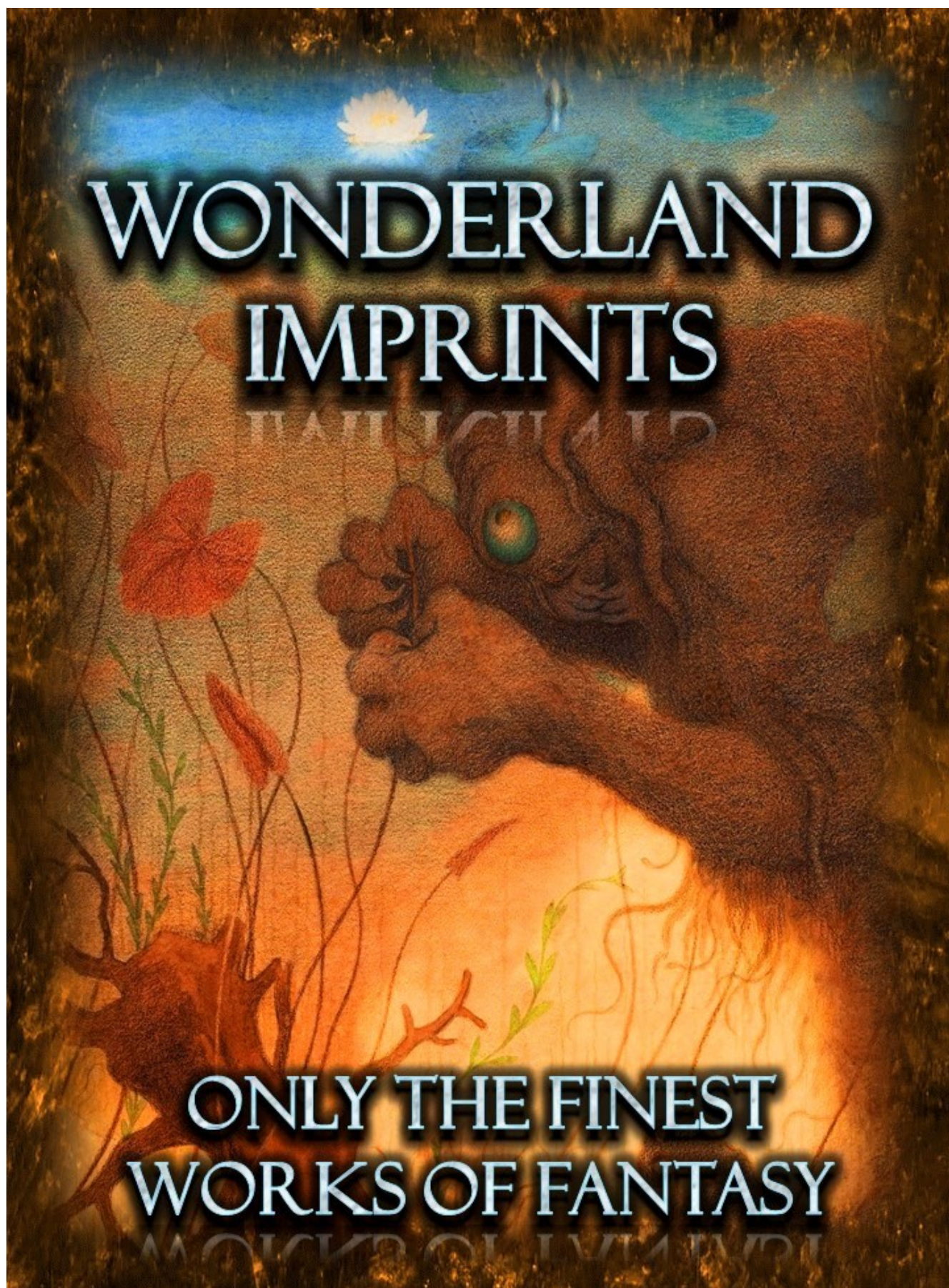


# SERPENTINE



OLDSKULL  
SERPENT FOLK







# **Serpentine:** **Oldskull Serpent Folk**

**An Old School Supplement  
For Fantasy Role-Playing Games**

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*Only the Finest Works of Fantasy*

**OSR**

## **Description**

***Slithering from out of the depths of Yoth and dread N'kai, they rise ...***

***Poisoning dreams, crushing the weak, conquering kingdoms,***

***And your game world will never be the same.***

Infused with unified coils of deep lore shed from the writings of Lord Dunsany, Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, Abraham Merritt and H. P. Lovecraft, *Oldskull Serpent Folk* is an exciting new supplement for Basic, Expert, and Advanced old school fantasy role-playing games. Herein you will find details linking the Cthulhu Mythos, the Hyborian Mythos, the World of Oldskull, pulp fiction, and world mythology into a single cohesive whole ... a villainous bestiary specifically designed to deepen and enhance your game's monstrosities and the netherworld domain.

Details are found herein concerning the anthropomorphic serpent men (NPCs), humans infused with the power of ancestral serpent spirits (PCs), and naga-like eldritch horrors (inhuman monsters of considerable power). The detailed rules systems include: Viperous Metamorphosis, explaining how the serpent folk become more powerful and less sane by shedding their skin; Bond Serpents, a detailed snake familiar system for PC beast masters; the Soul Slaver caster class, being a hybrid cleric/magic-user with snake-derived and beguiling hypnotic powers; serpentine history and behavioral lore; extensive rules for special abilities, attacks, and defenses; and much more.

Embrace the way of Yig and Thoth-Amon, and despair!

A slithy, bighted, and anfractuious supplement from Kent David Kelly and Wonderland Imprints, *Only the Finest Works of Fantasy*.



## Overview

Lo, the snake men! There are few villains in pulp fantasy who are more iconic, and you will find that having access to fully developed and detailed descriptions, lore, and stats for these creatures (in one handy supplement, no less) creatures inspiring plot and character opportunities for your campaign.

These creatures — inspired by the writings of Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, and H. P. Lovecraft, among others — are provided for your consideration as a villainous race which can be used as a baseline template for powerful and intelligent netherworld-dwelling NPCs. Secondarily they can be used as potential “powers behind the throne,” or insidious manipulators who are scheming to overtake civilization through subterfuge, impersonation, enslavement, and sinister intrigue. A long-term epic campaign plot involving inhuman powers who are taking over the world, and the heroes’ attempts to foil their schemes, can center upon this magnificent race.

These monsters are known by many names in many dead and living languages, including the Sheshkek’ul’tthrai (Walkers of the Dream Below) and the Thu-baan’i (and the Viper-Striders). More generally they are whispered of by humans as the Serpent Folk, Serpent People, Serpent Men, or simply the Serpentine.

In the timeframe of the author’s World of Oldskull and Tyrrhenian campaign (equivalent to c. 1300-1500 AD, the late medieval period), serpent folk can be found primarily in the netherworlds beneath the realms of fantastical Arabia (especially beneath Irem and the Nameless City), Golgotha (the mythic Holy Land), and Khom (mythic Egypt). However, beyond these strongholds they can further be found virtually anywhere that is not too cold ... and they even dwell within the places of power, situated irrevocably in the highest kingdoms of Law and Good.

## History and Pre-History of the Serpent Folk

Yig was a great god. He was bad medicine. He did not forget things.

In the autumn his children were hungry and wild, and Yig was hungry and wild, too. All the tribes made medicine against Yig when the corn harvest came. They gave him some corn, and danced in proper regalia to the sound of whistle, rattle, and drum. They kept the drums pounding to drive Yig away, and called down the aid of Tiráwa, whose children men are, even as the snakes are Yig’s children. It was bad that the squaw of Davis killed the children of Yig. Let Davis say the charms many times when the corn harvest comes.

Yig is Yig. Yig is a great god.

— *The Curse of Yig*, by H. P. Lovecraft and Zealia Bishop

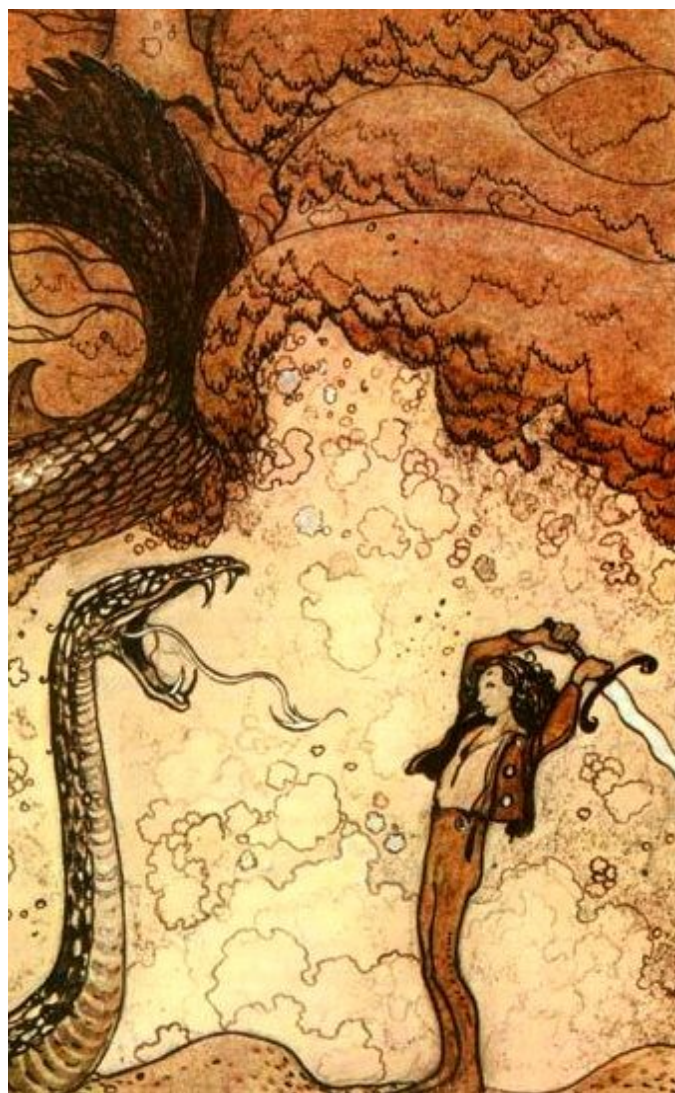
The serpent folk were originally born of Yig, the (Chaotic Neutral) Father of Serpents, a primordial chthonic deity representing the powers of darkness, secrecy, self-generative life, and forbidden wisdom. Yig is an ancient and pre-human being who was young when the Great Cthulhu fell to the World of Oldskull from the sky. His genesis dates to perhaps 330 million years BC. He has lived and died many times, shedding a thousand skins. He can never truly be destroyed. Only in his thousandth regenerative incarnation did he create his eldest children, far beneath the earth, as manifestations of his own elusive dreams and cosmic fears. (The most ancient known simple reptile species, *Hylonomus*, by temporal comparison dates in origin to c. 312 million BC.)

The Elder Things colonized the World of Oldskull much earlier than that ... however, Yig and his spawn — unlike those legions of foul Outsiders — are born of the planet's sub-terrene biosphere itself. As such Yig's children regard themselves as sacred assassins and purifiers of a disease-haunted world. They are the ultimate expression of the unbridled wrath of eradicated nature. And considering that the first pre-humans of the world were accidentally created by Elder Thing scientists as a byproduct of the shoggoth genesis, it should come as no surprise to learn that the serpent folk view humans as slaves (at best) who must be forced to serve the true purer order of the world ... against their will. Against all thoughts of liberty and freedom, yes, but serve the truth they must!

The first nether brood of Yig — spawned many millions of years before even the first dragons ever soared the skies — were naga-like, being enormous eldritch serpents typified by their intelligent faces, hateful hearts, and indecipherable minds. As various hierarchies of serpent folk warred, colluded, and even mated with humans

over millions of years they arose in many sub-strains, in caverns and lost cities and beneath swamps upon the surface. A more agile yet weaker humano-serpentine race arose as the naga-elders faded toward extinction.

All snakes in the world carry primal sparks of essence born from the blood of Yig, and all of these creatures — serpent, naga, and snake-walking humanoid — stand against mankind in the eternal war for dominance over the planet's biosphere and its ultimate vital destiny.



There are far too many eras of serpent folk dominance, annihilation, and resurgence



to ever detail here. But noteworthy ages of their reign following the initial elder genesis (c. 325 million BC) include:

**(I)** The rise of the non-sentient dinosaurs (c. 243 million BC);

**(II)** The carnosaurian and cataclysmic destruction of the first serpent folk surface empire (c. 225 million BC);

**(III)** The arrival of the Mi-Go (mortal enemies of the serpentine) and the subjugation of sentient beings to serve the Ur-mind (c. 160 million BC);

**(IV)** The revelation of the serpentine-manifested pre-human Dreamlands and the race's psychic corruption by Tsathoggua (c. 50 million BC?);

**(V)** The rise of the majestic and tribal serpent folk in Lemuria (c. 1 million BC?);

**(VI)** The emergence of the minor serpent kingdom of Valusia (c. 500,000 BC?);

**(VII)** The apocalyptic war against King Kull of Atlantis;

**(VIII)** The incarnation of Set — a storm-striding avatar of Yig — in pre-Egyptian Stygia (c. 20,000-15,000 BC);

**(IX)** The era of the God in the Bowl (itself being a spawn from one of the last primeval elders) during the age of Conan and Thoth-Amon (c. 10,000 BC);

**(X)** The rise of the Worms of the Earth against the Roman-Empyreans (c. 200 AD);

and **(XI)** The rediscovery of a fractured cabal of the Viper-Striders beneath the Nameless City of Arabia (a future campaign event, occurring in c. 1920 AD).

You will find fiction pertaining to these events and eras in many places, including Project Gutenberg (works free and in the public domain), Project Gutenberg Australia (works outside of copyright in some countries), bookstores, and your local libraries.



Although the race degenerated and never fully recovered from the scourge of incessant wars waged against the human barbarians and earlier threatening species, the Thuu-ban'i over time retreated into serpentine stronghold cities built deep within the wastelands of Arabia, Golgotha, Ur-Stygia and Khom. These cities were built upon the surface, hewn from bedrock and plateau, and their roots — in the form of mines and exploratory conduits — ran exceedingly deep.

Enslaved and possessed humans served in various hierarchies therein as city “rulers,” procurators, warriors, servitors, slaves, sacrifices, and (at the very lowest, and paradoxically most exalted, human rank) as food. The serpent folk themselves dwelled under these cities in fungus-draped caverns just beneath the earth, where water reservoirs and magically-preserved gardens of vegetation stood defended by their beguiled servitors, planar thralls, and guardian beasts. Their legions of enthralled human warriors — the “Venom-Anointed” — raided nearby villages and caravans, slaughtering the hardest enemies for centuries until vast tracts of infested and forbidden wasteland defined barrier zones between every Anointed city and the foreign realms beyond. These twisted borderlands were the realm of the Ghuls, the Efreeti, the Sand Elementals, the humungous Plated Worms, worm-riding necromancers, the voracious Burrowing Sharks, the Dreamlands-exiled Gugs, degenerate cannibals, and worse.

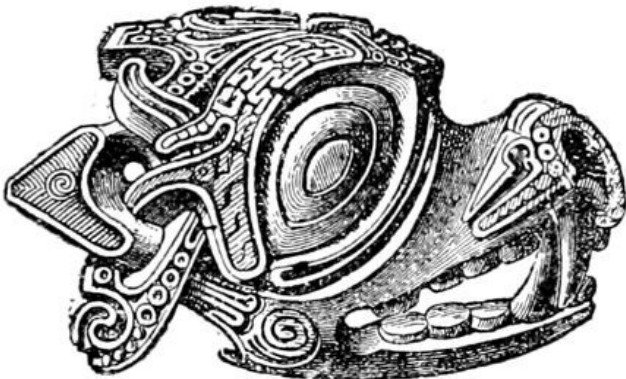
The *serpentine* serpent folk — as opposed to their humanoid and human-possessing kin, the Viper-Striders — never again emerged in force after the age of Abd al-Azrad (c. 700 AD). In the age of the World

of Oldskull campaign (c. 1300-1500 AD), the race's surface-approaching individuals exists (known as the Worms of the Earth) primarily as near-human creatures possessed by the spirits of fallen serpent folk from the past. And on the surface itself, the race exists in the form of humans possessed by invisible viper spirits. All of these various creatures serve the ultimate vision of Yig, and the crusade to eradicate mammalian species from the realms of the World of Oldskull.

Groping downward, he felt his feet slip and stumble on steps too small for human feet. With one hand pressed hard against the side of the well he steadied himself, fearing a fall into unknown and unlighted depths. ... The steps had ceased altogether and the stone felt slimy to the touch, like a serpent's lair.

What beings, Bran wondered, had slithered up and down this slanting shaft, for how many centuries? The tunnel narrowed until Bran found it rather difficult to shove through ...

— *Worms of the Earth*, by Robert E. Howard



## Serpent Folk

### Truename Generator

As an inherently deceptive race, serpent folk should not have unusual names in common usage among the realms of mankind. It's rather amusing to think of the local lord confiding in his advisors: "Men, we have an impostor in our midst! It's either Jon, Claire, Voss, Kane, Sratha-Torvex Srithshai, or Limpy Bill. We won't know until we question them all!"

But of course that naming convention doesn't work out very well in actual play.

As a playable compromise, I recommend giving each serpent man or woman — NPC or PC — a serpentine truename. Those creatures who dwell in the netherworld will use their truename freely, but those who are either (a) free-willed or (b) hidden away in human society will use a "normal" assumed human name and their truename will remain a closely-kept secret.

#### (I)

First roll 1D20 for the first syllable:

[1] Apoph-, [2] Ath-, [3] Eph-, [4] Eth-, [5] Gath-, [6] Gor-, [7] Kal-, [8] Kul-, [9] Lar-, [10] Lath-, [11] Nag-, [12] Raj-, [13] Rax-, [14] Reth-, [15] Sar-, [16] Sesh-, [17] Sor-, [18] Sreth-, [19] Sur-, [20] Suth-

#### (II)

Then include an interpolated syllable:

[1-2] 'a, [3-4] 'ah, [5-6] 'ax, [7] 'e, [8-9] 'el, [10-11] 'i, [12-13] 'ir, [14] 'o, [15] 'ol, [16-17] 'oth, [18] 'u, [19-20] 'ur

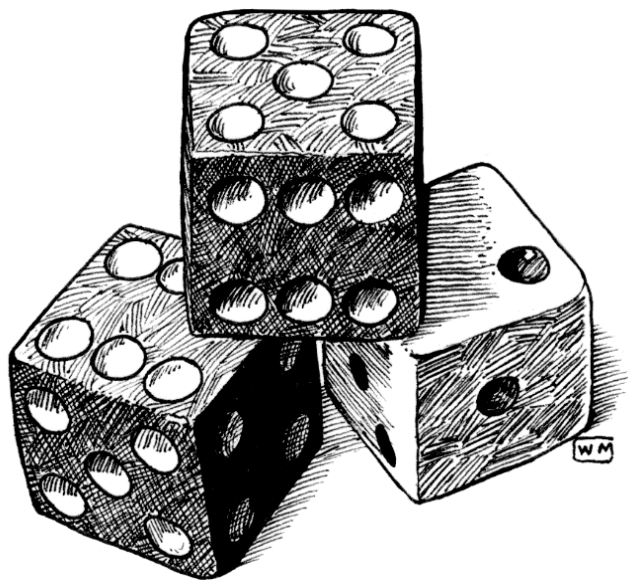
**(III)**

And crown it with a final hyphenated syllable:

[1] -Gash, [2] -Gin, [3] -Gor, [4] -Ka, [5] -Kom, [6] -Kur, [7] -La, [8] -Lash, [9] -Leth, [10] -Loth, [11] -Tha, [12] -Thex, [13] -Thir, [14] -Thra, [15] -Xal, [16] -Xol, [17] -Xur, [18] -Ya, [19] -Zag, [20] -Zolm

For female characters, add -a, -i, -ia, -iri, or -ra to the end of the name as appropriate. Hyphenation and/or apostrophes can be added as necessary.

In addition to the secret truename, human-possessing serpent folk (Viper-Striders) dwelling on the surface will have additional normal names appropriate to the culture of their realm (e.g., William in Britannia, Paolo in Tyrrhenia, Varg in Midgard, Khemos in Khom, etc.).



## Description

**Appearance:** Elder serpent people in their true form as giant snakes — properly, the

Sheshek’ul’thrai — will appear as giant poisonous vipers, or humanoid-headed nagas.

Secondarily the small, two-armed, bipedal, and snake-headed “lizard man-like” creatures — the Thu-baan’i (Viper-Striders) — are scaled reptilian humanoids. They are somewhat similar to troglodytes in appearance, although there are significant differences. Their tails are very short and vestigial, their limbs are thin, and their faces are much shorter and more serpentine ... not to mention the haughtiness of their visages, which speak of unmistakable intelligence and innate superiority.

Those creatures are nearly extinct, however. “New” serpent folk — meaning the Viper-Strider NPCs and most of those free-willed PCs who remain alive during the campaign’s current era — are actually human vessels possessed by elder serpentine spirits. They look like normal people (with a slightly exotic mien), but their souls are very different.

A full 10% of all these lower-level humanoid serpent folk can easily pass as human in every detail. All Player Character serpent men and women are included in this category. The remaining 90% have slight anomalous features or behaviors which are not immediately identified as serpentine, but are nevertheless suggestive. Example features and behaviors (one aspect per NPC) include but are by no means limited to: [1] narrow pupils, [2] brilliant green eyes, [3] an unblinking stare, [4] iridescent scale-like fingernails, [5] sharp and slender canines, [6] a bifurcated tongue tip, [7] a lilting hiss-voice, [8] a flat nose with almost slit-like nostrils, [9] a strange tendency to barely move while resting or sleeping, [10] a tendency to attack in darting thrusts (instead of sweeps or slashes), and so forth.

As these human-appearing serpent folk (either PC or NPC) gain power and ascend



in experience level, they undergo repeated metamorphosis. Each such altering physical change results in the emergence of more serpentine features. At level 2, a character would exhibit two anomalous qualities (as mentioned in the list above); at level 3, they would exhibit three; and so forth. For serpent folk Player Characters attaining experience level 9, a far more dramatic transformation takes place and the serpent man or woman will become a Viper-Strider, unquestionably monstrous and inhuman. Non-Player Character serpent people of level 9+ always appear as elders (naga-like Sheshkek'ul'thrai), not humanoids, as described in the first paragraph above.

Characters of such appearance — either Viper-Strider or Sheshkek'ul'thrai — can no longer mingle in human society. Even PCs who were formerly accepted as human will no longer be able to pass as such once experience level 9 is reached, and ever after. They will either need to enter self-imposed exile (or be killed), or they will necessarily live lives of never-ending stealth, concealment, magical illusion, deception, and disguise.



To convey any idea of these monstrosities is impossible.

They were of the reptile kind, with body lines suggesting sometimes the crocodile, sometimes the seal, but more often

nothing of which either the naturalist or the palaeontologist ever heard.

In size they approximated a small man, and their fore legs bore delicate and evidently flexible feet curiously like human hands and fingers. But strangest of all were their heads, which presented a contour violating all known biological principles.

To nothing can such things be well compared — in one flash I thought of comparisons as varied as the cat, the bulldog, the mythic Satyr, and the human being.

Not Jove himself had so colossal and protuberant a forehead, yet the horns and the noselessness and the alligator-like jaw placed the things outside all established categories.

... To crown their grotesqueness, most of them were gorgeously enrobed in the costliest of fabrics, and lavishly laden with ornaments of gold, jewels, and unknown shining metals.

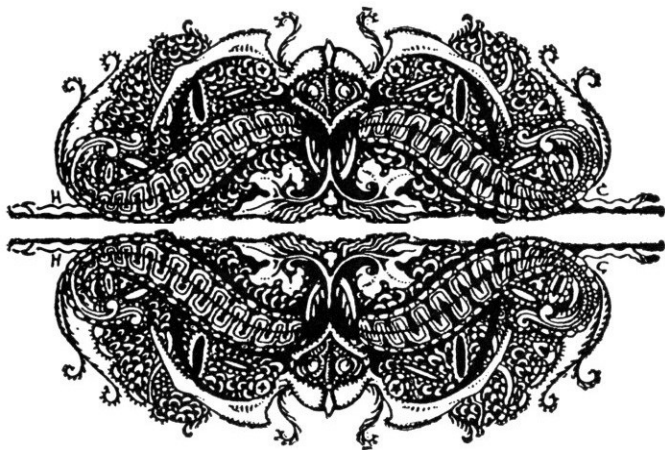
— *The Nameless City*, by H. P. Lovecraft

**Size:** Humanoid serpent folk who look like humans follow human dimensions in height and weight, although they almost never exceed 5' 6" in height or 160 lbs.

The reptilian Viper-Striders however are smaller than humans, averaging 5' in height. For Viper-Strider characters, PC or NPC, height can be equated to 50 inches + Strength; therefore a STR 3 serpent man would be 4' 5" tall, and a STR 16 one would be 5' 6". Weight is equal only to 60 + (Strength x 4) lbs., averaging 100 lbs. From a game rules perspective all serpent folk are size M (Medium).

Fully serpentine elders (Sheshkek'ul'thrai) appear as nagas, up to 18' long, and

weighing perhaps 400 to 700 very muscular pounds.



## Ability Score Minimums and Maximums for the Serpent Folk

Before qualifying for the serpent folk race, a PC or NPC must attain the following minimum ability scores.

- **Strength (STR):** Minimum ability score 7, Maximum 17. (For random determination for an NPC, you can use  $2D6+5$  to generate the character's Strength score.)
- **Dexterity (DEX):** Minimum ability score 11, Maximum 18. (For an NPC, use  $DEX = 1D8+10$ .)
- **Constitution (CON):** Minimum ability score 8, Maximum 18. (For an NPC, use  $CON = 2D6+6$ .)
- **Intelligence (INT):** Minimum ability score 9, Maximum 18. (For an NPC, use  $INT = 1D10+8$ .)
- **Wisdom (WIS):** Minimum ability score 9, Maximum 18. (For an NPC, use  $WIS = 1D10+8$ .)

- **Charisma (CHA):** Minimum ability score 3, Maximum 15. (For an NPC, use  $CHA = 1D4+1D10+1$ .) Serpent folk of very low Charisma, however, are not forced into the Assassin character class; they can belong to any allowed racial class (explained later) as desired.

After ability scores are generated (and for a PC, after ensuring that the character's rolls do indeed allow the player to play the race by meeting the listed minimums), the ability score bonuses and penalties (seen below) are applied. After modifiers are applied, any ability scores below the racial minimum must be raised to the racial minimum. For example if a PC serpent man had STR rolled as 7, and then the -1 racial penalty reduced this to STR 6, the STR would be restored to 7 (the racial minimum).

Similarly, after the racial bonuses are applied, any ability scores boosted above the racial maximum must be lowered to the racial maximum.

## Ability Score Modifiers for the Serpent Folk

Serpent folk characters of all types experience significant modifiers to all of their ability scores, as follows:

- **Strength (STR):** A penalty of -1. This is a result of their smaller size, as well as their thin limbs, even when they look like humans. However, most serpent people are surprisingly strong in relation to their stature.



- **Dexterity (DEX):** A bonus of +1. Serpent people tend to be quick, lithe, and graceful.
- **Constitution (CON):** A penalty of +1. Serpent people despise cold, but nevertheless those who are still around are inherently tough and resistant to physical adversity.
- **Intelligence (INT):** A bonus of +1. All serpent people deem themselves superior, and many of them actually are.
- **Wisdom (WIS):** A bonus of +1. The serpent folk are indeed wise, but they are also frequently lacking in empathy. They need to learn human societal niceties such as “manners,” “fairness,” and “compassion” as a matter of course, because such qualities do not occur naturally to their minds.
- **Charisma (CHA):** A penalty of -3. This penalty is worse than it seems; it is aura-related, not physical, as will be explained in the Disadvantages section of this supplement.



Note too that Charisma is not a “dump stat” for serpent folk, and players will find that low-Charisma serpent people are short-lived indeed. The race is hated and hunted, and — regardless of any PC allies played by other players — they must exist in the shadows. High-Charisma serpent people are able to keep up a convincing deception for a longer period of time, and as such they tend to live longer too. Low-Charisma serpent folk must be played with exceeding cleverness if they are to survive in any urban (human and/or demi-human) society for any length of time.



## Serpent Folk Behavior

Serpent folk are difficult to generalize as their personalities tend to be complex, unique, and inhuman. Given the chance, serpent folk prefer to be nocturnal. They rarely speak unless spoken to, preferring to dwell within their thoughts. They dislike

cold (although they are warm-blooded) and prefer caverns to the outdoors; some are agoraphobic.

Very generally, the Chaotic Neutral folk who worship Yig believe that the human race is a planet-threatening disease released by the Elder Things as a deliberate act of war against the planet's reptile-dominant primordial biosphere (as exemplified by the eternal Yig himself). However so many millions of years have passed, and the race has suffered so many setbacks, that the surviving folk have embraced a long-term plan of sublimation and insidious enslavement of the human race. Outright warfare no longer occurs. The human kingdoms are nevertheless being corrupted from within by serpentine pretenders, powers, impostors, and secret rulers.

These city-embedded serpent people harbor an innate fascination with humankind. Most demi-humans however are regarded as sub-strains of "the disease," as degenerate offshoots of the human race which threaten to pull humanity away from the tyrannical influence of the reptilian order. Only PC serpent folk will have trusted demi-human allies for any length of time.

At the individual level serpent folk can sympathize with and even befriend humans, although tentative alliance with demi-humans is obviously a more difficult psychological endeavor. The serpent folk are superior in all things and other races are too simple to understand that their ultimate purpose is either service to Yig in the name of planetary purification, or extinction. The Sheshkek'ul'thrai in the end must reign solely and supreme.

Free-willed (PC) serpent folk will find that these prejudices are ingrained in their psyches; the predilections can be emotionally and intellectually overcome through the passing of time ... but as

instincts and the distillation of unwanted dreams, these innate hatreds will always be present.

Beyond the reign of Yig are the NPC serpent folk who follow the cause of evil, as exemplified by the nightmare beast Tsathoggua. The Chaotic Evil serpent people are creatures who prefer to dwell (at least in their own thoughts, dreams, and meditations) beyond The Fields We Know, coiling in the nightmarish under-crust below the Lovecraftian Dreamlands. There they find new psychic power (some say, born of Kadath) in nightmare and forbidden knowledge, and they regard terror as a holy experience wherein the mind is opened to greater revelation. They are considerably more short-tempered, sensual, nihilistic, and disdainful of human value in general. Somewhat paradoxically, these evil creatures are more likely to regard specific human individuals as "pets" whom they love, shelter, and protect from others' influence.





## The Curse of Yoth:

### Experience Point (XP)

### Penalty for Serpent Folk

### Player Characters

Due to the number of powers enjoyed by the race — a repertoire that is only somewhat counterbalanced by the many racial disadvantages — any Player Character serpent person must accept a permanent -15% penalty to all earned experience points.

Please note that this penalty is concurrent with any bonuses an individual PC receives due to exceptional ability scores; e.g., a serpent woman fighter with a +5% XP bonus to class (due to exceptional Strength) would have a net penalty of -10% to all XP earned.



## Game Considerations of

### Serpent Folk Alignment

### I: In General

Unlike sentient mammalian races, the serpent folk are characterized by a sense of philosophical unity that is instilled by an age-old primal link to an otherworldly generative power. Surface-dwelling NPC serpent folk will always be either Chaotic Neutral (75%) or Chaotic Evil (25%); most who dwell in the netherworld (70%) are Chaotic Evil. Those who are Chaotic Neutral (as noted) are all bound to the serpent god Yig, and those who are Chaotic Evil are sworn to the toad-like abomination Tsathoggua.

Despite their non-good alignments, NPC serpent folk actively seek to integrate themselves in human and demi-human societies of all alignments, castes, and religious beliefs. Despite their near extinction they regard themselves as experiencing a temporary setback in their wars against humanity and the other mammalian races of the surface world.

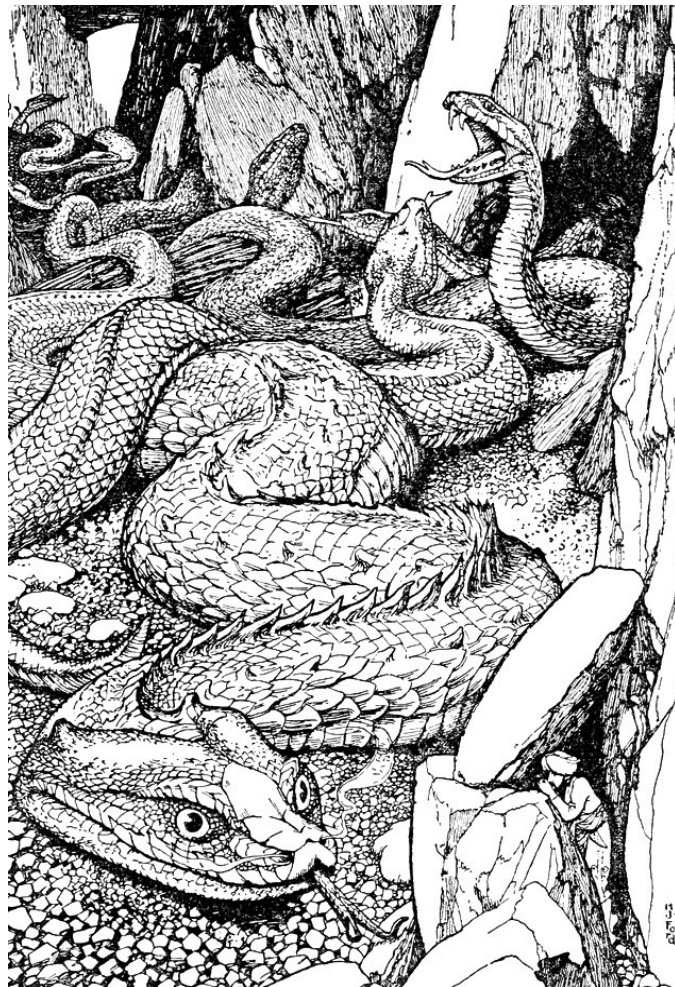
Player Character serpent folk however can be of any alignment, and might even be free-willed (worshipping neither Yig nor Tsathoggua) depending on the player's determinative decision. These rare PCs — and a few NPC serpent folk, at the GM's discretion — represent the exiled schism of those who are free-willed and spiritually forever apart from the machinations of Old Ones.

However, the GM might restrict the special Soul Slaver class to those characters who are either Chaotic Evil or Chaotic Neutral due to the number of reversed and unholy spells available to the class. In being CE or CN, such PC Soul Slavers could swear

themselves to any worthy god, or perhaps even a dream deity or a demon lord.



Required details concerning serpent deity worship, appearance, history, weaknesses, and powers can be found through Wikipedia, Google searches, the local library and so forth.



## Game Considerations of Serpent Folk Alignment

### II: Serpent Deities

### Beyond the Cthulhu Mythos

Beyond the domain of Yig the Serpent Father, there are many other snake deities in the real world who might well have a serpent folk origin. These are listed below, along with their suggested levels of power.

Alignments are open to interpretation depending on the myths that you would like to incorporate (although most are Chaotic to some degree). If you have a game where certain types of snake people are copyrighted, you can use these centuries-old real precedents to replace corporate lore with your own mythology-infused ideas ... just as I, the author, have done in my own campaign.

- **Angitia:** Italian Mythos, Lesser Goddess.
- **Astika:** Hindu Mythos, Demigod.
- **Ayida-Weddo:** Vodou Mythos, Lesser Goddess.
- **Brigid:** Celtic Mythos, Lesser Goddess.
- **Cihuacoatl:** Aztec Mythos, Lesser Goddess.
- **Coatlicue:** Aztec Mythos, Greater Goddess.
- **Damballa:** Vodou Mythos, Lesser God.



- **Danh-Gbi:** African Mythos, Demigod.
- **Degei:** Fijian Mythos, Greater God.
- **King Cecrops:** Greek Mythos, Demigod.
- **Echidna:** Greek Mythos, Demigoddess.
- **Eobshin:** Korean Mythos, Lesser Goddess.
- **Glycon:** Macedonian Mythos, Roman Mythos, Lesser God.
- **Kaliya:** Hindu Mythos, Demigod.
- **Kukulcan:** Yucatec Mythos, Lesser God.
- **Manasa:** Hindu Mythos, Lesser Goddess.
- **Meretseger:** Egyptian Mythos, Lesser Goddess.
- **Nehebkau:** Egyptian Mythos, Lesser God.
- **Ningishzida:** Sumerian Mythos, Lesser God.
- **Nirah:** Sumerian Mythos, Lesser God.
- **Nuwa:** Chinese Mythos, Lesser Goddess.
- **Ophion:** Greek Mythos, Lesser God.
- **Petro:** Vodou Mythos, Demigod.
- **Quetzalcoatl:** Aztec Mythos, Greater God.
- **Rainbow Serpent:** Australian Mythos, Greater God.
- **Ratimabulu:** Fijian Mythos, Lesser God.
- **Renenutet:** Egyptian Mythos, Lesser Goddess.
- **Set:** Egyptian Mythos, Hyborian Mythos, Greater God.
- **Shesha:** Hindu Mythos, Lesser God.
- **Simbi:** Vodou Mythos, Demigod.
- **Snake Child:** Hopi Mythos, Lesser God.
- **Snake Girl:** Hopi Mythos, Lesser Goddess.
- **Snake Goddess:** Minoan Mythos, Lesser Goddess.
- **Tlaloc:** Aztec Mythos, Greater God.

- **Ungud:** Australian Mythos, Lesser Goddess.
- **Vasuki:** Hindu Mythos, Lesser God.
- **Wadjet:** Egyptian Mythos, Lesser Goddess.
- **Wollunqua:** Australian Mythos, Lesser God.
- *(This list is necessarily incomplete.)*

Various small and isolated factions of the serpent people, depending on their culture, region, alignment and level of secrecy, might worship one or more of these entities at the GM's discretion.

Worshippers of Yig and Tsathoggua — when not warring amongst themselves — will on occasion set aside their differences in the name of annihilating any heretics who dare to worship the “lesser” deities listed above.

## Available Class Options for the Serpent Folk

The only character classes that are available to serpent folk are the following: Assassin (5% of all NPCs), Fighter (50%), Soul Slaver (25%) (described later), and Thief (10%). Therefore the available multi-classed options are Fighter / Assassin (2%), Fighter / Soul Slaver (2%), Fighter / Thief (2%), Soul Slaver / Assassin (2%), and Soul Slaver / Thief (2%).

The percentages listed represent a general proportion of classes for randomly-generated serpent folk NPCs. Therefore, if needed a GM can randomly determine the class(es) of any NPC serpent man or woman by rolling 1D100 as follows: [01-05] Assassin, [06-55] Fighter, [56-80] Soul Slaver, [81-90] Thief, [91-92] Fighter / Assassin, [93-94] Fighter / Soul Slaver,

[95-96] Fighter / Thief, [97-98] Soul Slaver Assassin, [99-00] Soul Slaver / Thief.

By the way Player Character serpent folk can indeed be multi-classed if they qualify for both desired classes as listed above.

The assassin, fighter, and thief classes require the usual qualifications (such as minimum ability scores). The Soul Slaver class is only open to PCs if the GM declares the possibility open; otherwise, it is restricted to NPC access only.



## Maximum Experience Levels for Serpent Folk

Serpent folk make rather poor front-line fighters, but they excel in the more insidious and indirect character classes (and other related professions, such as

spy). The maximum experience levels for PC and NPC serpent people are as follows:

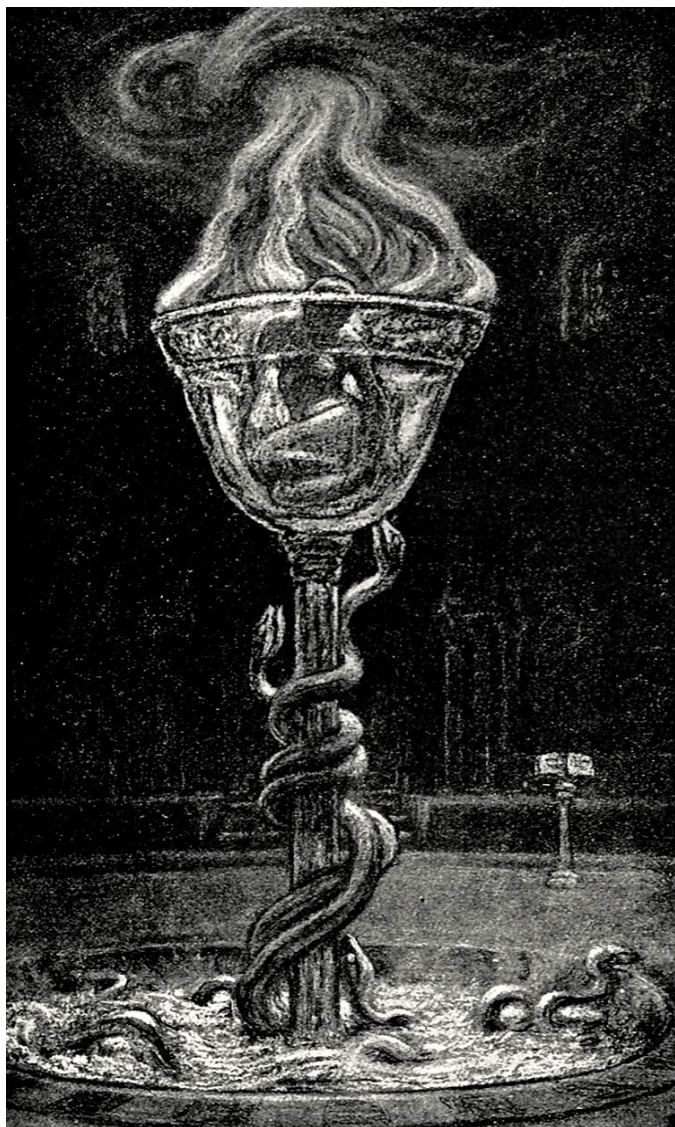
- **Assassin:** Maximum experience level 12. If DEX and INT are both 16+, the maximum level is instead 13 for such exceptional individuals.
- **Fighter:** Maximum level 6. If STR and DEX are both 16+, maximum level 7.
- **Soul Slaver:** Maximum level 18. If INT and WIS are both 16+, maximum level 19.
- **Thief:** Maximum level 14. If DEX and INT are both 16+, maximum level 15.
- **Multi-Classed:** For multi-classed characters, all maximum levels are penalized by -1. For example, the maximum levels attainable by a Fighter / Assassin with non-exceptional ability scores would be F5/A11.

The author realizes that level limits are considered atrocious and passé in the “new school” mode of play. However, they necessarily exist as an important bulwark against overpowered exotic characters in a humanocentric world. Without these limits the old school game’s atmosphere and intended mode of play are irrevocably altered.

If the GM decides for whatever reason to lift these reasonable level limits from Player Characters, a more severe experience point penalty (perhaps -30% to all XP earned?) will be necessary in order to keep game balance and parity with the demi-human races.

Those who choose to ignore this Gygaxian advice are on their own.





## Coils of Death:

### The Soul Slaver Class

Bereft of an archetypal cleric, shaman, or magical class, serpent folk are led by the most powerful unholy matriarchs and patriarchs of their kind. These are the Soul Slavers, chthonic spell casters who draw their power from fanatical devotion to a single Lovecraftian entity. Chaotic Neutral Soul Slavers derive their powers from Yig, while Chaotic Evil Soul Slavers derive their powers from Tsathoggua.

Theoretically, a PC Soul Slaver (necessarily of non-good alignment by definition) could conduct a similar pact with another worshipped deity outside of the Cthulhu Mythos, with GM approval. The only gods and goddesses who might empower such a pact would be evil or neutral pagan deities of serpents, death, plague, dark magic, vengeance, the netherworld, or something similar. Mere demon lords and arch-devils could never empower such a bond, however; their punitive philosophies are far too narrow, temporal, and “un-cosmic” from a serpent person’s perspective ... unless, of course, the GM has something special in mind and deems it otherwise.

Soul Slavers are similar to magic-users in most respects. They have D4 hit dice, they use only minor weapons (daggers, darts etc.), they ascend in experience levels at the same MU rate, and they acquire spells of various levels at the same rate that magic-users do. However, they do not possess spell books; they acquire their spells through worship and meditation as clerics do. Also, Soul Slavers can wear any non-metallic armor (cloth or leather). Multi-classed Soul Slavers must abide by this non-metallic armor ritualistic tenet as well, even if they are Fighter / Soul Slavers.

And knowing that players love to ignore limitations, I will state here that any PC Soul Slaver that is wearing metal armor (for whatever reason) will earn zero experience points during the entire session where the transgression takes place. Even points earlier in the session will immediately be lost when the metal armor is donned.

Soul Slavers do not have other clerical abilities such as the power to turn or compel undead, however. They do not gain bonus spells for high Intelligence or Wisdom. (However, they gain spells quite quickly, at the Illusionist rate by level.)

They all carry unholy symbols, but those symbols serve only as material spell



components and representations of faith. The two NPC Soul Slaver sects (of Yig worshippers in “the below,” and Tsathoggua worshippers in “the beyond”) are viciously at odds with one another and will fight incessantly given the chance.

Soul Slavers can only pray for spells from a predetermined list of thematic abilities. However, this list of spells draws from the cleric, druid, illusionist, and magic-user lists simultaneously. The result is a unique mix of powers themed to represent the race throughout long-term campaign play.

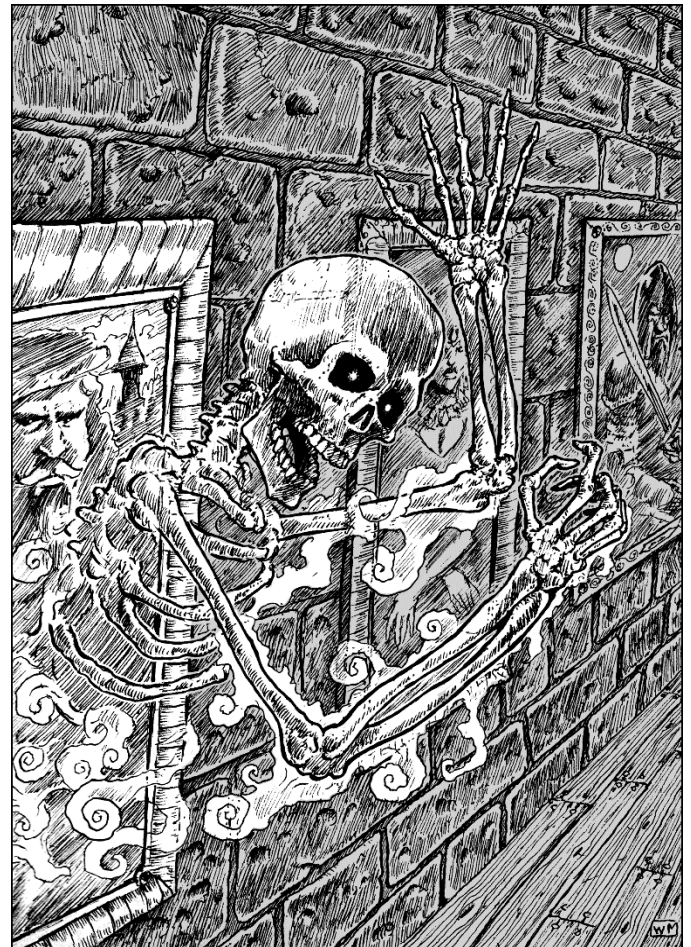
The spells which Soul Slavers can pray for, by spell level, are as follows. Parenthetical entries are a reference notation; e.g., (I4) means “equivalent to the level 4 illusionist spell of the same name.”

Please note that the bracketed numbers are included for random spell selection, for when the GM is assigning spells to a new PC, or designing an NPC, or creating a serpent folk-themed spell scroll (etc.).

**Spell Level 1:** [1-2] Cause Fear (C1), [3] Cause Light Wounds (C1), [4-6] Change Self (I1, almost always (80%) known by NPCs without a die roll), [7] Charm Person (M1), [8] Command (C1), [9] Curse (C1, reversal of Bless), [10] Darkness (C1), [11-12] Detect Good (C1), [13] Faerie Fire (D1), [14] Friends (M1), [15-16] Pass without Trace (D1), [17-18] Protection from Good (C1), [19-20] Sleep (M1).

**(Nota bene:** All Soul Slavers know the Read Magic spell as well; this power allows them to read Clerical, Druidic, Illusory, or Magical spell scrolls. However, they can *only cast spells from scrolls if they are found in these spell lists*; any other attempted spells will always fail.)

**Spell Level 2:** [1] Bind (M2), [2] Charm Person or Mammal (D2), [3] Enthrall (C2), [4] ESP (M2), [5] Forget (M2), [6] Hold Person (C2), [7-8] Hypnotic Pattern (I2), [9] Misdirection (I2), [10] Obscure Alignment (C2, reversal of Know Alignment), [11-12] Obscurement (D2), [13] Scare (M2), [14-16] Snake Charm (C2), [17-18] Spiritual Dagger (C2, similar to Spiritual Hammer), [19] Undetectable Charm (C2, reversal of Detect Charm), [20] Unholy Symbol.



**Spell Level 3:** [1-2] Animate Dead (C3), [3-4] Bestow Curse (C3, reversal of Remove Curse), [5-6] Cause Blindness (C3), [7-8] Cause Disease (C3), [9] Cause Paralysis (C3), [10] Continual Darkness (C3), [11-12] Dispel Magic (C3), [13-14] Non-Detection (I3), [15-16] Phantasmal Force (M3), [17]



Snake Sigil (M3), [18] Speak with the Dead (C3), [19-20] Suggestion (M3).

**Spell Level 4:** [1] Black Tentacles (M4), [2] Cause Serious Wounds (C4), [3-4] Confusion (M4), [5-7] Fear (M4), [8] Emotion (I4), [9] Improved Phantasmal Force (I2), [10-12] Poison (C4, reversal of Neutralize Poison), [13] Polymorph Self (M4), [14-15] Protection from Good 10' Radius (C4), [16-18] Sticks to Snakes (C4), [19] Tongues (C4), [20] Undetectable Lie (C4).



**Spell Level 5:** [1-3] Cause Critical Wounds (C5), [4-5] Dispel Good (C5), [6-9] Faithful Serpent (M5, similar to Faithful Hound), [10-11] False Seeing (C5), [12-13] Magic Jar (M5), [14-17] Phantasmal Killer (I4), [18-20] Slay Living (C5).

**Spell Level 6:** [1-4] Death Spell (M6), [5-6] Eyebite (M6), [7-8] Fang Barrier (C6, similar to Blade Barrier), [9-12] Feeblemind (D6), [13-15] Harm (C6), [16-17] Lose the Path (C6), [18-20] Repulsion (M6).

**Spell Level 7:** [1-3] Chaos (I5), [4-7] Creeping Doom (of Serpents) (D7), [8-10] Destruction (C7), [11-13] Energy Drain

(C7), [14-15] Finger of Death (D7), [16] Succor (C7), [17-18] Symbol (C7), [19-20] Unholy Word (C7).

(Spell levels 8 and 9 are not available to Soul Slavers, regardless of experience level.)

For game balance purposes, all spells require their usual material spell components. Even those that usually do not require a material component will require one, namely the caster's unholy symbol. For this reason Soul Slavers protect their symbols to the death.

Also, Soul Slavers cannot memorize more than one "charge" of any spell (e.g., Sleep x 2) at any time; each prepared spell must be separate and unique.

Note too that by design, Soul Slavers do not have access to healing spells or massive direct damage spells; their magics tend to be more deceptive and insidious by far.



## Soul Slaver Level Titles (and Maximum Number of Spells Known)

The following additional precepts apply to the Soul Slaver class.

- **Level 1, Beguiler:** First access to 1st-level spells. Castable spells 1 Level 1 (1-L1).
- **Level 2, Entrancer:** Castable spells 2-L1.
- **Level 3, Fang Priest / Priestess:** First access to 2nd-level spells. Castable spells 2-L1, 1-L2.
- **Level 4, Skin Shedder:** Castable spells 3-L1, 2-L2.
- **Level 5, Coil Shedder:** First access to 3rd-level spells. Castable spells 4-L1, 2-L2, 1-L3.
- **Level 6, Envemoner:** Castable spells 4-L1, 3-L2, 1-L3.
- **Level 7, Empoisoner:** Castable spells 4-L1, 3-L2, 2-L3.
- **Level 8, Soul Constrictor:** First access to 4th-level spells. Castable spells 4-L1, 3-L2, 2-L3, 1-L4.
- **Level 9, Soul Slaver:** Castable spells 5-L1, 3-L2, 3-L3, 2-L4.
- **Level 10, Dread Soul Slaver:** First access to 5th-level spells. Castable spells 5-L1, 4-L2, 3-L2, 2-L4, 1-L5.
- **Level 11, Eldritch Soul Slaver:** Castable spells 5-L1, 4-L2, 3-L3, 3-L4, 2-L5.
- **Level 12, Necromancer of Yoth:** First access to 6th-level spells. Castable spells 5-L1, 5-L2, 4-L3, 3-L4, 2-L5, 1-L6.
- **Level 13, Necromancer of K'n-yan:** Castable spells 5-L1, 5-L2, 4-L3, 3-L4, 2-L5, 2-L6.
- **Level 14, Necromancer of N'kai:** First access to 7th-level spells.

Castable spells 5-L1, 5-L2, 4-L3, 3-L4, 2-L5, 2-L6, 1-L7.

- **Level 15, Legion Slaver:** Castable spells 5-L1, 5-L2, 4-L3, 4-L4, 2-L5, 2-L6, 2-L7.
- **Level 16, Serpentine Magus:** Castable spells 5-L1, 5-L2, 5-L3, 4-L4, 3-L5, 2-L6, 2-L7.
- **Level 17, Viperous Magus:** Castable spells 5-L1, 5-L2, 5-L3, 5-L4, 3-L5, 2-L6, 2-L7.
- **Level 18, Serpentine Arch-Magus:** Castable spells 5-L1, 5-L2, 5-L3, 5-L4, 3-L5, 3-L6, 2-L7.
- **Level 19, Viperous Arch-Magus:** Castable spells 5-L1, 5-L2, 5-L3, 5-L4, 4-L5, 3-L6, 2-L7.



## Legacy of the Soul Slavers: The Legion of Souls

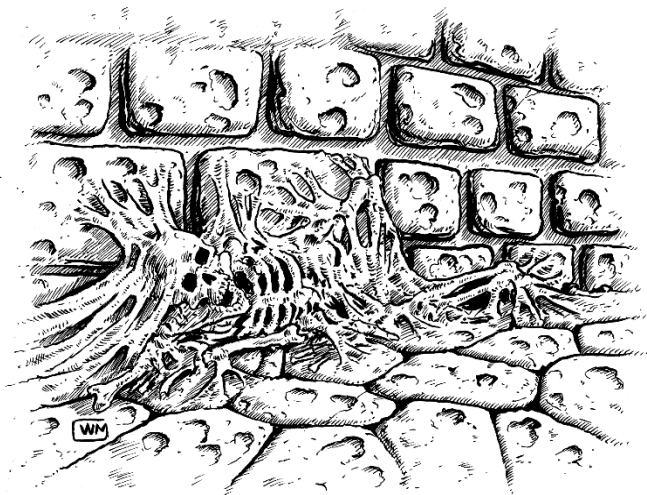
I have said that the fury of the rushing blast was infernal — cacodaemoniacal — and that its voices were hideous with the pent-up viciousness of desolate eternities. Presently those voices, while



still chaotic before me, seemed to my beating brain to take articulate form behind me; and down there in the grave of unnumbered aeon-dead antiquities, leagues below the dawn-lit world of men, I heard the ghastly cursing and snarling of strange-tongued fiends.

Turning, I saw outlined against the luminous aether of the abyss what could not be seen against the dusk of the corridor — a nightmare horde of rushing devils; hate-distorted, grotesquely panoplied, half-transparent ...

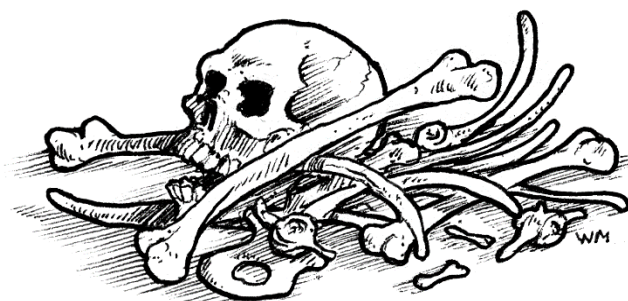
— *The Nameless City*, by H. P. Lovecraft



a new Soul Slaver level is gained, a new lost soul will arise.

Lost souls are unaligned undead and are semi-intelligent. They are identical to animated skeletons (with the same hit dice, hit points, etc.), with two exceptions. The first difference is that they are non-corporeal, which means they can only be damaged by spells, holy items, fire, or magical weapons of +1 or greater power. The second difference is their appearance: they appear as flayed, emaciated human-like things with enormous hollow eye sockets and perpetually screaming mouths. They are utterly silent.

Lost souls do not regenerate when wounded or destroyed. They are tireless and relentless and can follow basic (but not complex) commands. By default, they are tied to the Soul Slaver who controls them and will serve as tireless guards while the serpent person is sleeping, resting, meditating, etc.



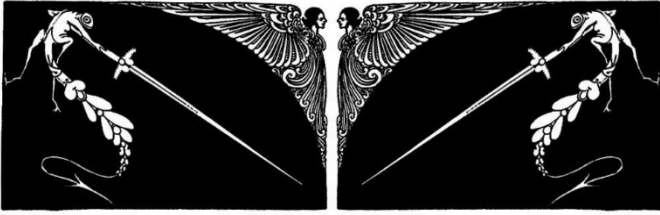
## Starting Ages for Serpent Folk Characters

Soul Slavers begin play in the same age ranges as elves do.

Non-Player Character Soul Slaver serpent people acquire a legion of souls. This effect is not experienced by Player Characters, because they are free-willed (and are sworn in eternity to neither Yig, nor to Tsathoggua). Non-Soul Slavers do not gain this effect either, as it is a result of killing sentient creatures with foul magic.

The number of lost souls that a Soul Slaver will possess is equal to his or her Soul Slaver experience level. A level 3 Soul Slaver for example would possess 3 lost souls; a multi-classed level 4 Fighter / level 4 Soul Slaver would possess 4. Each time

For NPCs, for each experience level beyond the first, you can add +1D8 to the serpent person's age.



## Serpent Folk Age and Ability Score Modifiers

Remarkably and uniquely, serpent folk do not experience ability score modifiers (bonuses or penalties) due to aging over time. Elderly serpent folk are just as physically and mentally capable as the young ones are.

The only serpent folk who have ever died of old age were over 10,000 years old.



## Racial Special Abilities

### I: General Powers

**Curious Senses:** Serpent folk have infravision, as noted below. However their sense of sight is quite poor overall; no serpent person can see any farther than 300' (even in broad daylight using normal vision) under the best of circumstances, and *magical effects and items cannot improve this maximum range.*

However, due to their meticulous sense of vibration detection, all serpent folk can detect invisible (but not astral or ethereal) beings to a range of 15'. Immobile or inanimate invisible objects cannot be so detected.

**Eye of the Serpent:** All serpent folk possess infravision. Those which are human-like possess only an innate sense (30' range), while those that are inhuman have serpentine eyes and pits that are much stronger (90' range) and the naga-like patriarchs and matriarchs are unmatched (180' range).

**Mortal Immortality:** Serpent folk almost never seem to die of old age. They can die in combat; they can also be poisoned, energy drained, drowned, and even laid low by a disease. But they do not go through the usual stages of mortality (Adult, Middle Aged, Old, Venerable, etc.) that are experienced by the mammalian races; or at least, if they do, these natural stages are simply disregarded as being of little consequence. As a result, as mentioned they also do not have any ability score modifiers (positive or negative) which are age-related.

Power gamers have probably already noted that this means that spell-casting serpent



folk can cast and experience spells (Haste or Wish, for example), or use magical items, which tend to create aging in other creatures. They are also immune to unnatural aging, up to and including a ghost's attacks.

**Reptilian Affinity:** All serpent people gain a reaction bonus when encountering snakes and snake-like beings (but not dragons or other reptiles). This category includes snakes, amphisbaenas, nagas, serpentine demonesses, and others determined by the GM, both intelligent and unintelligent.

The reaction bonus is +3 for an NPC serpent person (true to its nature), but only +1 for a PC serpent person (being free-willed, which serpents can sense as a dangerous "wild card" in regards to interaction).

**Slithering Skittering:** Serpent folk can easily move on all fours (depending on what they are wearing and carrying) and can move at full movement rate while crouching only a foot or two above the ground. This is reflected in their stealth advantages as given for the thief class (Hide in Shadows, Move Silently).

From a rules perspective this also means that any missile fire directed at a moving or fighting serpent man is at -2 to hit, in addition to any other range-applicable penalties.

Even human-appearing serpent folk can use this ability, but in doing so they instantly dispel any illusion concerning their true nature. No one will believe that the character is human after seeing them move in this terrible way.



## Racial Special Abilities

### II: Nagini in Excelsis:

#### Bond Serpents

Uldoon left the desert and travelled many days, and so came to the river where it passes beyond the city to seek the sea, and following its bank came near to his old home. And the people of the City by the River, seeing him far off, cried out: "Hast thou found the Secret of the Gods?"

And he answered: "I have found it, and the Secret of the gods is this —"

Zyni Moe, the small snake, seeing the figure and the shadow of a man between him and the cool river, raised his head and struck once.

And the gods are pleased with Zyni Moe, and have called him the protector of the Secret of the Gods.

— *Time and the Gods*, by Lord Dunsany

Player Character serpent people, of any class, gain *bond serpents*. This effect is not experienced by NPCs; it is the result of free will and the unique spiritual aura which emanates from such a "chosen" serpent person. Natural and magical snakes are sensitive to this aura, which is tied into their most ancient instincts; and they will at times submit themselves to lifelong control by a serpent man PC.

A serpent man PC begins play with a level 1 bond serpent. When the PC gains level 2, the player can choose either to keep the current serpent (if it has survived), or to "graduate" to a new level 2 serpent.

If a bond serpent dies, the PC must wait until they attain a further experience level before another serpent can arise. In other words, a level 4 serpent woman whose serpent is slain would need to wait until level 5 before a serpent could be called.

Summoning a bond serpent is a simple matter. Relinquishing a surviving serpent for another involves touching it and breaking its spirit link, which causes it to crumble painlessly into dust. Calling a new serpent involves sleeping and dreaming of the new desired creature, which will appear (from a crack, shadow, crevasse, sinkhole, a vaporous puff out of the Dreamlands, etc.) at the moment the serpent person wakes. The surroundings, climate, terrain,

timing, and other natural area concerns are irrelevant to the serpent's appearance.

Bond serpents will scout, fight, or hide as telepathically or vocally commanded by their master. If a bond serpent is slain, a new one cannot be called until the PC gains a new experience level.

Bond serpents are somewhat similar to magic-users' familiars; they are fearless, possess average intelligence (but cannot speak), will follow commands, and can temporarily convey their senses to the PC. The PC can see through the serpent's eyes, hear what it hears, and even share flashes of image-thought. These effects have a range of 1 mile, even underground or through solid stone. The bond serpent is otherwise mortal and can be killed, but unlike a magic-user's familiar the loss of the serpent will not damage the character.

The available bond serpents a Player Character might summon are as follows. Each time a serpent is summoned, the player rolls 1D10 and consults the following tables.





**Experience Level 1:**

- **[1-4] Serpent** (HD 1+1, save vs. poison at +3, bite causes sickness and incapacitation)
- **[5-6] Adder** (HD 1+1\*, save vs. poison at -1, bite causes sickness and incapacitation)
- **[7-8] Viper** (HD 1+1\*, save vs. poison at -2, bite causes sickness and incapacitation)
- **[9-10] Pit Viper** (HD 1+1\*, save vs. poison at +1, bite causes 2D4 poison damage with failed save)

**Experience Level 2:**

- **[1-2] Crimson Viper** (HD 1+1\*\*, save vs. poison at +2, lethal bite)
- **[3-5] Large Constrictor** (HD 2+1, 1D2 constriction damage)
- **[6-8] Large Serpent** (HD 2+1, save vs. poison at +3, bite causes sickness and incapacitation)
- **[9-10] Rattlesnake** (HD 1+1\*\*, bite causes 3D4 poison damage with failed save)

**Experience Level 3:**

- **[1-2] Large Adder** (HD 2+1\*, save vs. poison at -1, bite causes sickness and incapacitation)
- **[3] Large Pit Viper** (HD 2+1\*, save vs. poison at +1, bite causes 2D4 poison damage with failed save)
- **[4-5] Large Tropical Constrictor** (HD 2+1\*, 1D4 constriction damage)
- **[6] Large Viper** (HD 2+1\*, save vs. poison at -2, bite causes sickness and incapacitation)
- **[7] Blood Viper** (HD 1+1\*\*\*\*, save vs. poison at -3, lethal bite)
- **[8] Huge Constrictor** (HD 3+1, 1D3 constriction damage)
- **[9] Large Crimson Viper** (HD 2+1\*\*, save vs. poison at +2, lethal bite)

- **[10] Large Rattlesnake** (HD 2+1\*\*, bite causes 3D4 poison damage with failed save)

**Experience Level 4:**

- **[1-3] Large Poisonous Snake** (HD 2+1\*\*\*, lethal bite)
- **[4-6] Large Spitting Snake** (HD 2+1\*\*\*, lethal bite or blinding spittle)
- **[7] Large Blood Viper** (HD 2+1\*\*\*\*, save vs. poison at -3, lethal bite)
- **[8] Large Mamba** (HD 2+1\*\*\*\*, lethal bite, 2D4 damage even with successful save)
- **[9-10] Large Spitting Cobra** (HD 2+1\*\*\*\*, lethal bite or lethal spittle)

**Experience Level 5**

- **[1-2] Huge Poisonous Snake** (HD 3+1\*\*\*, lethal bite)
- **[3-4] Huge Spitting Snake** (HD 3+1\*\*\*, lethal bite or blinding spittle)
- **[5-6] Huge Tropical Constrictor** (HD 4+1\*\*, 1D6 constriction damage)
- **[7-8] Huge Mamba** (HD 3+1\*\*\*\*, lethal bite, 3D4 damage even with successful save)

- **[9-10] Huge Spitting Cobra** (HD 3+1\*\*\*\*, lethal bite or lethal spittle).

#### Experience Level 6:

- **[1-4] Amphisbaena, Small** (HD 4\*\*\*, two lethal bites)
- **[5-7] Giant Poisonous Snake** (HD 4+2\*\*\*, lethal bite)
- **[8-10] Giant Spitting Snake** (HD 4+2\*\*\*, lethal bite or blinding spittle)

#### Experience Level 7:

- **[1-3] Giant Mamba** (HD 4+2\*\*\*\*, lethal bite, 3D6 damage even with successful save)
- **[4-6] Giant Spitting Cobra** (HD 4+2\*\*\*\*, lethal bite or blinding spittle)
- **[7-10] Giant Constrictor** (HD 6+1\*\*\*, 2D4 constriction damage)

#### Experience Level 8:

- **[1-3] Amphisbaena** (HD 6\*\*\*, two lethal bites)
- **[4-6] Amphisbaena, Large** (HD 6\*\*\*, minimum 5 hit points per die, two lethal bites)
- **[7-8] Giant Tropical Constrictor** (HD 6+1\*\*\*\*, minimum 6 hit points per die, 2D6 constriction damage)
- **[9-10] Amphisbaena, Huge** (HD 6\*\*\*\*, minimum 6 hit points per die, two lethal bites)

#### Experience Level 9

- **[1-3] Giant Tropical Constrictor** (HD 6+1\*\*\*\*, minimum 6 hit points per die, 2D6 constriction damage)
- **[4-6] Amphisbaena, Huge** (HD 6\*\*\*\*, minimum 6 hit points per die, two lethal bites)
- **[7-10] Amphisbaena, Giant** (HD 6\*\*\*\*, minimum 7 hit points per die, two lethal bites)



#### Experience Level 10+:

- **[1-4] Amphisbaena, Huge** (HD 6\*\*\*\*, minimum 6 hit points per die, two lethal bites)
- **[5-8] Amphisbaena, Giant** (HD 6\*\*\*\*, minimum 7 hit points per die, two lethal bites)
- **[9-10] Amphisbaena, Enormous** (HD 6\*\*\*\*\*, 48 hit points, two lethal bites).
- Note that as a serpent person continues to gain higher experience levels (level 11, 12, 13, etc.), new bond serpents can be rolled on this level 10+ table.

Most of these creatures mentioned above are detailed in the 1977 and 1983 bestiaries; a few are extrapolated from those sources and can be deduced. For



example, a 4-HD variant of a 6-HD creature would inflict 2/3rds as much damage.

## Racial Special Abilities

### III: Vile Powers of the

#### Viperous

#### Metamorphosis

Every time a serpent person — PC or NPC — attains enough experience points to gain a new experience level, there is a chance that the creature will experience a vision and thereby (potentially) receive the option to enter a physical metamorphosis. The chance for this option to be available is 15% per *current* (not newly-attained) experience level, to a maximum of 90%. For example, for a serpent woman ascending from level 2 to level 3, the chance of a viable metamorphosis opportunity would be 30% (not 45%).

NPC serpent folk will always opt for metamorphosis when the dice indicate it is possible, provided their surroundings and circumstances are safe enough to allow for it. In the case of Player Characters, the decision belongs solely to the PC's controlling player. The decision must be made within 48 hours of gaining the level-boosting experience points; a non-decision equates to declination (refusal) and metamorphosis then does not occur.

If the percentile dice indicate that metamorphosis cannot occur at this time, or if metamorphosis is available and yet declined, the character can train normally to gain the new experience level ... just like any other character of any race.

If the metamorphosis option is available and embraced, the character will enter a deeply lethargic torpor state within 24

hours. During this time, the character's breathing is extremely shallow; water and food consumption are not required; and the character will suffer only 50% normal damage from psychic, psionic, magical, or elemental attacks. Physical attacks (from weapons, poisons, acids, or what-have-you) inflict full damage. Worse, the character is not only unconscious — unable to move, speak, hear, or defend itself — but is also unable to wake, even if attacked.

An NPC's torpor-affected body will be hidden and well-protected by servitors and/or allies. In a PC's situation, the player must quickly trust other player allies, any henchmen, guardian beasts, and magical guards and wards to hold while the lethargy is endured.

The torpor will last for 80-Constitution-2D20 hours. For example, a character of CON 13 with rolls of 14 and 7 would be helpless for (80 minus 13 minus 14 minus 7 equals) 46 hours total. The state causes the character to lose  $60 + (1D6 \times 5)\%$  of his or her current hit points as well; this is technically not damage (it is metamorphic physical trauma) but the game effect is the same. For example a serpent man with 32 hit points, rolling a 4, would lose  $60 + (4 \times 5 =) 80\%$  of his hit points, resulting in a new hit point total of 6 (losing 26 points to torpor). The character cannot be magically healed or otherwise "cured" during this process, and such interference will actually hamper and cancel the torpor state with no benefit received. Magical and natural healing can occur once the full torpor has ended.

Exiting torpor results in a surge of energetic activity; the character will be famished, dehydrated, bewildered, wounded, and paranoid (although not violently so unless attacked). However, the character will also be able to fully move, fight, speak, and otherwise act without further hindrance. These effects will fade quickly over time via eating, drinking,

communication with allies, and natural or magical healing.

During torpor, the serpent person deepens the primal link between itself and the ancestral spirits of the race. The character is instilled with shards of ancestral memories, and even other personalities; but the conscious aspects of these influences fade as do dreams when the serpent person wakes. However, the instillation of these spiritual essences cause permanent changes in the metamorphic individual.

The first beneficial effect of torpor is that the serpent person becomes stronger. The new experience level is gained upon waking with no training required. When new hit points are rolled for the new level gained, the dice are rolled twice and the higher total is taken while the lower total is ignored. Further, the character cannot gain fewer than an average number of new hit points, rounded up. For example a serpent woman fighter of level 4, gaining level 5 through metamorphosis, would roll 1D10 twice for new hit points gained. If both rolls are poor (such as a 3 and a 2), then the average minimum gain rule would be invoked. The average hit points gained by a fighter per level are equal to (1 plus 10 divided by 2, rounded up from 5.5, equals) 6; therefore 6 hit points would be gained. Or if the rolls were 10 and 3, the character would gain 10 hit points. Alternately, if the character is of high level and cannot dice for hit points (for example, a level 11 fighter set to gain a set +3 hit points for level 12), the character gains an additional 1D2 hit points (in this case, 3+1D2).

The second beneficial effect of torpor is more of a gamble; the character might gain +1 to any one preferred ability score ... so long as it is not the highest score, or one of the highest scores. For example a character of STR 13, DEX 14, CON 14, INT 10, WIS 11 and CHA 13 could gain +1 STR, +1 INT, +1 WIS, or +1 CHA, whichever the

player preferred. DEX or CON could not be selected however because these scores (14) are the highest that the character possesses. The player chooses the score to raise for a PC; the GM of course chooses for an NPC. But the chance of the +1 ability score gain actually occurring is based on a *single* unmodified percentile dice roll.

(Theoretically, a character with many high ability scores could eventually exceed racial maximums in this manner, although such an event is statistically improbable.)

The chance of the +1 gain is 90% during the character's first metamorphosis; therefore, the number of metamorphoses will need to be tracked throughout the character's lifetime. The chance is reduced to 70% for the second instance, 50% for the third instance, 30% for the fourth instance, and 10% for the fifth and further instances. The result of this is that a serpent person will almost always gain early power, while later gains will become much more erratic and unpredictable ... yet nevertheless high-level serpent folk tend to have very powerful ability scores indeed.

As an example, if the player chose to seek +1 CON with a 90% chance of success, a roll of 01-90 would grant the +1 CON but a roll of 91-00 would mean no point is gained at all. The hit-point gaining advantage mentioned above, however, always occurs regardless of whether an ability score point is gained.

The negative effect of metamorphosis — the resurgence of an ancestral curse once suffered by a formal serpentine self — is frequently more significant. The character *always* suffers a permanent random effect, which is rolled on 1D10, as follows:

- **[1] Arisen Curse of the Claw:** A -1 penalty to melee to hit rolls.
- **[2] Arisen Curse of the Fang:** A -1 penalty to missile to hit rolls.



- **[3] Forsaken Oath of the Soul Slaver:** A -1 penalty to all saving throws vs. magical effects.
- **[4] Forsaken Oath of the Viperous:** A permanent -1 loss of Charisma; reroll this effect if Charisma was selected as the ability to potentially gain a +1 bonus as described prior.
- **[5] Forsaken Oath of the White Warlord:** A -1 penalty to all saving throws vs. non-magical effects.
- **[6] Ill Omen of the Flesh:** A permanent physical disability, either muteness, blindness, or deafness. If the character is a PC, the player decides which disability occurs. This is an abominable curse and cannot be healed, outside of a Wish.
- **[7] Ill Omen of the Spirit:** A -3% penalty to all future XP gained.
- **[8] Violent Metamorphosis:** A complete loss of human-like appearance (identical to the effect of attaining experience level 9); reroll this effect if the character is already level 9 or higher.
- **[9] Vox of the Blackened Tongue:** The permanent loss of a random known language, possibly even the Common Tongue, the native tongue, or the alignment language.
- **[10] Vox of the Broken Blade:** The loss of a random weapon proficiency (which can later be relearned).

Theoretically, these effects could be cumulative (-2 to hit, -2 to saving throws, etc.) if the character goes through enough metamorphoses over time and the dice rolls indicate duplicate results.

Metamorphosis is a “racial gambling mechanism,” designed to encourage risk-taking players to engage in precarious calculations which might result in increased character power. No rolls or decisions — including the decision to enter torpor — can be altered once the decisions

and rolls are made. Let the wise and wary player enjoy, and beware.

**Involuntary Exaltation:** The GM and player should also note that when the PC gains experience level 9, an involuntary change occurs: the character becomes smaller, lighter, and more reptilian (being now a Viper-Strider with a snake head), and can no longer pass as human. This change occurs regardless of whether the character chooses to enter metamorphosis at that time.



## Racial Special Abilities

### IV: The Dread

#### Exaltation

“No!” exclaimed Promero. “I warned Kallian, but he would not believe me! It is a scaled serpent coiled with its tail in its mouth. It is the sign of Set, the Old Serpent, the god of the Stygians! This Bowl is too old for a human world — it is a relic of the time when Set walked the earth in the form of a man! The race which sprang from his loins laid the bones of their kings away in such cases as these, perhaps!”

— *The God in the Bowl*, by Robert E. Howard



The Dread Exaltation is the culmination of a month-long torpor state. The dreaming hibernation destroys the character’s mind and allows an elder soul to possess the creature’s flesh. When the serpent emerges once again, it will be in the form of an immense snake-like Spirit Naga of enormous size (Hit Dice 10\*\*\*\*\*, 80 hit points, 18’ long) and power (genius intelligence, level 6 magic-user, level 5 cleric, permanent charming gaze, fatally poisonous bite).

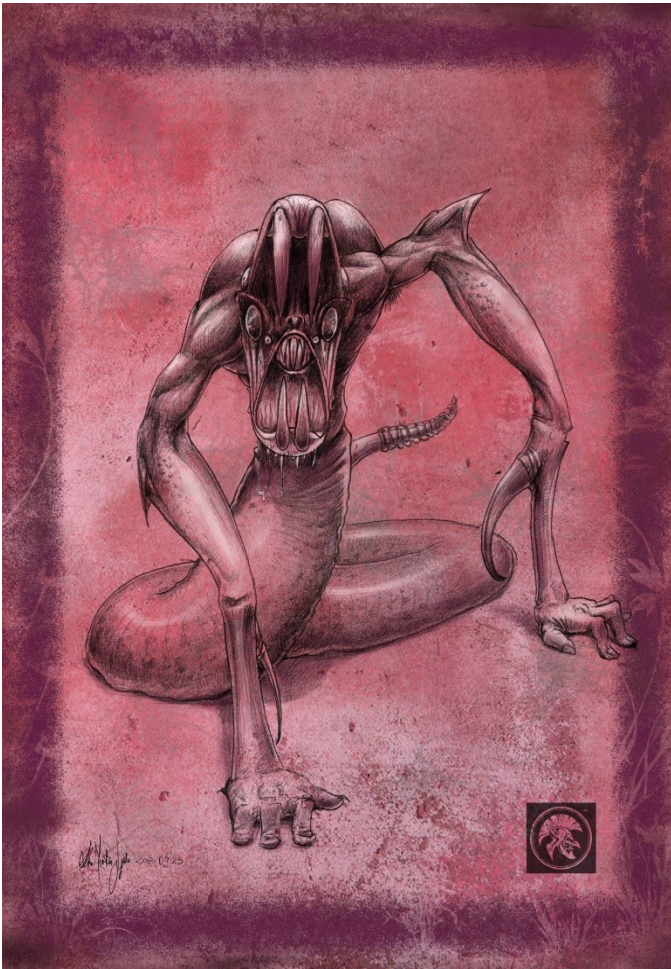
Everyday life does become more difficult in some ways, such as losing the ability to use hands; but somatic-component spells can still be cast (by weaving the character’s body). In general the character will seek to enslave allies to perform various tasks at its command. There’s also the little problem to consider, of course: Regardless of Charisma score, exalted serpent folk tend to cause most anyone beholding them to run away screaming in mortal terror.

Whether this is the true origin of the Spirit Naga race within the game world is a further matter for the Game Master to contemplate.

When an NPC serpent person attains experience level 12, it will realize the power to become the final incarnation of a primordial elder of Yig. Whether an individual serpent man or woman will embrace this destiny is dependent upon the GM’s case-by-case decision. (Theoretically a devout long-serving henchman of a PC might refuse the temptation and continue to serve, for example.)

A PC serpent person could do the same thing, although that decision by the player would result in the character irrevocably becoming an NPC under the sole control of the Game Master. The serpent person willingly sacrifices mortal awareness in the name of eternity, becoming nearly immortal in many ways.





For obvious reasons, most higher-level NPC serpent folk tend to wield bows and spears in battle.

**Never Unarmed:** If not wielding weapons, a serpent man can attack with two claws and a bite in melee (damage 1D2 / 1D2 / 1D2). These attacks are more darting than devastating, which means that the maximum Strength-associated damage bonus they can receive is +1 for STR 13+. In other words, the damage from a STR 13+ serpent man would be claw 1D2+1 / claw 1D2+1 / bite 1D2+1.

Serpent men can always use the biting attack, but using the claw attacks requires unencumbered hands. For example a serpent man who is holding nothing could use a claw / claw / bite attack sequence; a serpent woman holding a shield but no weapon could use a claw / bite; and a serpent man armed with a pole arm could only use the bite (obviously meaning that the weapon attack would certainly be more effective).

Which leads us to ...

## Racial Special Attacks

**Artful Impalement:** Any serpent person that is wielding an impaling weapon (spear, bow and arrow, crossbow and bolt, sharp-tipped sword, etc.) will have a bonus to damage inflicted per attack. This ability is learned at higher experience levels, as follows:

- **Experience level 1 to 3:** No impalement bonus.
- **Experience level 4 to 6:** +1 damage per successful impaling attack.
- **Experience level 7 to 12:** +2 damage per successful impaling attack.
- **Experience level 13+:** +3 damage per successful impaling attack.

**Darting Strikes:** More powerful serpent folk can combine their bite attacks with melee weapon attacks. (Claw attacks cannot be combined with melee weapon attacks; it's always an either/or proposition.) Whenever a higher-level serpent man successfully hits with a melee weapon, a second to hit roll can be made against the same target. This option is not available when the melee weapon attack misses, however.

If the additional hit is successful, the bite inflicts the usual 1D2 damage (if the serpent man's Strength is 12 or less) or 1D2+1 (if the serpent man has STR 13+). Only one bite attack — hit or miss — can be made per melee round, even if the

serpent man is capable of multiple melee weapon hits.

Lesser serpent folk of experience level 1 or 2 cannot successfully engage in these darting strikes while attacking with weapons.

For higher-level serpent folk, there is an attack penalty for the bite that declines over time (and eventually becomes a bonus), as follows:

- **Level 1 or 2:** No darting strike allowed
- **Level 3 or 4:** -4 to hit
- **Level 5 or 6:** -3 to hit
- **Level 7 or 8:** -2 to hit
- **Level 9 or 10:** -1 to hit
- **Level 11 or 12:** No penalty
- **Level 13 to 15:** +1 to hit
- **Level 16 or higher:** +2 to hit



## Racial Special

## Vulnerabilities

“Many things were peculiar and inexplicable. The civilisation, which included a written alphabet, had seemingly risen to a higher order than those immeasurably later civilisations of Egypt and Chaldaea, yet there were curious omissions. I could, for example, find no pictures to represent deaths or funeral customs, save such as were related to wars, violence, and plagues; and I wondered at the reticence shewn concerning natural death. It was as though an ideal of earthly immortality had been fostered as a cheering illusion.”

— *The Nameless City*, by H. P. Lovecraft

*(This might be the most important section in this book!)*

**Ashes to Ashes:** As a devastating counter-balance to a serpent man’s power and advantages, please note that serpent folk can *never be raised from the dead*. They can still be healed and brought back from death’s door (the -1 to -9 hit point range), but once they’re dead, that’s it. At -10 or lower hit points — or as the result of a failed fatal saving throw — they instantly shrivel into desiccated husks as they quite literally shed the mortal coil. Not even a Wish spell can ever bring them back.

This is an intentional severe disadvantage to the serpent folk character race. Any players who are entertaining the notion of playing one should be made well aware of this incontrovertible state of affairs before play begins.



Naturally, all NPC serpent folk greatly fear death, and will retreat from losing battles as quickly as possible ... and they will likely force slaves and servitors to battle in their stead, making the sacrifices which they themselves are too horrified to bear.

**Disturbing Presence:** Serpent people create an innate disgust in the “reptilian” instinctual mind of any sentient mammalian creature that touches them. Many of them are quite beautiful; their Charisma disadvantage is innate and related to *aura*, not necessarily physical appearance. Much like that odd experience of shaking some terrible person’s hand — a serial killer’s, for instance — and feeling a sudden surge of “wrongness” which never goes away, serpent folk must be very careful not to make physical contact with their mammalian hirelings, allies, or other such creatures whenever possible.

Please note that this effect persists over and through all magical abilities; for example a serpent woman covered by an illusion (as a gorgeous elf maiden) would perhaps convey a Charisma score of 20 from appearances, but a moment of physical contact would result in the Charisma effect being reduced to the serpent woman’s actual CHA score (and a new reaction roll being made, most likely). The illusory image would persist ... yet the toucher would instantly know that something is terribly wrong.

This effect makes it difficult for serpent people to infiltrate new societies, or to engage in subterfuge, unless they are extremely careful. It even makes it hard for them to make any friends at all.

As a result serpent people tend to be very cautious about physical touch, and any rituals or customs which result in bodily closeness. In-the-know guards, inquisitors, agents, spies, and other “serpent hunters” will be aware of this

situation and might (for example) invite a lady to dance simply so that they can make such a fleeting touch a possibility.

While he exchanged courtesies with some nobleman or councilor, he seemed to see the smiling face fade like smoke and the frightful jaws of a serpent gaping there. How many of those he looked upon were horrid, inhuman monsters, plotting his death, beneath the smooth mesmeric illusion of a human face?

— *The Shadow Kingdom*, by Robert E. Howard

**Draconian Enmity:** Serpent people are hated by dragons, even if the feeling is not always mutual. In elder times, the serpent people tortured and hunted dragons to near extinction. This fact has been forgotten by most of the currently-existing serpent folk, but dragons have memories as deep as the sea.

Serpent people can never befriend dragons. Evil dragons, if they know a serpent person is present, cannot be parlayed with (even by the serpent person’s allies!) and will always attack. Dragons cannot even be subdued by serpent people; the dragons would rather fight to the death than ever submit to the race again. This is a primal instinct and the dragon cannot resist these effects, regardless of alignments, free will, or other considerations.

Worse, dragons can see through all disguises, magical or otherwise, which are employed by serpent folk characters. Even if a serpent woman is (for example) polymorphed or shape changed, a dragon will know what the serpent woman is and will behave accordingly.

Dragons cannot, however, immediately detect serpent people who are not disguised. This generally leads to a cat-and-mouse détente, where a serpent person will engage a dragon with sinuous and pleasant lies while bearing no disguising magics whatsoever.



**Exposed by Doing:** Although many serpent people can easily pass as human, any use of their inhuman special abilities — most particularly, biting, clawing, summoning a bond serpent, and/or engaging in “slithering skittering” movement — will instantly give away their unnatural quality. Serpent folk NPCs who are in positions of power, or who are keeping up a long-term deception, will be loath to use such abilities while under direct observation by those who “know” them. This limitation might affect what a serpent person is willing to do under various circumstances.

Similarly, a PC serpent man who is keeping up a human charade will find that his nearby friends, family, etc. are suddenly horrified when the truth of the character’s identity comes to light.

**The Light, It Burns Usssss:** All serpent folk who are forced to fight in daylight suffer a -1 to their to hit rolls. Further, all lesser serpent folk suffer a similar penalty when exposed to bright magical light as well. This lesser aversion to magical light is gradually overcome by all serpent folk who attain experience level 3 or higher; but they never prefer any radiance brighter

than fungal phosphorescence, faerie fire, or (at most) torchlight.

**Traditions of Hatred:** Serpent folk, if identified, suffer a -3 penalty to all reaction rolls in encounters with good-aligned humans or demi-humans. For reaction rolls with neutral humans or demi-humans, the penalty is -2.

Any human-resembling serpent person (in game terms, this typically means any PC of experience level 8 or lower, along with select low-level NPCs) can create a first impression that hides the character’s abhorrent nature, thereby avoiding these penalties. However, if there is physical touch between the serpent person and the strangers, things will obviously get complicated rather quickly.





## Known Languages for the Serpent Folk

Serpent folk speak a native language (Srethala), and most also speak the Common Tongue unless their Intelligence is 8 or lower. All speak the appropriate alignment tongue as well.

For additional languages, naga, medusa or demonic are commonly known; but they also favor mastery of demi-human languages (dwarvish, elvish, gnomish, halfling, ogrish, orcish, etc.) due to the fact that humans interact with allied races when they are sharing secrets or preparing to wage war against evil.

There are no restrictions on the languages that a serpent person can learn to decipher, but avian and draconic languages cannot be spoken by them due to the structure of their jaws, tongues, and throats (prohibiting many birdlike or draconian sounds). For example a PC serpent man who is fluent in the black dragon language will be able to understand that race, but will not be able to speak to them in that tongue without some form of magical aid.



## Allowable Weapons for Serpent Folk

Serpent folk can effectively use any weapons in accordance with their chosen class. However, there are some significant behavioral facets to consider.

Blunt and crushing weapons (clubs, flails, maces, sling stones, etc.) are simply repugnant to them; they instinctively associate such things with primitive human barbarians, slaves, and other such petty sub-creatures. Non-Player Character serpent folk will never use such things unless the weapon in question is powerfully magical.

Players can have their serpent folk PCs wielding such things of course, but “good role-playing” would not apply if the player opts for such weaponry without any evident distaste. From a rules perspective this would mean, for example, that such a player would not ever receive an “Excellent” rating if the GM is using the play-rating system that is associated with the Advanced level and training cost rules.

Slashing weapons are deemed acceptable by the serpent folk, but are not truly preferred. This category includes blunt-tipped swords (such as the broad sword or two-handed sword), axes, and many types of pole arm.

Impaling weapons are preferred whenever possible. This category includes sharp-tipped swords (such as the short sword and long sword), arrows, crossbow bolts, spears, picks and warhammers, and so on.



due to their sinuous body type, musculature and scuttling abilities they are not comfortable in rigid plate armor. This classification includes the following armor types: banded armor, splint mail, plate mail, field plate armor, and full plate armor.

In plate armor (magical or non-magical), a serpent person cannot gain any Dexterity bonus to Armor Class.

In mail armor, a serpent person can only gain a +1 Dexterity bonus to Armor Class, but no higher.

In cloth or leather armor, a serpent person suffers from no such limitation.



*The serpentine treatise endeth here.*

## Allowable Shields for Serpent Folk

Serpent folk can use shields, provided their character class allows such. They tend to favor bucklers and small shields but will use anything that is available.

Given the average serpent person's innate terror of death, all such NPCs will use shields and other protective items whenever possible. This means that (for example) an NPC serpent man fighter would strongly favor a long sword and shield, instead of a two-handed sword, unless the two-handed sword was magical.

## Allowable Armor for Serpent Folk

Serpent folk can use any armor type that is allowed by their chosen class. However,



## Recommended

## Further Reading

- *The Worship of the Serpent*, by John Bathurst Deane (1833)
- *Time and the Gods*, by Lord Dunsany (1906)
- *The Nameless City*, by H. P. Lovecraft (1921)
- *The Curse of Yig*, by H. P. Lovecraft and Zealia Bishop (1929)
- *The Shadow Kingdom*, by Robert E. Howard (1929)
- *The Snake Mother*, by Abraham Merritt (1930)
- *Worms of the Earth*, by Robert E. Howard (1932)
- *The God in the Bowl*, by Robert E. Howard (c. 1932)
- *The Seven Geases*, by Clark Ashton Smith (1934)
- *The Haunter of the Dark*, by H. P. Lovecraft (1935)
- *The Temple of Abomination*, by Robert E. Howard and Richard L. Tierney (c. 1973)
- *Shadows in the Skull*, by L. Sprague de Camp and Lin Carter (1975)
- *Necronomicon: The Cthulhu Revelations*, by Kent David Kelly (2013)



## About the Author



Beginning play as a chaotic neutral normal human with one measly hit point to his name, KENT DAVID KELLY eventually became apprenticed to a magic-user of ill repute ... a foul man who dwelt in the steamy deeps of the Ivory Cloud Mountain. After this mentor carelessly misplaced an intelligent soul-sucking sword and then died under suspicious circumstances, his former henchman Mr. Kelly escaped to the deeper underground and there began playing Satanic role-playing games. This, the legends tell us, occurred in the year 1981.

Hoary wizard-priests who inspired Mr. Kelly in his netherworldly machinations included the peerless Gyga, Carr,

Arneson, Cook, Hammack, Jaquays, Bledsaw, Moldvay, Kuntz, Schick and Ward. Sadly, a misguided made-for-the-basements movie entitled *Mazes and Monsters* gave Mr. Kelly's parents conniptions in 1982. As a result of that blasphemous Tom Hanks debacle (and other more personal lapses in judgment), Mr. Kelly was eventually forbidden from playing his favorite game for a considerable length of time.

Nonplussed but not defeated, he used this enforced exile to escape to a friend's alehouse, and there indulged himself in now-classic computer RPGs such as Zork, Telengard, Temple of Apshai, Ultima, Tunnels of Doom, The Bard's Tale, Phantasie, Pool of Radiance, Wizard's Crown and Wasteland. He then went on to write computer versions of his own FRPGs, which led to his obsession with coupling creative design elements with random dungeons and unpredictable adventure generation.

Mr. Kelly wrote and submitted his first adventure for *Dungeon Magazine* #1 in 1986. Unfortunately, one Mr. Moore decided that his submission was far too "Lovecraftian, horrific and unfair" to ever serve that worthy periodical as a publishable adventure. Mr. Kelly, it must be said, took this rejection as a very good sign of things to come.

In the late 80s and 90s, Mr. Kelly wrote short stories, poems and essays ... some of which have been published under the Wonderland Imprints banner. He wrote several dark fantasy and horror novels as well. Concurrently, he ran Dark Angel Collectibles, selling classic FRPG materials as Darkseraphim, and assisted the Acaeum with the creation of the Valuation Board and other minor research projects.

At this time, Mr. Kelly and his entourage of evil gnomes are rumored to dwell in the dread and deathly under-halls of the Acaeum, Dragonsfoot, ENWorld, Grogard, Knights & Knaves, ODD, and even more nefarious levels deep down in the mega-dungeon of the Web.

There he remains in vigil, his vampiric sword yet shivering in his hand. When not being sought outright for answers to halfling riddles or other more sundry sage advice, he is to be avoided by sane individuals *at all costs*.





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