



EYE OF THE SERPENT

A Shadow of the Weird Wizard Quest for Expert Heroes



ple nervous, especially when their sons and daughters seem to be caught up with this new, weird religion, all swept up in the promises of false gods. In and out: what could be simpler than that?

It's a simple job: break into the temple, find the Eye of the Serpent, and get out. A job such as this one is nothing a typical group of seasoned adventures couldn't handle. And no one should feel guilty about robbing this temple. The cultists who worship there make people

CREDITS

Writing, Design, Art Direction:

Robert J. Schwalb

Illustrations: Yuggin Maffioli

Cartography: Matthew Myslinski

Editing and Proofreading: Jay Spight

Graphic Design and Layout: Kara Hamilton

Eye of the Serpent is © 2024 Schwalb Entertainment, LLC. All rights reserved. *Eye of the Serpent*, *Shadow of the Weird Wizard*, Schwalb Entertainment, and their associated logos are trademarks of Schwalb Entertainment, LLC.





SERVANTS OF A FALSE GOD

Seeking to establish a foothold on the continent, the naga sent shapeshifters into a city on the coast of the Sea of Fear. These agents infiltrated the Followers of the Silver Road, a minor cult, replaced the leadership, and perverted the group to the cause of the snake people. Since taking over, the Silver Road has become a growing cause of concern for the community, especially as it seems the priests focus on making converts of young people coming from wealthy families. Dozens have fallen under the cult's sway and these converts isolate themselves from friends and family as a result.

The disguised naga use the temple as cover for their efforts to create a magical gate that will connect the temple grounds to the naga enclave hidden on an island in the Sea of Fear. For the gate to open, the naga need a source of magical energy. They have found Oraldian crystals useful for this purpose. Connecting the crystals to the machinery powers on the gate long enough to transport a few people at a time. Unfortunately, the crystals are rare and expensive; they contain souls of the people from the lost Oraldian civilization.

The cult needs funds to acquire these crystals and thus they prey on rich young people. Once they have them in their clutches, they extort riches from their families. While the cult's actions enrage the city's elite and would draw swift reprisals, the cult has their offspring and holds them as willing hostages, ensuring a steady flow of gold into their coffers.

GETTING STARTED

You can set this quest in any city you like, though Westport and its extensive catacombs make the ideal place. The quest expects the characters to get inside the temple of the Silver Road and get out again. Some possible reasons for their involvement follow:

LURE OF RICHES: The characters have heard of the cult's fabulous wealth, with riches beyond imagining. Rumors claim the cult has the fabled Eye of the Serpent, a 10-inch-diameter cat's eye agate orb worth a king's ransom.

RESCUE MISSION: A parent hires the group to rescue their child, who has fallen under the cult's influence. A successful mission sees a reward of 5 gp per character.

THWARTED CONSTABLE: A constable has been investigating the Followers of the Silver Road for months, but, suddenly, their superiors reassign them to some other part of the city. The constable comes to the characters for help. The constable can offer each character 2 gp for their assistance and then becomes a connection if the group completes the quest.

FACTFINDING

The players might ask for time to investigate the cult in the hopes of gaining more information. They can learn the following facts from talking with locals, from their connections, and snooping around the neighborhood.

- The Silver Road has been in the city for years, but no one paid them much attention until the last year or so.
- The cult was known for being peaceful. Gagmalkus, a so-called mystic, founded the cult after devising an ethical system that promised rewards in the afterlife by foregoing riches in the present life.
- Recently, the cultists seem focused on finding pleasure in all things, though they still claim to have no interest in material wealth.
- The cult has been buying up Oraldian crystals. They're supposed to be rare and expensive.
- Most recruits are young with wealthy and influential parents. Many members treat the cult as more of a social club than an actual religion.
- The cult's symbol, a bisected circle, has been appearing all over the city.
- People have been complaining about the Silver Road, but the authorities have done nothing about it.
- Not everyone who joins the cult stays. A few weeks back, a former member came out against them, claiming the temple was infested with snakes. The ex-cultist disappeared a few days later.

FOLLOWING THE SILVER ROAD

The Silver Road temple stands in the center of the city's blighted seaside district, surrounded by about two blocks of abandoned buildings, each square and stacked atop each other, and having been left to the birds, wild monkeys and dogs, and the few squatters brave or foolish enough to settle here. The temple's pagoda rises above the compound's walls, visible from just about everywhere in the district.

The bisected circle in white paint shows up on walls along with exhortations to "Walk the Silver Road" and "Receive the Wisdom of Gagmalkas."

NEARBY BUILDINGS

If the group inspects the abandoned buildings, they find furniture, dishes, clothing, and other personal effects, all left by whoever lived here. Not much of value remains, the choicest treasures having been pocketed by trespassers, though characters can make a luck roll for every two or three buildings searched and discover 4d6 cp worth of valuables. The squatters (6 **peasants**) avoid contact with outsiders, fleeing if able. If captured and questioned, they reveal people tend to go missing here. One claims no one leaves this place; they're taken from it.

SILVER ROAD CULTISTS

The cult's active membership includes 36 **cultists**, 6 **cult deacons**, 3 **cult leaders**, 2 **cult priests**, and 1 **cult high priest**. The cult high priest, priests, and leaders all have the naga ancestry with the Shapeshift special action (see Naga, in *Secrets of the Weird Wizard*). These naga murdered the leadership, stole their identities, and now masquerade as them. The high priest carries the key to the treasure vault (see Naga Warrens, later in this quest).

Cultists dress in yellow and green silk robes with nothing on underneath. They grow their hair long and grease it up into bizarre shapes.

The temple receives deliveries of foodstuffs to feed the entire group on the last day of each week. Wagons arrive and porters unload the supplies outside the rear gate. Cultists carry in goods, which usually takes an hour or two.

DAY VISITS

Visitors find 1d6 + 4 cultists roaming the temple grounds, while a cult leader watches over them. The leader welcomes visitors and invites them to receive the wisdom of the Silver Road. The cultists are pleasant, though empty-headed and easily distracted.

If the characters hope to inspect the pagoda and the great idol it contains, they are turned away with apologies as only the ordained can withstand the glory of the idol.

Any hostile action against the cultists draws another 1d6 cultists from a place of your choice among those in the outbuildings.

SILVER ROAD TENETS

If the characters socially interact with the cultists, they can learn more about the cult's essential tenets.

The gods gave mortals everything they need to find pleasure in life.

Riches might seem the way to pleasure by spending coin for acquisition, but such joys are fleeting and sullied by the flaw of greed.

Only by divesting of one's wealth can true happiness be found.

The cult accepts donations and uses those funds for charitable causes, as well as to maintain the cult's needs.

There is but one purpose in life: pleasure in all things.

NIGHT VISITS

The temple closes its doors to outsiders after night falls. After dinner, the revels begin and cultists cavort, ingest mind-altering substances, and engage in lewd activities until a few hours before dawn. Nearly all the cultists can be found in the gardens, along with the deacons who watch over them. Leaders, priests, and the high priest absent themselves from these events, generally, and retreat to their Secret Sanctum.

The cult permits no outsiders on the grounds after hours and attack anyone they find, raising the alarm, which draws the leadership out of the Secret Sanctum 1d6 + 3 rounds after combat begins. Characters incapacitated by the cultists are stabilized, bound, and dragged to the leadership who decide their fates.

TEMPLE LOCATIONS

A 2-yard-high wall surrounds the compound and contains several different locations. Gardens of flowers, shrubbery, and ornamental trees crowd a gravel path that winds through the place.

1. PAGODA

The 10-yard-tall pagoda occupies the center of the compound. An opening facing the outer gates leads to the Chamber of the Idol, with yellow and green hangings on the walls and a pedestal in the center on which coils a stone statue of a one-eyed serpent. The eye is the enormous cat's eye agate and it's worth 500 gp, but it carries a curse. Anyone who is not a cultist that touches the jewel becomes cursed and, while cursed in this way, becomes poisoned (luck ends) whenever they take 5 damage or more from a single instance of taking damage. The cursed affliction fades 30 days after the creature last touched the jewel.

2. POOL OF REFLECTION

A sizeable fishpond dotted with lily pads and fringed with multicolored flowers offers a place of quiet reflection ideal for meditation.

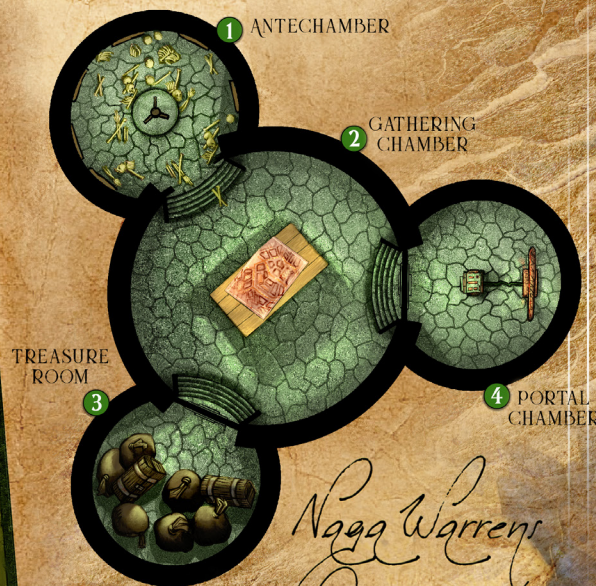
3. DORMITORY

The 60 small cells that spread throughout this single-story L-shaped building house the cultists and deacons. The cells lack doors, enabling free access to anyone and at any time. Most cultists sleep here during the day, recovering from the previous evening's excesses. The cultists have nothing of value; they donate everything to the cult. Each cell holds a cot, table, chair, icon of the serpent, and a few sets of spare robes.

4. COMMONS

The large square-shaped building holds a spacious dining hall with rows of long tables and benches, with kitchens and storerooms to the back. The cultists handle all the cooking and cleaning.

Silver Path TEMPLE



5. HALL OF THE EXALTED

The Hall of the Exalted mirrors the dormitories, but the cult bars entry to anyone other than the leadership. This building contains 60 cells, with the same furnishing and sparse decoration of the dormitory, except that it holds a small shrine dedicated to the cult's founder in the far corner. A life-size stone statue of a bearded man wearing long robes and flowers in his hair stands on a pedestal at the center while prayer rugs cover the floor to all sides.

THE STATUE

The statue depicts the cult's founder, Gagmalkas, and it is made of a soft stone (Size 1, Health 20). Anyone with an Intellect of 11 or higher that inspects the statue notices the base swivels. Pushing the statue causes the statue to swing out and reveal a circular opening set in the floor, slightly smaller than the statue's 2-yard-wide diameter base. A wooden climbing pole stands in the center of the opening and descends to location 1 of the Naga Warrens.

NAGA WARRENS

The naga conceal the existence of the chambers under the temple from the other cultists. They use lethal force to dispatch anyone who discovers it. Comprising a few chambers, the naga meet here to discuss plans, to transport their fellows through the gate, and store the wealth culled from their followers.

1. ANTECHAMBER

A circular room, about 10 yards in diameter, marks the entrance to the rest of the underground complex. An opening to the southeast leads to a short set of stairs that descend to location 2.

Bones cover the floor and disturbing images of snake people decorate the walls. An **amphisbaena** guards this room. It awakens when the statue is moved from above and moves out of sight of descending intruders. It recognizes naga by scent, so it attacks anyone who doesn't belong and fights until slain.

2. GATHERING CHAMBER

The central circular chamber acts as a meeting place for the naga and, depending on when the characters enter this area, it might house some or all the naga. The room holds a table of yellow wood. Floating glass orbs shed dim light from near the ceiling. Two closed doors stand in the walls, one to the southwest and one to the southeast.

A map of the city stretches across the table. Red circles mark places where the naga have established control over influential citizens. Such information might be useful for future quests. In addition, there's plenty of information with which the cult can blackmail the city's leaders.

Any naga encountered here fight until they lose half their numbers, at which point the rest flee toward location 4 and through the gate found in that place.

3. TREASURE VAULT

A lock and a Light Lattice trap (see *Secrets*, page 38) protect the door into this chamber. The high priest has the key, which neutralizes the trap when used to unlock the door. Picking the lock with tools requires 1 minute of work and a success on an Agility roll with 1 bane.

The treasure vault holds two large chests, six sacks, and a pile of clothing and worthless personal possessions donated to the cult by the new recruits. The chests and sacks hold a total of 124 gp, 568 sp, and 3,456 cp. Searching characters also find an Enchanted Dagger, a Talisman, and 3 Elixirs of Healing to round out the treasures. Finally, there is one Oraldian crystal.



ORALDIAN CRYSTAL

The length of clear crystal emits faint light when held. The first human to touch the crystal hears a voice in their head, a voice that gives an invitation to make a joining. In effect, the entity contained in the crystal offers magical power in return for the person to become the entity's host until death. If the character agrees, their ancestry changes from human to daeva. For more information on daeva's, see *Secrets of the Weird Wizard*.

4. PORTAL CHAMBER

Behind the unlocked door to this circular room stands a bronze metal ring, 2 yards in diameter, held perpendicular by a bronze clamp bolted into the stone of the floor. Cables extend from the clamp to a pedestal a few feet away.

RING

The ring (Health 10) forms the portal that connects to a naga enclave in the Sea of Fear. Once activated, the space inside the ring fills with shadows that remain until the ring powers down. Anything passing through the ring exits from the other side of

the portal, which, in this case, happens to be a sprawling naga enclave, with over one thousand naga and twice as many prisoners made to serve them. (Beyond the scope of this adventure, an expedition into the naga enclave could be an exciting basis for one or more adventures!)

PEDESTAL

Off to the side stands the pedestal, which holds the ring gate's controls. It features a couple of dials, needle gauges, and a socket large enough to hold an Oraldian crystal. One such crystal extends out from it, but it has turned black and cracks cover its surface.

If a character replaces the burned-out crystal with a fresh one, the character can attempt to switch on the portal by making an Intellect roll. On a success, the portal opens. At the end of each round that the portal is open, make a luck roll. On a success, 1d6 – 2 (minimum 0) **naga degenerates** emerge from the portal. On a failure, the crystal burns out, destroying the soul it contains, and the portal closes.

The pedestal has Health 20. If destroyed, it explodes, dealing 1d6 damage to everything in the room. A creature makes a luck roll. On a failure, the creature takes an extra 1d6 damage.

CONCLUSION

The quest ends when the characters accomplish the objective that put them in conflict with the cult. However, what happens next depends on how the encounter with the cult shakes out.

Absconding with the Eye of the Serpent mobilizes the cult against the city leaders. Fearing for their offspring, city leaders pressure the constables to find the thieves and bring them to justice. If the characters don't move on, it eventually comes out that they were the ones responsible. Not only does the group have to contend with the law, but they also must deal with the naga, who send assassins to dispense their brand of justice on the group.

If the characters discover some of the cultists to be naga, the surviving naga step up their efforts to bring more of their kind into the city, while increasing recruitment efforts. So bolstered, the cult scours the city for the characters, killing them if able.

Wiping out the naga and most of the cultists effectively destroys the cult and puts an end to their threat. However, there's a good chance for surviving cultists to become radicalized by the violence against them and start new and more dangerous societies in the likeness of the one they lost.