

Quest for the Snake Mother

**A One-Round AD&D Game Living Jungle Adventure
for Low/Mid Level Heroes**

by Tom Prusa

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This is a standard RPGA Network tournament. A four-hour time block has been set aside for this event. It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

The actual playing time will be about three hours. Make sure you use the last 20 to 30 minutes of the event time block to have the players capsulize their characters for each other and vote. The standard RPGA Network voting procedures will be used. Complete the Judge's Summary before you collect the players' scoring sheets. This way you will not be influenced by their ratings and comments.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

A note about the text: Some of the text in this module is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in *oblique font*. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

Welcome to the Living Jungle!

If this is the first time you've judged a Living Jungle adventure, be sure to obtain a copy of the Judge guidelines from your event coordinator. In any event, review the use of optional rules (especially the "At Death's Door" rule) before beginning play.

The Living Jungle is a tournament campaign exclusively for members of the RPGA Network. Be sure that you distribute scoring sheets at the *beginning* of the round, and make sure that each player at your table has a membership card (or at least remembers his or her membership number).

This tournament should include:

- 20 pages of text
- 6 Hero Point Certificates
- 7 Treasure Certificates

This is a low/mid-level Living Jungle adventure; only characters of sixth level or below may participate in it. If a player brings a higher-level character to your table, explain that he or she must use a lower-level hero (or start a new hero) to play in this event. If your players do not have heroes, help them create new ones (see your event coordinator for character creation instructions if you don't have them).

During the course of the adventure, the heroes will earn experience points based on their accomplishments. Some of these points are for overcoming obstacles, finding information, defeating monsters, and recovering treasure. After each encounter an experience point value is listed. This is summarized at the end of the adventure as well. *All characters contributing to the success of an encounter receive the listed experience points.*

For example, if an encounter lists an experience point value of 100, then each hero participating earns 100 points. All experience points are awarded at the end of the tournament. Do not award experience points after each encounter.

In some places the characters can gain treasure. For common items, like normal weapons and equipment, the players simply record the new items on their character sheets. But for magical or other special items, you must hand the appropriate Treasure Certificate, included with this tournament.

DM Background

This is a one round Living Jungle adventure for low/mid level heroes. In this adventure the heroes must negotiate a peace with an ancient enemy - the yuan-ti, or snake people.

The adventure begins with the heroes summoned by Bengoukee, legendary witch doctor of Bagoomba's tribe. They are told that Bengoukee has had many visions, bad visions. He is not certain what they mean, but one thing he does know is that the tribes cannot continue to fight against the snake people and survive. Thus, someone must make peace with the yuan-ti. The heroes have been selected for the task.

The party is provided with a guide, and sets out for the home of the yuan-ti. When they encounter a party of yuan-ti, tensions run high. If they are calm, they can get through the encounter with no bloodshed, and get an escort back to the village of the snake people.

Once there, they are immediately captured and held for a feast, with the heroes as the main course. The heroes may attempt an escape, or they may wait for their fate. Either way, they will get to place their offer to the snake mother, the leader of the yuan-ti.

Once they meet her and present Bengoukee's offer, she tells them that she too has had visions. Perhaps the heroes speak truly, and the hostilities should end. A yuan-ti priest objects, strenuously. He proposes a combat to the death. Instead, the snake mother directs that the yuan-ti take a group and race the heroes to recover an ancient magical item that can perform miracles when applied to seeing magic. The party to recover it will be proven to be correct, and so will the yuan-ti go, peace or war.

The heroes face a treacherous cave, a lightning trap, and a stone golem before recovering the jewel. Some fire

toads also block the entrance. If all of these obstacles are overcome, the heroes can recover the stone of seeing.

Returning to the yuan-ti temple, they are allowed to participate in the ceremony of seeing, which grants a vision of the coming of a great danger to the jungle.

Player's Introduction

It was an unexpected summons, but an impressive one. You were all about your separate business in the jungle, living your daily lives. Then a small animal, a tiny bird, an inoffensive reptile stopped right near you and spoke to you! In your own language it said, "Bengoukee wants to see you at the tribe of Bagoomba. Make haste, for he has had visions, and you must come." It then dropped back to the ground and sped off into the bushes, or flew off into the trees. With no more to go on than that, you made your way to the tribe of Bagoomba, to Bengoukee's hut.

If any heroes choose to ignore the call, they receive bad dreams that keep them from sleeping until they do start out for Bagoomba's tribe. Bengoukee wants them!

The heroes meet at the River of Laughing Idols, about a mile from Bagoomba's village. They can introduce and describe themselves before you continue on.

Bengoukee

You approach Bengoukee's hut with a bit of trepidation; the old korobokuru has scared better folk than you. All of you have been on missions for him before, but never has he specifically sent for you.

When you get to within a few yards of his hut, the door bursts open and you face Bagoomba, chief of the tribe. "You have come. Hurry, Bengoukee awaits." You enter after the chief, who trips on a rug and spills beer all over himself. Bengoukee looks exasperated, but says nothing. He indicates that you should be seated on the floor near him, and a young shu moves among you offering date wine or beer.

"Woe to Malatra!" are Bengoukee's first words. "I have had visions, terrible visions. A great danger comes to the jungle, one that could destroy all life. The nature of the danger itself is hidden from me. But this has my vision said: "The answer lies with the snake mother. Only those who have received the Curse of the Snake Mother can truly understand. For without the snake people, the other people of the jungle will be ground to dust."

Bengoukee continues, "As if this was not omen enough, the yuan-ti have begun to pose a real threat, raiding many small villages, and ambushing hunters in the jungle. Their numbers are few, compared to ours, but they are powerful. And if the raids are not stopped Bagoomba has said that he will send raiding parties to wipe out the yuan-ti. This could doom all the peoples of the jungle."

Bagoomba responds with a bluster: "What do you expect my hunters to do? They are being slaughtered, and no one likes to think about the fate of those who did not come back. But I listened to you, like I always do. I held back the raiding parties until these folk got here (indicating the heroes). So what are they going to do about it?"

Bengoukee turns to you. "We must have peace with the yuan-ti, and in my visions, it was you folk who held the key. I will not force you - the mission is very dangerous - but Malatra needs this. Will you do it?"

Allow the heroes to choose, and to ask questions of Bengoukee. He answers them to the best of his ability.

• **What is the peace offer?**

The heroes are authorized to promise almost anything. They must get the attacks on the tribesmen and the raids on the villages stopped. The treaty that Bagoomba prefers would leave all of the jungle north of the village of Kuomi to the yuan-ti, and the rest to the tribesmen. The heroes have a lot of latitude in this as well.

• **Where do we find the snake mother?**

The snake mother is thought to be a legend by many, but Bengoukee is certain she exists. He does not know the location of her temple; no one who is not a yuan-ti knows this and lives. However, he does have a guide who followed some yuan-ti to what he believes is the entrance. Bayi, a young ranger of the Simbara tribe, has agreed to lead the heroes there, although he does not wish to enter the temple.

• **How do we stop the yuan-ti from killing us?**

That's why this is a dangerous mission. The heroes will be provided with a gift for the snake mother, for when they reach the temple. If the heroes encounter a band of yuan-ti, they are more likely to fade into the jungle than to attack. The yuan-ti are too cunning to attack when they are outnumbered against an unknown enemy, and bands rarely number more than four. Do not get overconfident; each yuan-ti is a cunning and vicious fighter, or an even more vicious spellcaster. They do hold reptiles in great esteem; if anyone in the party is a saurian, lizardman, or caiman

katanga, or especially a snake katanga, this hero should be in charge and speak for the party.

• **What about supplies?**

Food and other supplies will be available. Weapons too, as needed.

• **What else did your visions say?**

Bengoukee has seen the plains of ash growing and growing. All life is eaten, but the eater remains hidden. Against this stand the heroes of the jungle, together with the snake mother. Behind them all stand the heroes; thus were they summoned, for it is their fate.

When questions are finished, Bengoukee introduces them to Bayi, their guide.

Bayi, hm R3: AL NG; AC 8 (none); hp 24; THAC0 17; #Att 2; dmg 1-6 (club)/1-3 (knife); Str 17; Dex 16; Con 13; Int 12; Wis 15; Cha 14. Tracking (16); move silently 37%; hide in shadows 25%.

Bayi also carries a short bow and 10 stone-tipped arrows.

Personality: Bayi is a nubari of few words. He never uses one word where a grunt will do. He is loyal to his party, and will fight to save them if necessary.

Bengoukee also tells them that he usually offers rich rewards if the mission is completed. This time, he feels that the heroes have already earned their rewards just by agreeing to go on such a dangerous mission. Besides, the heroes may need this stuff to survive.

Each hero gets one of the following items. Bengoukee selects those who have been most enthusiastic about the mission so far to choose first, anyone who has been reluctant goes last.

- Two pots of *neutralize poison* ointment.
- A *potion of enhancement*, containing a mixture of hanna pollen and other secret ingredients, that allows a spellcaster to cast spells at maximum effect for an hour after imbibing.
- Two *brews of healing*, doing 1d8+4 points of healing when imbibed.
- An *amulet of the heron*, which allows the hero to turn into a heron as the *polymorph other* spell would, but only to a heron. It works twice and then returns to an ordinary stone figure.

He also gives them a gift for the snake mother, an intricate polished jade figurine of a cobra. It is one of the most beautiful pieces of jewelry the heroes have ever seen. (No certificate provided; if not given to the Snake Mother Bengoukee wants it back).

Bengoukee wants the heroes to set out immediately, although he will wait for the party to rest and change spells, if necessary. It is a week or more to the yuan-ti's area of the jungle, and there is no time to waste.

Encounter One: Travel time

The heroes must travel north past the edge of Fire Mountain, almost to the Hebika River and the Dokuba swamp. This is a distance of over 100 miles, so it will take them five or six days to reach the area. Along the way, they have a few encounters.

Wise Ones hunters.

The second day out, the heroes encounter three hunters of the Wise Ones tribe. The three, Dinal, Wai'ti, and Tok, are on the trail of a pair of spiketails (stegosaurus). They are wary at first, but as long as the party is friendly, they soon relax. The leader of the three is Wai'ti, a female nubari fighter of 4th level. She offers to let the party join the hunt; there should be more than enough meat for two villages to share.

The party may accept or not, as they choose. If they do so, a simple tracking roll by anyone possessing that proficiency (Bayi, Wai'ti, and any heroes may try) locates the spiketails.

Spiketails (2): Int Animal (1); AL N; AC 5; Mv 6; HD 18; hp 90, 85; THAC0 5; #Att 1; Dmg 5-20; Sz H (25' long); ML 13. Stegosaurus attack with their spiked tail, doing considerable damage. It keeps its tail turned towards attackers if it can, so anyone who is directly in front of a stegosaurus cannot be attacked by the tail.

Wai'ti; hf F4: AL NG; AC 6 (thatch armor); Mv 12; hp 25; THAC0 17; #Att 1 or 2; Dmg 1-8+1 (spear) or 1-6x2 (arrows); Str 16; Dex 13; Wis 15; Tracking (15). Wai'ti carries a spear and a short bow. She is friendly and gregarious.

Dinal, Tok; hm F2: AL NG; AC 4 (thatched armor and Dex); Mv 12; hp 20, 16; THAC0 19; #Att 1 or 2; Dmg 1-8+1 (spear) or 1-6x2 (arrows); Str 16; Dex 16; all others normal. Dinal and Tok are a bit more reserved than Wai'ti, but they gradually warm up to the heroes.

If the heroes choose to help with the hunt, they are given first choice of the meat to take with them. The Wise Ones are interested in their mission, although they don't pry if the party chooses to keep it a secret. If they reveal the mission, Wai'ti especially thinks that this is a good, even vital mission. Tok thinks the party is going to be eaten. Dinal refuses comment, but he also clearly thinks the party is history.

The Wise Ones do reveal that their village has suffered from raids by the Snake People, and several hunters have turned up missing, although only in one case are they sure the hunter was lost to yuan-ti.

They are warned repeatedly not to trust the yuan-ti, and to watch their backs. Tok mentions that the snake people are said to favor deadfall traps, and that they like to use slow poison in their other traps.

Burrowing Worm

A day later, the heroes are passing the outskirts of the Rayana Savannah when they are attacked by an ankheg. The monster lies beneath the surface, and detects movement on the surface by means of its sensitive antennae. Thus, it is impossible for the party to surprise the ankheg, and they suffer a -2 penalty to their surprise rolls.

Ankheg (1); Int Non-(0); AC 2 (4 underside); Mv 12, Br 6; HD 5 (3 if party is all low level); hp 30 (16 if party is low level); THAC0 15 or 13; #Att 1; Dmg 3-18 (crush) + 1d4 (acid); SA squirt acid for 8d4 (1/2 damage if saving throw vs. poison is made); Sz L (15' (10') long); ML 9.

The ankheg uses its acid squirting ability only in desperation, and only once. If reduced to 5 or less hit points, and with no way to escape, it will squirt acid. Because the acid is poisonous, the *neutralize poison* salve from Bengoukee can negate all the damage from the acid. It will even save a dead character's life, if applied within 2 rounds of the poison's effect.

The ankheg is just hungry. It attempts to kill one character and drag them down under the surface to feed. Because of the high damage involved, and the fact that it is sensing the size of its prey by the weight of those walking, try to target one of the heftier heroes (read - lots of hit points) for the attack. It does not pursue a hero who backs away if there is other prey closer.

Snake Trap

After four days of travel, the heroes are nearing yuan-ti country. They encounter a yuan-ti trap.

As the heroes walk through the jungle, anyone on the ground has a chance to set off a nasty poison trap.

When a hero steps on or kicks a vine stretched just an inch off the ground and hidden by dead leaves, a thorn bush is released to spring at the heroes. The thorns cause only minor damage (1 hp), but all are coated with a slow acting poison.

As they pass along a little used game trail, have each hero in order make a surprise roll. If they are surprised (1-3), they step on the vine and expose themselves and the heroes immediately before and after them to the thorn bush. If they roll a 10 (9 or 10 if alertness proficiency used), they spot the vine, and can easily avoid it.

Heroes affected by the thorn bush take 1 point of damage from thorn scratches.

They also must make a saving throw vs. poison or take 2d6 points of damage each hour until 12 hours have passed. The salve from Bengoukee neutralizes the poison. Heroes with herbalism proficiency may find a natural antidote on a proficiency check at a -4 to the skill.

Anyone who examines the thorn bush notices the poison on a Wisdom +2 check. Otherwise the poison may not be noticed until an hour has passed, when the first effects of the poison are felt.

Encounter Two: Yuan-Ti!

A few hours after encountering the thorn trap you are in what Bayi says is the heart of Snake Country. He is proven true when you realize that the jungle has gone silent, at least in the area immediately surrounding you.

Allow all heroes to make a surprise roll to spot a hidden snake form behind a nearby tree. As soon as the yuan-ti realize they have been spotted, they move to attack. The heroes should avoid combat, if they can.

Yuan-ti half-breeds (3); Int 18; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 7; hp 26, 29, 36; THAC0 13; #Att 2 or 1; Dmg 1-10 (bite)/1-8 (stone battle axe) or 1-6 (thrown spear); MR 20%; Sz L (10 long); ML 14.

These half-breeds all have a human torso and snake heads. They follow the orders of Sssulki even to death.

Sssulki, yuan-ti abomination: Int 17; AL CE; AC 0 (scales); MV 9; HD 7 (priest 7); hp 35; THAC0 11; #Att 1; Dmg 1-8 (spear); SA spells; MR 20%; Sz L; ML 15.

Sssulki speaks common; he is the only member of this patrol to do so.

Spells memorized: *cure light wounds, cause light wounds x2, detect poison, command, hold person, cause blindness, withdraw, wyvern watch, messenger, dispel magic, summon insects, hold animal, protection from lightning, poison (reversed neutralize poison).*

As a human headed yuan-ti, Sssulki can also cast the following spells once per day: *Cause fear, darkness 15' radius, snake charm, sticks to snakes, neutralize poison, suggestion, polymorph other.*

The yuan-ti half-breeds throw spears and close to melee. Sssulki casts darkness over any group of heroes that look like spellcasters. If no one stands out that way, he centers it on the heroes in the back, to leave the ones in the front exposed to the thrown spears. After that he'll go with *hold person, summon insects* (on a spellcaster), and *polymorph other*. If someone closes to melee he'll use *cause fear, cause light wounds, and poison*. If two of the half-breeds fall, he attempts to flee into the jungle, leaving the remaining half-breed to die ensuring his escape.

- **Avoiding combat.**

If the heroes refrain from returning attacks for two rounds, Sssulki calls his half-breeds off. He doesn't understand why they are not fighting back. He seems to be interested in the talk of peace that the heroes may bring up. Actually, he doesn't like the odds (7 to 4), and is looking for a way to capture the heroes with no risk to himself.

He is even willing to call a halt if one or more of the half-breeds have been killed; actually, he may suggest it himself in this situation. He absolutely is concerned about his own health first.

Sssulki retains a suspicious attitude, claiming that the yuan-ti are only defending themselves and their territory from the incursion by the Nubari, shu, and other folk. He agrees that a peace would be good, but he doesn't know how they'd trust the Nubari, who have broken many treaties.

This is all an act, of course. But he keeps it up, trying to put the heroes on the defensive. Any heroes who played "Flower of Kuomi" have indeed helped to kill yuan-ti, although they had lots of justification.

If peace does break out, the yuan-ti agree to lead the party to the temple of the yuan-ti. Of course it is death to any non-snake person to know where the Snake Mother lives; the heroes must agree to be blindfolded for the last part of the trip. This is a nonnegotiable demand. If the party objects too strenuously, you might point out that if the yuan-ti were going to kill the heroes, they probably wouldn't care if they knew where the temple was.

If the party refuses this request, Sssulki attempts to get away with his own hide, without combat if possible. Under no circumstances will they lead the heroes to the temple without the blindfold, and they do not return to the temple immediately, so that the heroes cannot follow them there. Instead, they'll try to set up an ambush.

- **If the party kills the yuan-ti.**

Two hours after slaying the yuan-ti, they encounter another party. This one does not attack immediately, stopping to talk first. It is led by Trassst, who has identical abilities to Sssulki.

- **If the party agrees.**

The yuan-ti also wants the party to divest themselves of their weapons. This is a negotiable demand. If the party objects, Sssulki will agree to have one of the heroes carry all of the weapons. A hero loaded down with four or five spears and a pair of battle axes does not look like someone ready to attack, avoiding any incidents when they reach the yuan-ti village.

- **The blindfolds**

A mile away from the village, the heroes must wear blindfolds. Their hands are not bound, and one of the half-breeds leads the first hero, with all other heroes holding on to the one in front. They are warned repeatedly that any

attempt to remove the blindfolds before they are told will be dealt with most severely. If someone does try this, Sssulki is ready with a *cause blindness*.

A hero may try to rig their blindfold by leaving a crease or something; allow it to work at first. But before they begin one of the snake people checks all the blindfolds and makes sure that the heroes cannot see. These snake people have genius level intelligence and are not easily fooled.

- **Reaching the village.**

The heroes are led without incident to the village. You can have each hero make a dexterity check to avoid stubbing a toe on a root and stumbling. No damage, just a bit of pain.

After being turned in circles to disorient them, they are led into the village. They can tell when they are getting close by the sounds of movement nearby. Those with enhanced scent (lizardmen, katanga in biped or natural form, saurials), also detect a dry musty odor, as of snakes.

When the heroes are told to remove their blindfolds, they find that they are in a cage of solid ironwood bars. The door has been barred shut with an intricate locking mechanism, and Sssulki stands outside, hissing with what passes for yuan-ti laughter.

"Fools. You really are as stupid as you look. Thank you for volunteering for tonight's feast. We will eat well."

The heroes can and should protest that they must see the Snake Mother. Sssulki responds that they will meet her at the feast.

- **If reptilian heroes are in the party.**

Sssulki assures them that they are not on the menu for tonight, or ever. They will be allowed to meet the Snake Mother and if she agrees, they will be released unharmed.

Encounter Three: The Snake Mother.

Things are not going well. You are in a cage, bars on all sides, in the center of a yuan-ti village.

A larger structure with curved earthen ramps leading into it is about fifty meters away; this must be the temple of the Snake Mother. You have reached your objective, but...

You still have your weapons (if they do), and you are not bound. But six guards surround you outside the cage, and you can see many more snake people in the village. Occasionally they stop and comment to each other in their hissing language. You don't know what they are saying, but you can guess.

It will be dark in a few hours, then the feast will start. If escape was possible, and the odds don't look good, you still need to meet with the Snake Mother to plead your case.

The heroes have decisions to make. The feast starts two hours after dark. None of the guards speaks common. The heroes can attack with missile weapons or spells, but the guards do not get close enough for melee attacks. The bars are of ironwood; to break one involves a bend bars roll at a -20%.

The heroes may have someone who can still get out of the cage - a snake katanga is a good example. If so, and if the hero is rendered *invisible*, by the spell, for instance, the hero may be able to make his/her way to the temple and confront the Snake Mother. If they do so, they are told that no feasting will take place until they answer some questions, meaning they do indeed get to speak with her before they are killed. She then has them escorted back to the cage, and the guard doubled. She says that she has had disturbing visions of her own and she needs to talk to some of the 'lesser folk'.

Don't drag this out long, it is a no-win situation for the heroes. Opening the locking mechanism on the door takes a thief open locks roll at 1/2; it is awkward and difficult. Any attempt will be noticed by the guards, two of whom concentrate their four *hold person* spells on the character attempting it. Many more yuan-ti (at least 20) come if any alarm is raised. If the heroes seem bound and determined to escape, tell them that they see no chance, and ask if they wish to watch for one. While they are doing so, the time for the feast arrives.

• Going to the temple.

When the time comes for the feast, 20 yuan-ti show up, including four abominations. Ssulki asks if the heroes will pass their weapons outside, or in the case of large weapons like a battle axe, if they will leave it inside the cage. The alternative is that he and his fellow priests use enough *hold person* spells to immobilize everyone, and take the weapons. And if that doesn't work, they have paralytic poison enough to do the job. The heroes' weapons are brought along by a yuan-ti half-breed.

Each hero is not tied, but is grasped by a pair of half-breeds, with another, armed half-breed right behind each hero.

The time for the feast has come, and you are led into the temple of the Snake Mother, a most disgusting place, with carvings of snakes swallowing nubari and shu all over. The architecture is subtly wrong, or perhaps alien is a better word.

Your eyes are immediately drawn to an altar, stained with the blood of many sacrifices. Behind it stands the largest yuan-ti you have ever seen. Twenty feet of snake-like muscle is topped with a surprisingly attractive face, that of a nubari female of advanced years. The Snake Mother radiates the same sort of power that Bengoukee does, even more impressive because of the sheer alienness of it.

"I bring the sssacrificess I have captured to the Snake Mother. May she rule forever in splendor and evil." says Ssulki. "Bring them forward" says the Snake Mother, in clear and articulate common. She looks you over and says, "I have seen you in my visions. What terror do you bring to the lands of the Snake People?"

This is the heroes' chance to speak. They won't get another one.

Snake Mother, yuan-ti abomination, P15: AC 0; AL N (strong evil and chaotic tendencies); Int/Wis 19; Mv 9; HD 17; hp 99; #Att 2; SA spells; MR 20%.

The Snake Mother has been the leader of the yuan-ti for hundreds of years, and has accumulated much wisdom over the years. She is personally evil, but she recognizes that some compromises must be made to keep the yuan-ti from being wiped out by the other folk of the jungle. The only weakness of the yuan-ti is that their numbers are few and they grow only slowly.

The Snake Mother listens to the peace proposal with some interest, and accepts the gift with delight. She admits that she too has had visions of a great danger coming to Malatra; she thought it was the heroes themselves. Perhaps they have an offer that would be mutually beneficial for both peoples.

Let the heroes start to work out the details of the treaty. She wants all territory north of the nubari village called Kuomi as the yuan-ti's own. Since this is what the heroes were told to ask for, negotiations should go swiftly. Let it go on for a few minutes, then have Ssulki object.

"Sssurely you cannot be ssseriouss, your worsshipp? How can we trust these foul beings - they will turn on uss at the first opportunity!", cries Ssulki. "They must die."

The Snake Mother ponders this for a moment and looks at you. "Ssulki has a point; there have been many years of distrust between our peoples. I know of only one way to be sure. South of here, at the base of Fire Mountain, is a cave of power. There lies hidden the Stone of Seeing, an emerald of great power. If you will find it and return it here, I can use it to determine both the

truth of your tale, and the nature of the danger that threatens Malatra. Will you retrieve this stone?"

Let the heroes agree, then have Sssulki object again.

"No, your highness. They will take the stone and flee, using it against your own people."

The Snake Mother replies. "So be it, a contest. Sssulki, choose four warriors and set out for the stone. At the same time these folk will set out to get it. The party that returns with it will have proven the truth of their claim. As guarantee of your return, we will keep this one (pointing to Bayi, the guide) as hostage. Is this agreeable to everyone?"

The heroes have no reason not to agree, and Sssulki grudgingly also agrees.

They are given directions to the Cave of Power, and a warning that all magic will be enhanced in the area, due to the nature of the stone. All involved must also agree not to kill anyone from the other party until after they return here. If the heroes agree, this constitutes voluntarily failing their saving throws versus the *quest* spell she has cast. It also applies to Sssulki. Don't mention this unless a hero attempts to attack Sssulki or his minions during the retrieval.

If the heroes agree, the Snake Mother tells the half-breed to give them back their weapons. This draws hissed protests from the yuan-ti in the temple, which she silences with a single glare. She heals Sssulki, if he is still wounded, and even spares a *Cure Light Wounds* (maximum of three spells) on any heroes who may be wounded.

The party is given directions to the lair. It is about twelve hours hard travel to the hidden caves. Before they are ready to set out, she gives both the heroes and Sssulki this final guide.

The entrance to the cave of power is hidden behind the rock that resembles a hawk. To reach the cave, you must pass through the cavern of silence, the tunnel that stops a nubari's heart, and pass the unsleeping statue. No one has ever lived to complete this journey; it is truly a test of heroes." At this Sssulki bristles with pride, and then seeing you, gets a deadly sneer on his face.

The directions are accurate, but the heroes lose time because they must be led blindfolded away from the village. The yuan-ti who leads them tells them that he'll wait for two days for them to return, to lead them back to the temple.

Encounter Four: Entrance to the Cave of Power

The heroes have no encounters on the way to the cave. When they reach the area, tracking or wisdom -4 rolls are needed to locate the hawk-shaped rock. One roll may be made for each person searching, once per hour. When they locate it, they also locate a cave opening behind the rock. It is there that they find the first guards.

Fire Toads

Having located the entrance to the cave, you find yourself in a fairly large cavern, 80' by 60', rising to 20' at the ceiling. A group of four giant toads stand in front of the exit to the next cavern. They are frozen in place, staring in your direction. None of them move or react to you in any way. As you look about, you see Sssulki stick his head back into the cavern and hiss a single word. Now the toads are moving, with hostile intent, towards you.

The heroes win initiative automatically the first round, while the fire toads recover from the *Hold animal* that Sssulki cast upon them.

Note about magic: All magic in the caves is enhanced. All spellcasters function as though they were two levels higher, for purposes of range, duration, damage, etc. In addition, there is a 50% chance that any spell cast is NOT forgotten and may be recast. A spell that is cast and remembered may be recast only once; there is no chance to remember it the second time it is cast.

Fire Toads. (4); Int Low (5); AL CN; AC 10; Mv 6, hop 6; HD 4+1; hp 30, 23, 22, 19 (If the party is all low level, cut hit points by 10 per toad); THAC0 17; #ATT 1; Dmg 2-16 (fireball)- cut this to 1-8 if the party is all low level; SA breathe fireball 1/round; Sz S (4'); ML 10.

Fire toads have only one attack, a fireball that they breathe that shoots up to 30' and explodes in a 5' burst radius. The fire toads must roll a successful hit roll to hit someone with a fireball, but it will explode somewhere if it misses. Fire Toads take -1 per dice of fire damage, but take an extra point per dice of cold- or water-based damage. Even throwing water on a fire toad causes it to retreat, although it will immediately breathe twice on anyone who does this. This is the only time it can breathe more than once per round.

The fire toads are defending their lair; they fight until at least two of them go down before checking morale.

When the heroes have finished with the toads, they may continue on. The fire toads have no treasure, but there are two bodies of scorched yuan-ti lying in the cave.

Encounter Five: The tests of the stone of seeing.

The Cavern of Silence

After defeating the toads, you continue through the next entrance. You emerge into a huge cavern, with the ceiling covered with stalactites. The first one in line kicks a small stone, which pings off of a nearby stalagmite. As if in response, two long thin and very sharp looking stalactites break off and hit the ground near the stone you kicked. The strangest part of this is that the stalactites made no noise when they hit. No wonder they call this the Cavern of Silence. At the far end is a light, coming from a tunnel. Over all you smell the wonderful aroma of scorched snake.

The heroes must cross this cavern, and they must do it silently. Each noise causes 1d4 stalactites to break off. The person making the noise is subject to 1d4 attacks by stalactites, with a THAC0 of 15. A stalactite that hits causes 1d6 points of damage (1d4 if the party is all low level).

Each hero must make three rolls to make it across the cavern. Thieves, jungle tam'hi, and rangers may use move silently skills. Others may use dexterity at a -6 to avoid making any noise.

Anyone who chooses the heads-down running attack is subject to the maximum number of attacks, 12. Of course they knock down many more stalactites than that, but 12 is all that have a chance to hit them.

The stalactites hitting make no noise due to an effect of the magic enhancement. A *silence* spell was cast on the ceiling once; it magnified and became permanent.

If any hero possesses a *Silence* spell, all of the heroes can make it across with no trouble, if they take their time and stay in the radius of the spell.

Note for flyers: People using a *fly* spell can make it across with no chance of a noise. Those with wings WILL make noise the first round as they take off, but can then glide silently the rest of the way.

The Tunnel that stops the heart of a nubari.

Moving past the Cavern of Silence, you enter the tunnel that stops the heart of a nubari. And already you can see why - two more yuan-ti lay in the 90' long tunnel, with large scorch marks over their dead bodies. At the far end in a safe

alcove you see Sssulki, standing next to a pair of statues. "Fools, you are too late. The stone is mine!" Sssulki has a distinctive blue glow around him. (Spellcraft roll to identify a protection from lightning spell). He turns and enters the final room. "I knew I would oolp.." he says as the statue animates, bashes him on the head, picks him up and throws him down a fairly deep pit, judging from the length of his screams. As you stand there watching this there is a loud crack, and a flash of lightning streaks from one end of the tunnel to the other, leaving an acrid smell to go with the burnt snake smell.

The tunnel is at either end of a natural electrical effect. Well, it's natural for this cave, with the stone of seeing here. Every other round, the lightning streaks through the tunnel, possibly stopping the heart of anyone caught here. For game purposes, anyone caught in the lightning must make a saving throw vs. breath weapon. If they succeed, they take 1/2 of their current hit points in damage, if they fail, they take all of their current hit points in damage. (Go to zero hit points). This means that the heroes have 10 rounds to run through and grab them and get their hearts started again.

- Running through the tunnel. The heroes must make a running roll, or a constitution -4, with the following modifiers.

First one through tunnel - no modifiers.

2nd one through tunnel - -1 to running skill.

3rd one through tunnel - -2 to running skill. Each additional hero who tries to make it through in one round has an additional -1 to their roll.

Aarakocra - -8 to running skill. (And no, the tunnel is only 7' wide, not nearly enough for an aarakocra's wingspan).

Shu or korobokuru - -2 to running skill.

Butu - +3 to running skill (This terrain is very similar to mountainous terrain, where a butu's movement rate is 15')

Tiger katanga in tiger form - +2 to running skill.

- Ways past the lightning.

Anyone who takes a round to study the lightning may make an observation or alertness check. (Alertness equals wisdom, in this case). If successful, they notice that the lightning is in a sheet, about two feet off the ground. Anyone who crawls underneath can make this with little trouble, with two exceptions.

There are two dead bodies blocking the passage, which must be crawled over. It takes three rounds to crawl the length of the passage. Thus, at least one of the rounds when a hero is crawling over a yuan-ti body, the lightning will strike. Allow a simple dexterity check to time it correctly.

Running characters may easily hop over the two bodies with no rolls needed.

The statue does not attack until they enter the room beyond the alcoves. Thus the heroes can use healing, revive party members at zero hit points, and so on before entering the Cave of Power. Because of the enhanced magic, all healing spells and potions in this alcove function at maximum effect.

Encounter Six - The Cave of Power.

Looking into the Cave of Power you see that it is a 40' circular cave, with a pedestal in the center. The statue is standing motionless, to the right of the entrance. Nearby is the pit where Sssulki met his end. Atop the pedestal is a large perfect emerald, the stone of seeing. You know that the statue will animate and attack if you enter, but somehow you must get the stone.

Let the heroes have as much time as they want for planning. They are facing a foe they cannot harm, so strategy becomes paramount.

Stone Golem: Int Non-(0); AL N; AC 5; Mv 6; HD 14; hp 60 (currently 48); THAC0 7; #Att 1; Dmg 3d8; SA slow 1 person once per seven rounds; SD only harmed by +2 or better weapons (so no weapon the heroes have can harm it), only affected by *stone to flesh*, *flesh to stone*, and *rock to mud* spells, which none of the heroes should have; Sz L; ML 20.

The golem is incredibly ancient; in fact it is from the time of the ancients. As such, it is literally falling to pieces. It loses six hit points each round until it crumbles to dust. It lost 12 points dealing with Sssulki.

If the party is severely weakened, or all low level, it took the golem four rounds to deal with Sssulki and it is currently at 36 hit points.

• Doing something about the golem.

While the heroes cannot harm it, they do have a couple of options for dealing with it. The first is to have a fighter parry the golem's attacks until someone can retrieve the stone. For this combat ONLY, allow fighters to use the Fighter's Handbook parry. That is, if they can make a successful hit roll on the golem, they can block its attack. Any weapon used to block an attack must make a saving throw vs. crushing blow or be shattered and broken.

The second option concerns the pit near the golem. And there they have two options. The first is to overbear the golem and push it into the pit. The golem has an effective strength of 20; it takes at least that much strength to push it in. If two or more fighters hit it simultaneously, have all involved make a strength roll, and total the amount each was made by. Then roll a strength roll

for the golem and compare the two. If the heroes win by more than ten, the golem has no chance to grab anyone. If the heroes just win, the golem may make a hit roll on a hero. If it is successful, it has grabbed a hero, doing damage. It also has a chance to pull the hero into the pit, requiring a strength roll to break free. Heroes close to the grabbed one can attempt to aid by making strength rolls of their own.

The second option concerning the pit involves more strategy. Someone with a *fly* spell cast upon them, or holding a rope, could allow the golem to grab them and throw them into the pit. This would be a perfect time for someone to push it from behind, into the pit. A hit roll and a strength roll are necessary to accomplish this, and up to two heroes may try. If someone does go into the pit, they may make a dexterity roll to hang onto a ledge, or a rope, if they have one. If the rope is tied to them, they take 2d6 points of falling damage, and are otherwise safe.

Retrieving the stone.

The stone has a powerful *repulsion* field for 3' all around it. Any hero attempting to reach it must make a strength check for each foot. It takes a full round to fight through each foot. Failure means they are pushed back. Thus only after 3 successive and successful strength checks can they grab the stone. Of course anyone who gets close to the stone is going to draw the attention of the golem. No hero who is going for the stone gets dodging. Heroes may interpose themselves may block the golem, but they also must give up dodging.

If the stone is grasped while the golem is still present, it begins to break down even faster, losing 12 points per round until it crumbles. The extraordinary magical effects also cease when the stone is removed from the pedestal.

This is a potentially devastating encounter. If the heroes are attempting to slug it out with the golem, remind them of the chance of parrying.

• **Hero points.** This encounter abounds with chances for hero points. Anyone who volunteers to let the golem grab them certainly deserves a hero point. Likewise, anyone who interposes themselves to let someone else have a chance at the stone may deserve a hero point.

Once the stone is retrieved, the magical effects begin to fade. The lightning is reduced to once per turn, eventually to nothing. The ceiling of the Cavern of Silence is no longer silent. The first noise sets off a chain reaction that causes all of the stalactites to fall (making a really loud noise). The heroes have no real encounters until they return to the village.

If the heroes choose to keep the stone, or to take it back to Bengoukee, he sends them right back to the Snake Mother after healing them and giving them a good scolding.

Encounter Seven: The Curse of the Snake Mother.

Blindfolded once again, you feel better about it this time. You have something the Snake Mother needs. Sure enough, you are allowed to remove your blindfolds as soon as you enter the village, and are led straight to the temple. The Snake Mother awaits, smiling at you in a rather horrible way. "I can feel that you succeeded. I am glad, it is to be peace between us. Can you tell me what became of Sssulki?"

The Snake Mother has a *detect lies* spell cast; she contradicts the heroes if they lie about the fate of Sssulki, but accepts it if they tell the truth.

When they have finished their tale, they may wish to hand over the stone. The Snake Mother refuses. It is then that she asks for a real sacrifice from one of the heroes.

"I do not want the stone. I feel that Bengoukee may be right - you are connected to the visions. I would now ask for one of you to accept the curse of the snake mother. It will give you the power to have visions, but this is not always to be envied. It is also draining of one's life force. But I feel that it must be done to learn what threatens Malatra, and because of the visions, one of you is the one to do it. What say you?"

Let the heroes decide. Draining of life force, if they ask, does not mean they'll lose a level. But they may very well lose a hit point or two, permanently.

If more than one hero volunteers, the Snake Mother demands that they pick one. If neither one backs down, she picks the one with the higher charisma.

If none of the heroes volunteers, Bayi eventually does so.

The Snake Mother instructs you to hold the stone and concentrate on it. "It will greatly enhance your vision, as well as project it for all to see. Now concentrate." As you do so you feel a sting on your arm and then a great pain. The rest of the party can see that the Snake Mother reached down and bit you on the arm. Already that arm is swollen, but you are lost in the vision.

You see the Yaku plains, bare and desolate. The ash spreads as far as you can see. You are standing on savannah, looking out over the Ash Plains. But now there is someone coming, a figure

that is indistinct and clothed in a black light. As it approaches, so does the ash plain, the grasses withering and turning to dust before your eyes. You see other figures pass you to face the shape, but you are rooted to the spot in fear of the unknown terror. Bengoukee, Taronee, and the Snake Mother all move past you to face this figure, as do some of the most famous heroes of the jungle.

There you see the winner of the Great Hunt, here is the champion of the games of Fire Mountain. Heroes and legends all move to face the dread shadow and its minions, and there is great carnage. Through it all the shape and the ash plains keep advancing, until only one hero, the chief of the Simbara tribe, remains. Now, as the Simbaran faces the figure does it finally become clear. A tall bipedal shape, clawed and fanged like a tiger katanga. But it is no katanga you realize with horror, it is...

"Aieeee!!; screams Bayi. Tiger comes! We are doomed!" Bayi's eyes roll back and he collapses on the floor of the temple.

As you view the tiger, it seems to look out and see you, in your vision. It gestures and all goes white, as the stone explodes in your hands. You lose consciousness and slump to the floor.

The other heroes can aid their friend, who has indeed lost one hit point permanently. He has also acquired "The Curse of the Snake Mother", as detailed on the certificate included.

The vision has shaken the Snake Mother as well as all of the yuan-ti. Before letting them go she tells the heroes that her people too have legends about tiger, and it always involves great destruction and death. The yuan-ti will agree to a truce, at least until the danger is past. If needed for the heroes to be sure, she agrees to meet with Bengoukee and trade *geas* spells, that they may both be sure.

Without much further ado, the heroes are blindfolded and led to the drop-off point, where they are released. They are not molested on the return trip, although Bayi does insist on leaving and heading straight for his village, to warn them.

Bengoukee is glad of their return, but most worried about their news. He does not offer them any particular rewards, although he will arrange for training in any proficiency of the heroes' choice, provided they have a slot open.

**Here ends
The Curse of The Snake Mother**

Experience Points

The experience awards in this adventure occasionally have two values, one for low level and one for mid level. To determine which to apply, consider whether the PCs average 1st to 3rd level (low), or 4th to 6th level (mid).

Encounter One:

Roleplay with the Wise Ones:	50 xp
Defeat the ankheg: 200 xp if low level.	350 xp
Counter the poison or avoid the trap:	150 xp

Encounter Two:

Do not attack the yuan-ti:	200 xp
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Encounter Three:

Roleplay well with the Snake Mother:	100 xp
Present the peace treaty offer well:	200 xp

Encounter Four:

Defeat the Fire Toads: 150 xp if low level	350 xp
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Encounter Five:

None or low damage from cavern of silence: 100 xp if low level	200 xp
Take no damage from the tunnel: OR	400 xp
No one dies in the tunnel:	200 xp

Encounter Six:

Recover the stone:	300 xp
Lose no one to the stone golem: 300 xp if low level	600 xp

Total Possible XP:	2,900 xp
	2,150 xp if low level.

Treasure

From Players Introduction:

- Two pots of *neutralize poison* ointment.
- A *potion of enhancement*, containing a mixture of hanna pollen and other secret ingredients, that allows a spellcaster to cast spells at maximum effect for an hour after imbibing.
- Two *brews of healing*, doing 1d8+4 xp of healing when imbibed.

- An *amulet of the heron*, which allows the hero to turn into a heron as the *polymorph other* spell would, but only to a heron. It works twice.

From Encounter Seven:

- A certificate with the details of the "Curse of the Snake Mother".

A teacher for any non-weapon proficiency the hero is allowed in the jungle, provided the hero has an open slot.

Neutralize Poison Ointment

This salve cures any natural poison when applied to the wound within five rounds after the poison takes effect. It can even bring characters back to life, if they have died from the effects of the poison. The ointment must be applied within five rounds of the effect, and revived characters will have one hit point. There is enough for only one use. It was given to you by Bengoukee when you went to make peace with the evil Snake People.

Brew of Healing

This bitter beer is steeped with many herbs and has a flat taste. It greatly promotes healing. Anyone who imbibes it will heal 1d8+4 points of damage, at the rate of one hit point per round. It was given to you by Bengoukee when you went to make peace with the evil Snake People.

Potion of Enhancement

This powerful mixture of hanna pollen and other secret herbs brings any spellcaster to the peak of his power. Anyone who imbibes the whole gourd (which tastes awful), is able to cast all spells at maximum effect for a period of one hour after imbibing. Thus, *magic missiles* all do five points of damage each, *fireballs* cause 6 points per level, and curing spells do maximum healing. It is usable only by spellcasters; anyone else gets violently nauseous after drinking only a sip. It is a special brew known only to Bengoukee, who gave it to you when you went to negotiate a peace with the dreaded snake people.

Amulet of the Heron.

Many moons ago, a group of heroes traveled across the Ash Plains to retrieve the Blue Heron for Bengoukee. In the process they discovered several new races of people, including the aarakocra and the butu. This amulet is the product of Bengoukee's research of that fabled artifact. The amulet of the heron allows a hero to change to heron form for one hour, as per the *polymorph self* spell. It only allows changing to a heron, and is usable only twice before it loses all power and becomes an intricate stone amulet of a heron. This amulet was gifted to you by Bengoukee, who entrusted you with the mission to make peace with the evil snake people.

The Curse of the Snake Mother

You have been inflicted with the Curse of the Snake Mother. This has the following effects.

1. Permanent loss of one hit point.
2. A snake-shaped scar on your forearm, and scars on your hands.
3. The ability to have a 'vision', once per adventure.
4. Being recognized as an almost-person by the yuan-ti, and receiving a +3 to their reaction roll when encountered.

Notes to the DM: This vision should not 'blow' an adventure. It becomes effective when you choose, not when the player does. Also, should more than one hero have the curse, they all receive the same vision at the same time (no more than one vision, total, per adventure). Typical examples would be waking up a round before the party is attacked at night, getting a feeling of the direction to go if the heroes are hopelessly off track, something like that. In all cases, the vision is disturbing. Thus, if the party is about to be attacked at night by leopard katanga, the hero awakens from a dream where he was rent to pieces by leopard katanga. Any vision involves the heroes' death in some way. The hero can change the future by their actions.