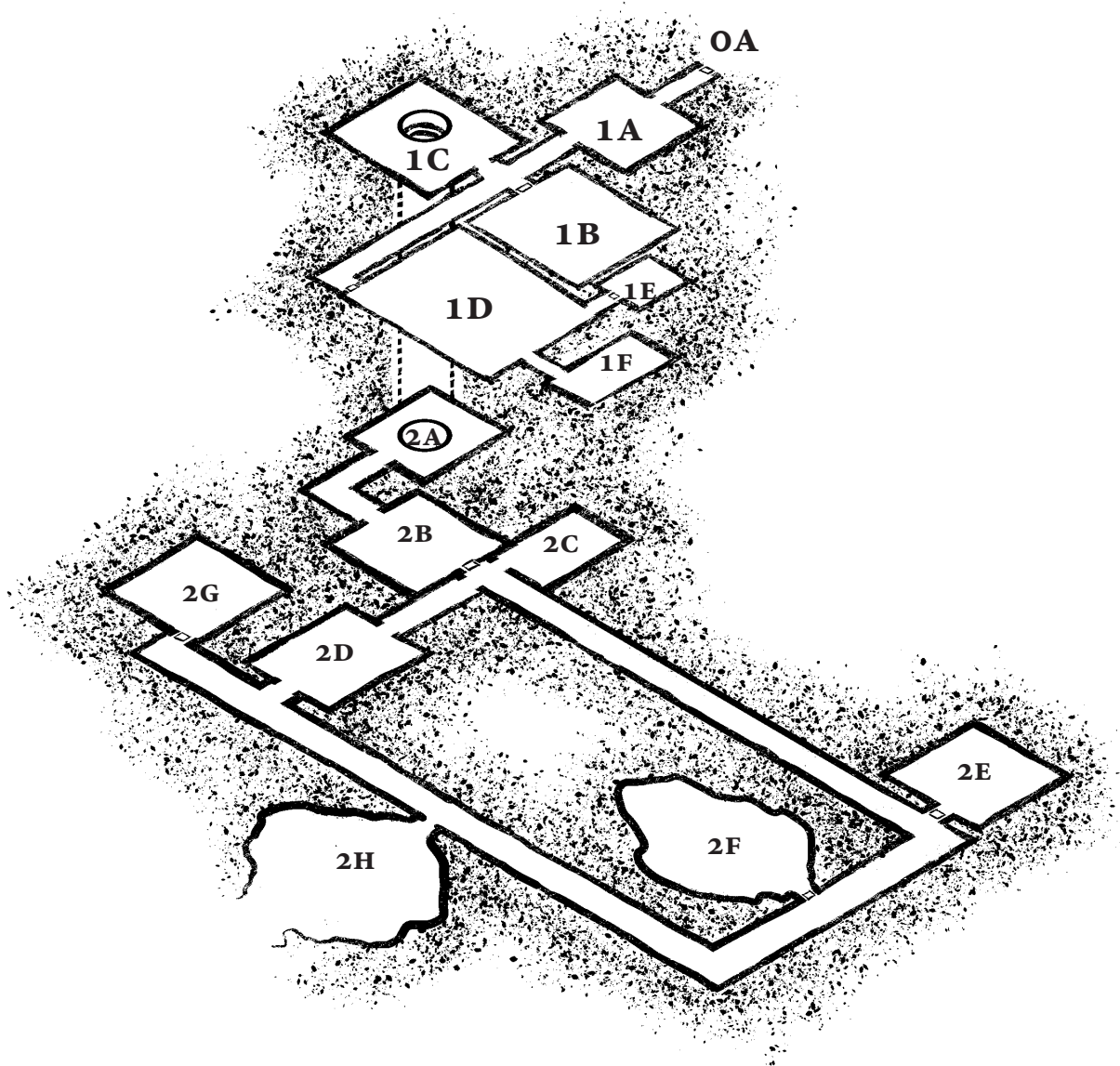




THE TEMPLE OF LIES

by Zzarchov Kowolski

*An Adventure for NEOCLASSICAL GEEK REVIVAL
and OSR ROLEPLAYING GAMES*



The
Temple
of
Lies

an adventure for characters of levels 1-2 for use with
Neoclassical Geek Revival
or your favourite
Old School Roleplaying Game

written by
Zzarchov Kowolski

art by
Jean-Leon Gerome

cartography by
Chris Huth

layout by
Chris Huth

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INTRODUCTION

The horrors of the world, supernatural and mundane, force mankind to huddle together around shared fires. Eventually enough scared masses huddle together that they form towns to act as bastions of civilization against the terrors of the night. As more and more people flood into these citadels for safety, they begin to buckle under the strain. When neighbours no longer know neighbours, the tall grasses of the plains have been replaced by the crumbling and twisting alleys of the slums in allowing monsters free reign over the weak. In one such city resides the temple of lies.

The adventure has two variants, depending on if the cult has access to real magic or if they are just deluded. If they have real magic, several items will become magical items and that will have an impact on other portions of the dungeon. Monsters and spells may come into play where as otherwise there is just superstition and cheap tricks. If you haven't decided, flip a coin.

Orange text indicates a hidden danger

Red indicates an obvious person
or monster

BLUE indicates the most obvious detail
of an area

Green is treasure

THE HOOK

This adventure is based upon kidnapping and so the easiest hook is the kidnapping of a treasured non-player character, or more likely, someone who owes the player characters something they want. If the players feel themselves a heroic sort (or wish to be seen as such by the locals) they could also witness a kidnapping of an innocent person and be driven by their inner heroism to attempt a rescue. The important parameters are that the players have to care at least somewhat (regardless of why), they have to be in "hot pursuit" or have some other clue that leads them quickly to the alley way in question, and they have to have a reason to not just call the local authorities to deal with it. For the last one, the simple effect that the local authorities may be incompetent or corrupt usually works. Less so if they are in charge of the town or are otherwise figures of high esteem.

THE ALLEY

OA

The entry to the adventure location seems to be a **BASEMENT APARTMENT** under a crowded boarding house, serving mostly poor rural families looking to make a fresh start in the city and failing miserably. At ground level, **a lone guard** of impressive stature keeps **a trio of beggars** on their side of the alley. The guard wears a dark cloak with a key ring on his hip. He carries an unsheathed sword of local manufacture. The key unlocks the door to the basement apartment, once covered in vibrant red paint but recently coated in black pitch to seal cracks in the aged wood. One of the beggars is secretly a second guard and holds a trio of *poisoned throwing knives*.

The guard will not want to cause a scene, but will also not permit access to the opium den beyond. He will attempt to summon local authorities in the following circumstances: 1. They are corrupt *or* 2. Opium dens are not illegal *and* 3. The player characters are not local authorities. If help cannot be raised by the authorities, the guard will attempt to gain the attention of the residents of the boarding house. While they are unlikely to face off to armed adventurers, the residents of the opium den earn favour with the local neighbourhood by generally keeping burglars away and provide free rat catcher services that greatly

improve the health of the area. This means residents (especially children) will lean out the second and third story windows to boo and empty chamber pots, potentially throwing a rock or two.

THE OPIUM DEN

The door from the street leads down a half flight to stairs to the mudroom. The walls are a mortared field stone foundation, reinforced and repaired with bricks and wooden beams throughout the years. The ceiling is 8 feet high, made of ancient oaken beams and pine planks festooned with rusty iron nails that occasionally stick through a few inches. You can periodically hear some foot traffic from the housing above that will shower down dust and dirt. The ceiling is very flammable and will probably ignite if burning oil is used. The floor is made of bricks sunk into the dirt and is slightly uneven, small dips here and there trap dust and dirt. Doors are simply cheap wool curtains between rooms.

MUD ROOM

1A

The Mudroom is fairly bare, wooden pegs are set into the walls to hang cloaks upon. Boots are roughly piled in a corner upon a large rough hemp rug. A **CHEAP PINE END TABLE** with a lit *silver candelabra* (25sp) upon it. There are 12 cloaks on the hooks and

40 shoes and boots (20 matched pairs) on the rug. It would take some effort to count the boots and match them.

SLEEPING ROOM **1B**

Seven washed up addicts lay upon reed mats with simple wool pillows. They are in tattered rags and look like they have no possessions of value. If investigated, one of them have a valuable *heirloom signet ring* (50sp) he has not yet debased himself enough to sell. Unless the player characters try to rob, assault, wake, or otherwise interfere with the addicts they will not react. If one of them is interfered with, 1d6 of the remaining addicts will attempt to help their fellow addict.

LATRINE **1C**

The floor in the latrine is packed earth, **THREE STALLS ARE MADE OF CHEAP PINE**. Inside each stall is a simple slat over a hole. Each stall also has an approximately hip high hole leading to the other stalls for obvious sexual purposes. The stall in the centre has a large iron sconce set firmly into the wall behind it. Its position makes using the centre stall quite awkward. The hole under the slat in the central stall drops down 40 feet into The Pit. Midway down, an individual could enter the Landing Area in the secret temple with the right climbing gear. The sconce is securely set enough that it could hold the weight of 4 or 5 people.

CLERKS **1D**

This room contains **5 clerks** counting money and opium, and **a single guard** to watch over them. They sit on small cushions in front of small **COFFEE TABLES WITH SCALES, ABACUSES, AND OTHER TOOLS**. The clerks have swords by their sides, the guard wears mail armour of local make, a heavy helm, and wields a sword and shield. Combined the clerks have *1d8 x 1d100 sp in assorted loose coins and 1d20 small pouches of opium* (worth 50sp a piece). The clerks will fight if they think they can win, but they are not interested in dying to stop a robbery (the guard will try to fight first and raise the alarm). They all do know the location of the secret temple, but will not divulge that information. If they think the secret temple is at risk, they will fight as zealots to protect it.

STORES/ KITCHEN **1E**

This room has **A FEW BARRELS** of water, and one of apples. They also have *a few bottles of wine* (1d6+1) worth 5sp a piece, and *a silver tea service* worth 25sp (including the tea). It is otherwise empty.

VIP ROOM **1F**

A **BRASS BRAZIER** dimly illuminates the room with its charcoal embers. *Silk curtains* hang against the walls (100sp), and **A PAIR OF SOFAS** provide

comfortable seating (worth 75sp a piece if you can carry them out). **A single passed out wealthy aristocrat** is on the couch, while **a young woman** wearing nothing but an iron chain collar lounges on the other sofa, awake. She will claim to be a slave prostitute but is actually a neophyte to the secret temple who preys upon the passed out wealthy movers and shakers of society. She will play the part of the slave and hope for freedom, but will seek to protect the temple once out of sight (perhaps by summoning the authorities if that has not been done, but could be without exposing the temple).

OVERALL VIBE

The opium den is the front of the secret temple, but anyone with experience in either the drug trade or even retail would know that the amount of staff and guards compared to the amount of patrons that it could house even at maximum capacity means this is not a business that can survive on its own. It needs subsidization. If the players investigated the number of boots they would also note that there are too many for how many people are in the opium den. There is also no kidnapped victim. If they haven't yet found the secret path to the temple, they should be looking now. The

longer they take, the more likely the kidnapping victim is dead.

THE SECRET TEMPLE

The secret temple is a dug out of the earth, with large limestone slabs to create walls, floor, and a ceiling. Periodically a crack has appeared from the shifting of the earth around the temple. The temple is warm and humid from some unknown cause. The air smells acrid. Doors in the secret temple are heavy wooden doors painted red and then bound in brass.

LANDING AREA **2A**

Part way down the latrine shaft, it expands outwards into a landing area while the pit continues below. Someone descending by a rope would have to swing the rope to try and throw themselves past the pit and onto the landing area. The landing area has a **PILE OF CLIMBING GEAR** in the corner, and there is a knotted rope and grapnel affixed to **A HEAVY IRON RUNG** in the wall. This can be thrown up and attached to the scone in the latrine, allowing easy access between the opium den and the secret temple.

CRYSTAL ARCH **2B**

This room contains **TWO MASSIVE QUARTZ CRYSTALS** that lean against each other to form an arch. You must walk through this arch to reach the

DOUBLE DOORS leading deeper into the temple. A fine thread across the entryway from the landing area acts as a *tripwire*. If snapped it will release two small weights from the ceiling that will strike the two crystals and cause them to hum loudly for almost a minute, alerting everyone in the dungeon. The thread runs through a series of simple rings set into the wall and can be easily found if investigated from inside the room with the crystal arch.

STORES **2C**

This room contains **SEVERAL BARRELS** of water, a few of wine, and **MANY BASKETS** of charcoal. There is also a crate full of green candles. **DRIED MEAT HANGS FROM THE CEILING** on string. Tucked in the corner under a linen sheet is a round sarcophagus with a coil design. Its lid is circular and looks like a stylized female face with long hair radiating in all directions. If this site contains real magic, then a serpent demon is inside the *sarcophagus* and will awaken once it is opened. If not, it contains the mummified skeleton of a decapitated python, and the severed mummified head of a woman connected to it through ancient taxidermy. It is convincing but wouldn't fool a doctor or taxidermist under close inspection.

HALL OF MEDITATION **2D**

This room has an **UNLIT BRAZIER** full of charcoal. The **WALLS ARE CARVED WITH BAS-RELIEFS** showing men and women engaging in various sexual rites with creatures of mixed human and serpent appearance. Text supposedly written in the ancient language of the serpentmen details various parables and mantras for religious reflection. **Two temple guards** wearing silk and brass mail are stationed here (unless the alarm has already been raised). They each carry an ornate fire lance that has been stylized to look like a spitting cobra. The firelances are loaded with broken pottery for a scattershot effect. Each also carries a dagger of exotic make with a blade that curves back and forth. Each of the guards has had their tongue slit, to create the illusion of a forked tongue. The guards are fanatical.

SLEEPING QUARTERS **2E**

This room contains **A SINGLE CHEST** and **SEVEN HAMMOCKS**. There are **four "nuns"** in the room if the alarm hasn't been sounded, 1d4 of which are in the hammocks. The nuns are nude, but covered in fine silver chains and other *jewellery* (45sp of value each). They have tattoos of reptile scales over much of their body and have had their tongues slit to create the illusion of

a forked tongue. Each wields a whip with a weighted barb at the tip. The barb is coated in a powerful venom. The nuns are fanatical.

RELIQUARY **2F**

This room has the **RAW STONE WALLS OF THE CAVERN** that was hallowed out, and it is full of **a writhing mass of snakes**. Large cracks in the walls allow these serpents to leave the temple and make their way back outside when the weather permits. In the centre of the room is **A LARGE FLAT STONE WITH A SQUARE IRON CAGE SECURELY BOLTED TO IT**. Inside this locked cage are the relics of the temple:

A dyed green rope

A golden dagger shaped like two snakes

4 vials of venom

A snakeskin collar with beaten copper clasps that forms an ouroboros when worn.

HIGH PRIEST'S CHAMBERS **2G**

The walls of this room are coated in **PAINTED MURALS** of humans offering gifts and tributes to a massive serpent that coils around the entire room several times. In the centre of the room is a **STONE THRONE** upon which sits **the high priest**. The High Priest wears a green silk robe with a heavy white leather apron. He wears green

silk gloves and his face is covered with a silk balaclava with only his eyes and mouth visible. Around his neck he wears *a gold medallion* (50sp) with the sign of an ouroboros upon it. In his hands is wooden staff carved to look like a serpent. He has the key to the reliquary. Beside the throne is a *bone flute*. If this cult does not know real magic the high priest is a charlatan and there is then a *secret panel* on the wall behind the throne. Behind that panel is a watertight sack containing a cloak, fake travel documents, *a pouch with 500 silver coins*, a rope with grapnel, and a stolen town watch uniform. There is also a crawling tunnel to the bottom of the pit under the latrine. If things go south a charlatan high priest would try to escape and leave all the faithful to burn at the stake. If they have real magic the flute is magical, if they do not, the “high priest” is a trained snake charmer.

ALTAR **2H**

This room opens up into a part of the **NATURAL CAVERN** that is **PARTIALLY FLOODED** with unusually water. **A LARGE FLAT ROCK** sits in the centre of this chamber, illuminated by green candles floating on wicker rafts. The massive **Sacred Python** rests on the rock, slowing constricting or swallowing the kidnapping victim.

The longer the party has taken to arrive, the further along it is in the process. If threatened the albino

python will attempt to retreat to the water and swim down some 20 feet to wait out the threat.

TREASURES AND MAGICAL ITEMS

Holy Serpent Venom

This thick and viscous liquid is used to coat the beggar assassin's throwing knives, and the barbs on the snake nun's whips. 4 vials of it can be found in the reliquary. If this cult knows *Real Magic*[™], the venom also makes the weapon it coats count as a magic weapon equivalent to a blessed +1 weapon for a single combat (this includes any poison damage). NGR: It adds 1d8 points of poison to a successful attack. OSR: A hit from a poisoned weapon deals 1d8 extra damage with a poison saving throw to only suffer half instead.

0A, 2E, 2F

Silver Candelabra 25sp

A silver candelabra with some fine silver work, but also a few dents. It does not fit with the rest of the establishment and was most likely sold by an addict to the den for more opium.

1A

Heirloom Signet Ring 50sp

An ornate gold ring with two tiny inset rubies and the mark of a formerly great noble house that long ago fell to disrepute.

1B

Small Pouch of Opium 50sp

Its a bag of opium. It is possible to overdose on even one such pouch. (NGR: It contains 20 points of intoxicants)

1D

Opium Den's Treasury ?sp

A collection of coins of all denominations. 1D8x1d100 sp worth of coins. This is a treasure of local importance (NGR).

1D

Bottles of "Fine" Wine 5sp

These bottles of wine are imported from region renowned for its great wineries. These aren't from those expensive wineries mind you, but for those who don't know the difference their country of origin is enough to show their quality.

1E*Silver Tea Service* 25sp

This is a descent quality tea service without any particularly unusual qualities. It is the sort of tea service any upper middle class home would have for special occasions. This means it probably arrived here as trade in for more opium.

1E*Silk Curtains* 100sp

These are a trio of large curtains (4'x8' each) made from pink silk. There are a few minor tears and stains near the bottom.

1F*A Pair of Sofas* 75sp

Each of these sofa's is made of ornately carved wood in a floral design. They are upholstered with thick velvet cushions. They have some small burn marks in them that are not immediately obvious.

1F*Ancient Sarcophagus*

This is a round terracotta sarcophagus with a coil design, similar to a serpent if closely studied. Its lid is made of ancient wood, it is circular and looks like a stylized female face with long hair radiating in all directions. If it contains real magic and is unopened, it would be a treasure of local importance (NGR) to any wizards in the area.

2C*Brass and Silk Mail* 200sp

This armour is made of brass mail and armoured plates sewn between sheets of dark green silk with gold embroidery of serpents. NGR: Sophisticated Ceremonial Mail Armour. OSR: AC4

2D*Stylized Firelance* 250sp

A brass bell like structure on the end of a staff with pair of axe blades on either side for use as a makeshift chopping weapon, all artistically stylized to look like an angry cobra. When loaded with gunpowder it fires a volley of broken pottery at an unfortunate target. NGR: Medium Burst Experimental missile weapon that cannot be reloaded in combat. It can function as an unsuitable hand-and-a-half slashing pole weapon in melee. OSR: It can be fired for an attack dealing 2d6 to a target. It misfires on a 2 or less, dealing 1d3 damage to the firer.

2D*Jewellery of the Snake Nuns* 45sp

Each of the snake nuns wears, for lack of a better term, a body harness of fine silver jewellery chains. There are a myriad of clasps joining chains together, each in the shape of an ouroboros. If the cult knows

real magic, the chains do provide some protection against entirely supernatural creatures (NGR: DR 1 against supernatural creatures or magical weapons, OSR: AC 12 to creatures requiring a magic weapon to hit, or against attacks from a magic weapon). This appears to be some form of divine blessing.

2E

Dyed Green Rope

If the cult knows real magic, the rope has been blessed by the powers of the snake god. It counts as a +1 object and cannot be snapped by supernatural creatures, regardless of their strength (unless they require a +2 or better weapon to hit).

2F

Golden Serpent Dagger 500sp

This two pronged golden dagger is shaped like a pair of snakes, their tails forming the dagger points. If the cult knows real magic it has some minor powers. NGR: It is a relic with a benefit level of 4. OSR: A cleric of the snake god can use up a spell slot for a spell of level 1-3 to make the dagger have a bonus of +1 to +3 (based on the spell level) for one turn.

2F

Succubus Collar

This collar is made of a shed albino snake skin, with beaten copper clasps

in the “jaws” of the snake, that looks like an ouroboros encircling the neck of its wearer. If the cult knows real magic, the wearer of this collar may consumer the mind of a human male by taking his seed. A human fully drained by this process becomes a weak minded sickly individual, completely in thrall to the wearer of the collar.

NGR: This process deals 3d6 stress to the victim, leading to mind control.

OSR: The process causes level drain.

2F

Gold Amulet of the High Priest 50sp

This golden medallion is a flat circle of gold worn around the neck by a leather strap. Carved onto it is an ouroboros. If the cult has access to real magic, this amulet is a holy symbol to the snake god.

2G

Bone Flute 5sp

If the cult does not know real magic, this is just a flute made from a human bone, supposedly covered with writing in the language serpentmen. If they do, it is enchanted to allow one to charm snakes. NGR: The writing contains the spell “Snake Charmer” and the flute is a rare crafted spell component. OSR: While playing the flute (you have to know how), no snake or serpent of equal or lower hit dice to the flutist will attack.

2G

NGR Spell: Snake Charmer

Template: Shriek

Difficulty: 5

Cost: 5 per power level

Range: Audible

This spell allows the caster to calm all snakes and serpents within range with a size modifier equal to or less than the power level of the spell through music. This lasts until the caster stops performing the music.

DENIZENS OF THE SECRET TEMPLE

BOUNCER **OA**

A tall and muscular man in a dark cloak wielding a sword. He has the key to the opium den on his key ring.

NGR: The bouncer is very strong (16 strength)

OSR: 1+1 HD, Unarmoured, Attack as weapon with + 1 damage, good morale, speed of an unarmoured man.

BEGGAR ASSASSIN **OA**

A scrawny beggar in tattered robes with a hidden stash of poison throwing knives. He remains hidden unless the bouncer is attacked.

NGR: He is weak (8 strength) but quick (13 agility) and alert (13 perception).

OSR: A level 1 thief. Unarmoured with a high dexterity bonus. Attack as weapon + poison. Excellent morale. Speed of an unarmoured man.

ADDICTS **1B**

Emaciated opium addicts who lurch around with the thousand yard stare.

They are sickly and unwell. They do not have weapons.

NGR: Sickly (7 health), weak (7 strength), and weak willed (7 will).

OSR: 1/2 HD. Unarmoured. Unarmed attacks. Poor morale. Speed of a man in plate armour.

CLERKS **1D**

Men counting money and drugs. Nothing special or of note. Their morale increases to unbreakable if the cult risks exposure. They have swords.

NGR: Very strong willed (16 will)

OSR: 1 HD, unarmoured, attack with weapon. Average morale*, speed of an unarmoured man.

TREASURY GUARD **1D**

An armoured figure who guards the treasury of the opium den. He wears mail armour, a heavy helm, bears a shield and wears a sword.

NGR: Brave (13 will), has Guard warrior power.

OSR: 1HD, Armour as mail and shield, attack as weapon, good morale, speed of a man in mail armour.

NEOPHYTE **1F**

A conventionally attractive young woman, nude except for an iron chain collar. She pretends to be a slave but is a neophyte to the secret cult.

NGR: Healthy and attractive (12 health and 12 charisma).

OSR: 1 HD. Unarmoured. Unarmed attacks. Poor morale. Speed of an unarmoured man.

SERPENT DEMON **2C**

A demon preserved for untold eons in its sarcophagus, until some dingbat player characters woke it. It has the body of a 15 foot long constrictor snake, but the head of a woman, with long black hair. When it locks gaze with a human it causes its victims to hear sweet soothing words, unable to notice its horrific form, sending them to catatonic states.

NGR: It is very quick (16 agility) and unnaturally hypnotic (supernatural charisma). It may cause stress with appeals, leading to a catatonic state. Fast (moves 2 areas per action)

OSR: 2 HD, armour as leather, no effective physical attack, poor morale, twice as fast as an unarmoured man. May make a gaze attack each round,

target must make a saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 turn.

TEMPLE GUARDS **2D**

Trained warriors in ornate silk and brass mail armour, wielding fire lances and daggers.

NGR: Strong (12 strength), quick (12 agility) and very brave (16 will), but a little dumb (8 intelligence) and gullible (6 charisma).

OSR: 1+1 HD, Armour as mail and shield, attack as weapon, excellent morale, speed of a man in mail armour.

SNAKE NUNS **2E**

Nude women wearing body harnesses of silver jewellery chain and wielding poisoned whips. Their armour gives a bonus against magic weapons if that comes up.

NGR: They are very quick (16 agility) and very brave (16 will).

OSR: 1HD, unarmoured*, attack as weapon + poison, excellent morale, speed of an unarmoured man.

WRITHING MASS OF SNAKES **2F**

I'd normally leave it at "what it says on the tin", but in this case the tin says "Peanut Brittle" so its a bit of a lie.

NGR: If someone moves through the mass of snakes, roll a d6 and subtract their armour's DR. They

suffer an amount of damage equal to that number and a number of d4's of poison equal to that number. Don't crawl through a pit of poison snakes in NGR.

OSR: Save vs poison or die. Success if 3d6 damage. Don't crawl through a pit of poison snakes in OSR games either.

HIGH PRIEST **2G**

The high priest is a man covered head to toe in green silk, with a heavy white leather apron, in imitation of a snake. He wears a silk balaclava, and has a gold medallion around his neck. He wields a wooden staff carved to look like a serpent.

If the cult knows real magic he is a (un)holy man.

NGR: 4th level 2 part priest and 1 part bard. True Belief, Dogma, Fervour. Leadership. He has an iron will (20 will) but is very closed minded (8 intelligence).

OSR: 4th level cleric with 18 wisdom. Armour as leather from the front. Attack as weapon. Unbreakable morale. Speed of an unarmoured man.

If the cult does not know real magic he is a charlatan.

NGR: 2nd level 3 part bard. He is very clever (16 intelligence) and charming (13 charisma) but is a complete coward (4 will).

OSR: A 2nd level bard or thief. Unarmoured. Attack as weapon. Pathetic morale. Speed of an unarmoured man.

SACRED PYTHON **2H**

This massive albino python is over 30 feet long. It lazily lounges on a warm rock, consuming its prey. Its unusually bulky and muscular.

NGR: The creature has a size modifier of 3 and is very strong (16 strength) and while it is normally very quick (16 agility) it is less so while eating or when having recently fed (6 agility). It is quite skittish all things considering (6 will). If it has not eaten it can constrict, dealing an automatic strength die of damage each round if it is grappling a target.

OSR: 5 hit dice, armour as leather, attack by constricting. If it successfully hits it deals an automatic d8 damage each round after the first. Poor morale. Speed as fast as an unarmoured man, half that if it has recently eaten. It moves twice as fast in water.

