled. This ring can control hatchlings but not serpent people that have developed arms.

Area 3 Breeding Chambers

The serpent people are aware of their weakness, and that weakness is numbers. The society is focussed on creating hatchlings so that their numbers are bolstered in a few short years for they grow quickly to adulthood. This area is focussed on the birthing and protection of the eggs, as well as their final hatching process.

The chambers are akin to being in an oversized burrow. Earthen walls, grounds and rooves with bolstering from wood and stone pillars at the side of the walls. Most tunnels are ten feet in diameter and largely circular. The ground remains some kind of gritty sand (that the serpent people travel well across and assists in shedding) but it is much more moist and humid. This is because the eggs need constant heat to speed up the hatching process.

Area 3-1 Snakeskin Canvas

The circular corridor leads down through the earth with ribs circling the chamber acting almost like stairs. The ribs smooth out and the tunnel takes a tight turn 90 degrees to the south and you see it opens into a small oval like chamber, not much wider than the passage itself.

The tunnel is covered over by a snakeskin that has been treated to look much like the surrounding earth. It is easy to spot this as the skin is not solid in any way. Any kind of searching for a secret entrance is done at a DC 5 Intelligence.

Behind the flap of skin stands a guard whose job it is to keep all new Hatchlings from coming through this area.

Serpent People Guard (p.3)

Area 3-2 Birthing Shrine

This area opens wide into a clover shape. Sconces have been dug into the earthen wall at many heights, including the alcoves of the clover. The effect makes this a hot area and

you can feel the clamminess building on your skin thanks to the heat.

In each of the three alcoves there are piles of ripped leathery eggs, each of them placed carefully here. You can see that each of the eggs has something sitting inside the leathery packages.

The serpent people give thanks for every birth that occurs. They build these shrines and fill them with the eggs of new hatchlings – each with a gift placed in the egg as an offering to Athississ for the creation of new life. Any eggs that do not hatch are eaten by the other serpent people.

A fire beetle lurks here amongst the eggs, it is tasked with keeping the flames burning.

Flame Beetle (p.4)

Treasure: Inside all of the eggs (many are recent hatches so play up the slime and smell) are gold ore that has a total value of 127 gp. There are a variety of fishing hooks (taken from the search party), a yard of brightly coloured silk (orange), many hides of giant rats, 3 emeralds worth 20 gp each and one contains the hilt of two handed sword with leaping lions decaled as the cross guard.

Area 3-3 Eye of Athississ

A large circular door stares at you literally. A large slitted eye fills the entire space of the door, beautifully crafted. Amongst the pale yellow of the eye you can see repeated forms, perhaps writing, meticulously incorporated into the design.

The patterns are in fact writing in the same language that the serpent people use, a variant of dragon. With a successful skill check of DC 10 Intelligence the characters can decipher the scrip which reads;

*Those that pass this portal
Grace the lands of Athississ
By his rules you will be judged
May you forever find yourself worthy*

The door is unlocked and is not trapped.

Area 3-4 General Stores

It strikes you as oddly absurd when you set eyes on the crates and barrels that fill this chamber. Such a part of your life and completely foreign to the context you now find yourself in. "Turk and Sons" is printed on the side of most of them and you can only think that this material must have been stolen after Turk and his lads were made a part of an evening meal. Picks and shovels lean across the crates and there is a strong smell in here that is acrid and distasteful. Coiled around the barrels, the picks and on top of many crates you see many large snakes.

This room houses much of what the serpent people use in their work and also contains a good level of food stores. The barrels are filled with vinegar and the bodies of over 60 giant rats and eggs that did not hatch. The crates contain ropes, pitons, torches, tar, slate, bedrolls, tents, whetstones, chalk and string. There is also a small iron chest secreted at the bottom of one of the crates that holds the pay records of the mining crew and a months' worth of wages at 83 gp.

There are hatchlings in most areas of this room. They do not attack unless one of them is attacked first. Damaging anything in here will likely draw an aggressive response from some of the hatchlings that are beginning to develop in intelligence. If the food barrels are tipped over the hatchlings will move to eat the contents and care little for the rest of the room's contents. It is the smell of the food that has drawn them to this room.

Serpent People Hatchlings x 11 (p.3)

Area 3-5 Guard Station

Along the corridor ahead you see a dark void where the wall should be.

A guard station has been built here. The role of the guard is to enter the egg chambers once a hatchling comes from this area that it has not seen before and retrieve the leathery egg for the Birthing Shrine at Area 3-2. Secondary to this is defence of the hatchlings

though few of the guards actually believe that a threat could enter this far into the complex. It is possible, therefore, to catch the guard unawares if approached silently.

Serpent People Guard (p.3)

Treasure: Two leathery eggs with gold nuggets placed in them worth a total of 7 gp.

Area 3-6, 3-7 and 3-8 Birthing Alcoves

These rooms are almost unbearably humid. Piles of leathery eggs dominate the centre of the chamber, numbering around 40 eggs at least.

The heat is because these chambers are kept warm by two flame beetles. They may be in any of the alcoves as the characters arrive. The eggs are placed carefully on an array of slate and gold nuggets that is not initially visible unless the characters move to the rear of the alcove. At the rear of the piles there is an opening protected by slate that the flame beetles spit into and the golden nuggets conduct the heat to the slate in the heap, thus keeping the eggs warm.

To get at the golden nuggets (a significant treasure) the piles need to be dismantled. The sound of this will immediately attract the two flame beetles and up to 7 (roll a d7) of the hatchlings will erupt from their eggs. This occurs in every alcove, although there will be no replacement of beetles once the two are dealt with.

Serpent People Hatchlings x 3d7 (p.3)

Flame Beetle x 2 (p.4)

Treasure: Inside area 3-6 there are gold nuggets worth 78 gp throughout the pile. In Area 3-7 the gold has been formed from a pot of leprechaun gold. There are 83 gold nuggets in the pile which can be sold for 90 gp or if the leprechaun is found he may offer something a great deal more important for it. The leprechaun is named Killton O'Faddy. The gold has a feeling of fae magic over it and can be identified by anyone with magical skill with a DC 15 check as leprechaun gold but not the

name of the leprechaun. Area 3-8 contains 111 gp worth of nuggets in it.

Area 3-9 Laying Alcove

As you approach you hear the sound of a good deal of hissing and the temperature drops off from the heat in the main corridors.

A breeder is currently delivering eggs under the watchful eyes of two other breeders and a guard. This room has a snakeskin covered box in it that contains all that is required in the birthing process. The occupants of the room will all fight, including the breeder that is giving birth though she does not have a weapon and may only use her bite attack.

Serpent People Breeder x 2 (p.3)

Serpent People Guard (p.3)

Treasure: The box contains a collection of underworld herbs used to accelerate the birthing process and it also has 5 vials with a greenish liquid that act as a Healing potion.

Area 3-10 Laying Alcove

This corridor stays warm at every step, opening up into a large chamber that is littered with around a dozen eggs laying in a slimy trail in the centre of the room.

The third flame beetle that is normally in the birthing alcoves is here beginning to collect the eggs from this chamber to take to the birthing chambers.

Flame Beetle (p.3)

Area 3-11 Defect Collection

The chamber ahead is large and the ground is concave. Eggs lay at the bottom. Hundreds of them, and all look different to those that you have seen so far. Different shapes and colours dominate this room, and it is obvious also that anything that is in them is long dead.

Being that many of the serpent people are centuries old, their gene pool has struggled to remain pure and the older breeders are producing a percentage of eggs that are mutating before being laid. This could be two

headed serpents, serpents that are already developing arms or things that look nothing like serpents in any way shape or form. The flame beetles drop these eggs here to die. The serpent people feel that these eggs are cursed and that only taking back the surface will lift this curse.

If the characters seek to dig out the eggs, for whatever reason, they will find that the pit has a resident grey primeval slime that moves amongst the eggs. It covers a ten foot area and attacks anything that disturbs its "nest".

Primeval Slime (p. 423 DCC) hp: 12 Special Properties: Protoplasmic breakdown, Rapid reproduction

Area 3-12 Judgement

An alcove ahead contains a crystalline statue of the great hooded snake that you have seen elsewhere in this lair.

Here a statue taken by the serpent people from their cities so many years ago stands. It detects those that have blasphemed the word of Athississ and comes to life judging them and sending them to the afterlife. If the players have killed a serpent people of any form the living statue attacks.

Crystalline Living Statue (p.420 DCC) hp: 9

Treasure: The crystal fragments of the living statue are worth 40 gp to the right person.

Area 4 Temple

This section was the first completed by the serpent people that rose from the depths. To signify this they built the chambers precisely as the High Priest Ssloriss asked. They built the key statue of Athississ over the entrance to the chambers from the underworld to signify that the only way forward was to take the surface world back.

The chambers of the temple are all grandiose and made with a combination of marble and basalt. Each chamber is 60' tall unless otherwise noted.

Area 4-1 Copulation Chamber

The door opens up onto a ledge that stands 5' above the remainder of the vast chamber. It is a startling difference to the rooms before it with the walls of the chamber fastidiously decorated with tile mosaics representing the life of their great serpent god.

This room is filled with writhing serpent people bodies clasped together as they copulate. All of them, and there must be at least 160 of them, are in the throes of passion. Four acolytes watch over their breeders and see the characters as soon as they arrive. One attempts to leave the chamber and inform the guards at 4-3 to the infiltration while the other three attempt to capture the characters.

Fighting amongst the serpent people breeders requires a DC 10 reflex save or the character will tread on one of the breeders and then perhaps be bitten from a strike.

Serpent People Breeders (p. 3)

Serpent People Acolyte (p.3)

Area 4-2 Sorcerer Rooms

This chamber is large and filled with three chambers similar to those above ground with small openings into them. The room has the same decorations of the rest of the temple with mosaics on the sides of the walls but here they have been painted over with chalk and ochre forming strange arcane symbols.

The small chambers contain the equipment and items of the serpent people sorcerer Ssilleena. The items are a rarity to her as they are mainly herbs, berries and plant and animal life from the surface which she has not had a chance to use for some time so she stockpiles it. One of the small chambers houses a hunter that Ssilleena uses to collect these items as well as a mate. His name is Ssecil and is currently discussing his next trip with Ssilleena when the characters arrive.

The final chamber is Ssilleena's own and it is a simple chamber that contains a gravel from

the underworld that she is particular to sleeping on. She also has three flawless diamonds worth 150 gp each and a cloth bag with 6 vials inside it. Two are healing potions and the other four contain her own venom that she gives to Ssecil to use on his weapons when above ground.

There are currently two acolytes discussing the daily progress of Ssilleena in creating a magical way to speed the birthing process as the characters arrive.

Serpent People Sorcerer (p.4)

Serpent People Hunter (p.4)

Serpent People Acolyte (p.3)

Treasure: Apart from the items in the chambers Ssilleena has a scroll case on her that contains a list of spells that she hopes will help her find a solution to the growth of the hatchlings. Truth is she has no idea what most of the spells are and it is a remnant of an ancient time. It is signed by a human wizard now forgotten to time but his title sits at the bottom of the spell as Goldin the Great. She will use the 1st and second level spells if she is backed into a corner but the higher level spells are too valuable to her to waste.

Spells on the scroll are;

Level 1: Color spray, Flaming hands

Level 2: Levitate, Shatter

Level 3: Turn to stone, Gust of wind

Level 4: Control ice, Lokerimon's orderly assistance

Level 5: Mind purge, Magic bulwark

You may see this scroll as a threat to balance in your game. If you do then just make it contain up to second level spells and ignore the rest. I use this scroll to provide a hook that you can use in following adventures around the history of the first magicians.

Area 4-3 Temple Guards

The great circular door is beautiful ahead of you. Made of copper and emblazoned with serpents, thousands of serpents, that make up

the form of one great hooded serpent that glares at you.

Four temple guards are located here and they are brutes. Each has maximum hit points and a solitary desire to kill any that seek to invade the sanctum of the temple. If approached by the acolyte at 4-1 two of the temple guards will go to 3-1 and assist so you will need to adjust numbers of guards due to this.

Serpent People Guards x 4 (p.3)

Treasure: The weapons and flourishes of the temple guards are extremely fine and would sell for double value of the item to a collector of weapons.

Area 4-4 Grand Temple

This room can only be described as grandiose. The ceiling must be 80' off the floor and it is entirely covered in mosaics of the serpent god. To the south a ledge drops off to a large pristine pool of water from which a fountain shaped like a hundred snake heads spitting venom keeps moving. Dominating the centre of the chamber is a statue of the snake god that dwarfs all around it. The hood nearly touching the roof of the temple room.

This is the heart and soul of this group of serpent people. Worship is not seen as anything but the fulfilment of a complete life. No serpent person would ever not paying homage to Athississ and all of them visit the temple on a daily basis whilst in the area.

Currently there are two temple guards and four acolytes tending the temple. The temple guards are swimming in the holy waters of the divine Athississ when the characters arrive and the acolytes are tending the statue. Any battle in here will draw the High Priest Sscollor, from his chamber to the north east of the temple.

Serpent People High Priest (p.4)

Serpent People Acolyte x 4 (p.3)

Serpent People Guard x 2 (p.3 max hp)

Treasure: There are many treasures inside the temple. Religious relics and treatises on Athississ written in books covered in snake skin are everywhere to be had and total up to 1000 gp to an individual interested in religion, history or intelligent species.

The waters of the pool have a restorative effect too, washing away tiredness and aches giving the character back 1d4 hp per half hour swim.

Area 4-5 High Priest Chamber

A chamber sits inside this larger chamber. The room is adorned with paintings utilising ochres of the great serpent god. The paintings are frightful to your eyes and they mainly display the god destroying other humanoids.

If you did not face the high priest in the previous room you will meet him here and he will battle to the death.

Treasure: There is an idol of Athississ in here made of precious gems that fits together like a puzzle. In a skilled cleric's hands this could be used to make contact and divine information about the god's desires. To a religious item collector it would easily fetch 800 gp.

Also in the room is a longsword held in a crystal weapon case. It is the *Blade of the Desert Nomad*. A +1 blade with 6 intelligence but no means of communication other than its ability to direct the wielder to any source of water within 30'.

Of course you can put more items in here. Things that can hook into the next great DCC adventure you are going to run.