THE SERPENT AND THE SEA

by Collette Quach

Creature: *Naga* | **Levels:** *6 - 8* | **CWs:** *Theft of cultural artifacts*

SYNOPSIS

Across the sea, through treacherous waves and winds, lies a temple. To the people of the coast it's a cultural icon. To the adventurers it's an ancient temple filled with treasure. The adventurers return with what they found, among which is a large, aquamarine relic. The relic, and by extension the temple, are tied directly to the ocean. Those who wish to cross the ocean make a pilgrimage here to ask for the blessing of the naga for safe passage.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The party can be returning to Ferris' ship, the *Orpheum*, via a dinghy. Out of divine judgment from the ocean, a storm hits suddenly causing the boat to capsize. The waves pull them under before they can swim away.

Alternatively, the party can simply be crossing the ocean on their own and got caught in the storm.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This adventure is a Tier 2 adventure, recommended for 7th level. This adventure focuses on narrative and character reflection. Take the time to discuss with the group about their characters' regrets and those they've lost. Characters are encouraged to explore the festival and the temple to learn about the land. There are optional combat scenarios that the DM can use if the party prefers more combat over puzzles or riddles.

Naga are half-serpent, half-human beings, taking multiple different forms: a human, a multi-headed serpent similar to a cobra, or a mix. They are guardians of everything associated with water and the treasures that lie within. They pose no harm to humanoid populations unless threatened. The crew of the *Angkor* are the only known naga in this adventure.

The relic is a large, egg-shaped aquamarine. The inside is a clear blue green and staring into it is like staring into the ocean itself.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Soriya Apsara:** Captain of the Angkor. In human form, she is a brown skinned woman with long, black hair. As a naga, she has nine serpent heads, indicating her seniority. She has a strong sense of justice and takes her role as guardian seriously. She uses altered stats for the yuan-ti pit master located in the appendix for her human and naga form.
- **Lai:** First mate of the *Angkor*. In human form, they are a dark-skinned individual adorned with various trinkets of shells and sea glass. As a **naga**, they have six heads. Curious by nature with a desire to see the world. Whenever they are away from the inhabitants of the coast, they are typically in their serpent form.
- **Ferris de Longpre:** Admiral of the *Orpheum* and former adventurer. He enjoys the thrill of dungeon-delving to find long lost treasures. Use the stats for an **assassin**.

REPUTATION

How the characters are perceived by the people and the land itself is important, especially during the Harvest Festival. Characters can participate in various events at the festival, making a good impression on the community.

Reputation can help the party in *Chapter 3*. The DM can state this explicitly to encourage exploration of the festival and temple.

CHAPTER 1 – HARVEST FESTIVAL

The characters awaken in a cabin on the *Angkor*, the ship of **Soriya Apsara**, a famed sailor in the area and naga guardian. Not too long later, Lai enters, noting that the characters have awoken. They ask the party follow them up to meet Soriya.

If the party was on Ferris' ship, she informs them that their theft has caused the storm. Upon returning the relic, it subsides and allows the party to return home.

If the characters were simply caught in the storm, in addition to the above, she says since an outsider has stolen this relic; the ocean can only accept it if another outsider returns it. She gives the party the relic.

She tries to convince the party to return the relic. She does not use force, attempting instead to appeal to the characters' morality. She can also appeal to them by offering a reward, specifically an item from the ship's armory, once they return the relic.

- Those proficient in Arcana may make a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check to sense magic coming off of Soriya and various crew members.
- *Detect magic* specifies that this magic is more druidic than arcane.
- A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check party members looking overboard can see the outline of a serpent/naga swimming near the ship

After, she brings the party ashore near the Temple.

> Soriya guides you east from the sandy beach into the dense jungle. The path opens onto a clearing with the Temple of the Coast at the far end. The field is filled with celebration and people enjoying music, food, and other festivities. Market stalls are aligned in rows displaying various artisan goods.
>
> On the northern end of the field past the stalls is a makeshift theatre filled with children; the southern end, a shrine. A stone walkway divides the two areas in the middle where you see a crowd of children surrounding the familiar face of Lai.

PARTICIPATING IN THE FESTIVAL

This annual festival commemorates the autumn harvest, to honor and give thanks to the river that cuts through the land. The river is the area's livelihood. Food, water for farming, and transportation all derive from the river.

Soriya explains the festival if asked. She tells the party to partake in the festival as a way to show that the land isn't just lost treasures and "ancient" temples. The festival goers do not know of the theft and are being kept out of the temple, for safety and to avoid panic.

Map #1 has the locations of all the events. Merchants mostly sell souvenirs of the festival such as toys, lanterns, etc.

ANCESTOR SHRINE

The shrine is set up with different trinkets, portraits, and food offerings. A specific area is adorned with blue silk cloths in addition to the things usually placed. A marker reads:

> To those we lost. We remember them as the harvest ends. May the nagas bring them safely to the afterlife.

Talking with the various people around the shrine, they reveal that they have lost a partner, child, friend. Talking to those near the area of the blue cloth reveals that this is reserved for those who passed due to floods or other water related disasters.

Characters may participate in this event by physically placing a memento they have of someone that has passed. They also can receive a white lily from the person running the shrine to place if they do not have a momento.

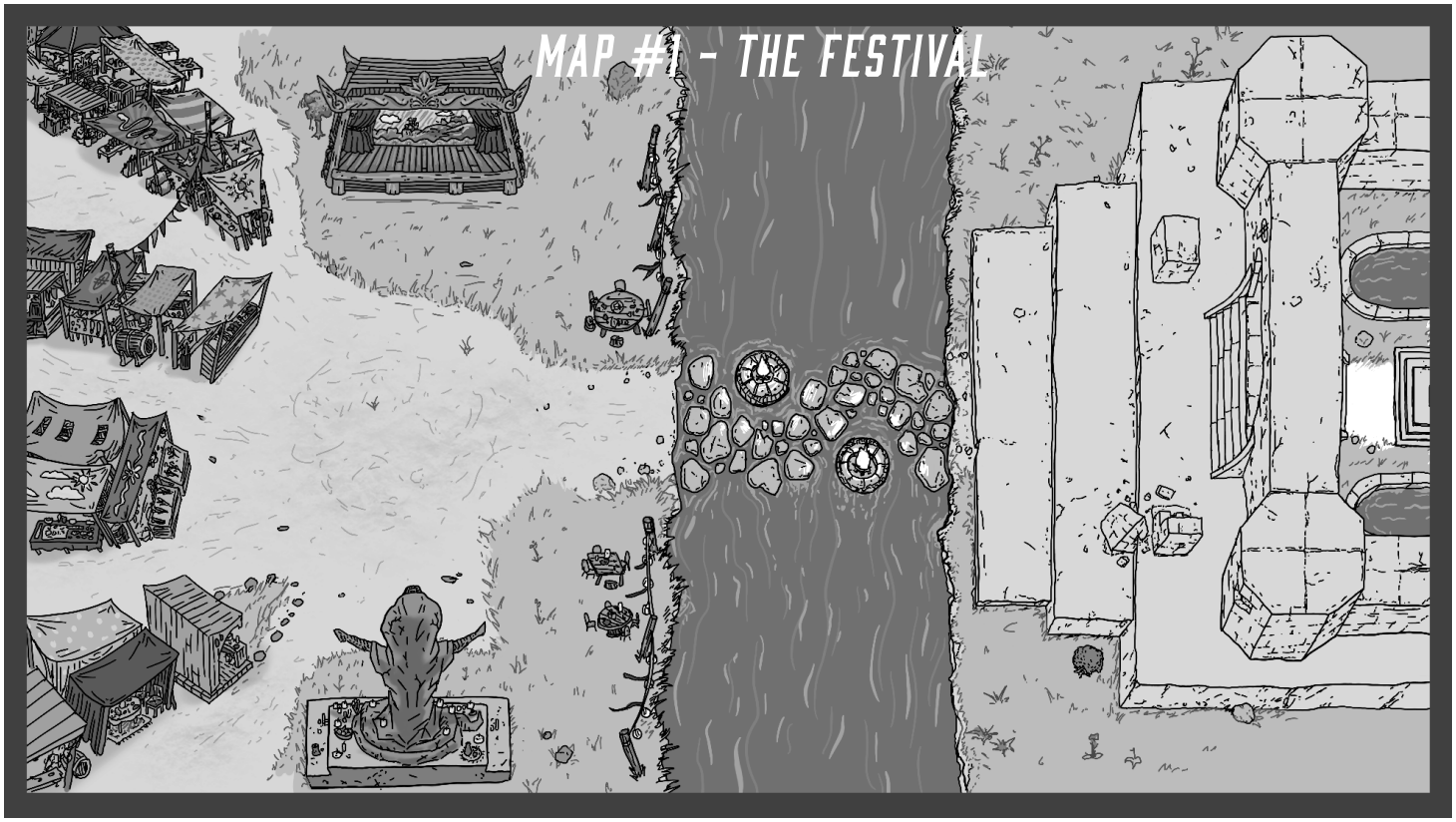
This event grants +1 reputation.

THE THEATER

A large audience has gathered, many of them children, around an outdoor stage. The performance is shadow puppetry—ornate cutouts of figures illuminated to create shadows. The shows tell various stories of heroes of their land. Sitting through a story grants +1 reputation.

A CONVERSATION WITH LAI

The party can find the first mate, Lai, with a group of children. One child is asking Lai why they can't go into the temple. Lai asks the characters what it's like on the other side of the sea and ask to entertain the



Map by D.W. Dagon

children, as they are interested as well.

On a successful DC 10 Charisma (Performance) check, a character can tell a story that entrances the kids (advantage if the player delivers it well).

- If there are magic users, they can use their magic to dazzle them.
- A bard can perform for the kids (The DM can decide if they want a Performance check).

Having at least two characters successfully interact with the children grants +1 reputation. Five successes grant +2 reputation.

TEMPLE UPKEEP

Various people are cleaning and repairing the sandstone around the temple foundation. Characters may help with the upkeep of the temple in various ways, earning +1 reputation for each success:

There are some stones that are weathered down. With a successful DC 16 Dexterity check characters can wash and restore some of the details on the stone. A result of 20 or higher restores the stone to pristine condition, granting them one extra reputation.

With a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check, party members can learn from what the other festival goers are doing. If a character has proficiency with masonry, carpenter, or smith's tools they can make the check with advantage.

There are some sandstone blocks that have fallen out of place. With a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check, they can pick up one of the blocks and put it back. Failing the check means the character drops the block but can try again; on a five or less on the check, the block instead shatters and is irreparable.

DEVELOPMENT

When the party approaches the entrance to the temple, they see Soriya with a priest of the temple. Before the party enters, the priest warns of the changes in the temple due to their transgression (or the transgression of others) and cautions them against what now lies inside.

CHAPTER 2 – THE TEMPLE OF THE SHORE

As the party enters the temple, they see the thick coverage of vines, other foliage, and trees that have grown around the structure itself, just as the priest warned.

RELIC CHAMBER PUZZLE

Entering the inner sanctum, characters see two pools of water on either side of them. In front of the relic chamber is a large square indented into the ground where the puzzle is to be placed. To complete the puzzle, the party needs to find the pieces in the four corner rooms and assemble them correctly in the indent. The puzzle is available at the end of the adventure.

If the characters are stuck with aspects of the puzzle, they may make a DC 10 Intelligence (History) check for a hint.

FOUR CORNER ROOMS

The southeast room contains two puzzle pieces that characters can find without a check. Examining the room more closely, characters proficient in Intelligence (History) understand the carvings on the wall to tell a story of how sailors from this area use this temple to ask for safe passage when sailing. There are naga, some with multiple heads, swimming underneath the ships.

The entirety of the southwest room is a 30 feet deep pool of water. At the bottom lie two puzzle pieces, which characters have to swim down to in order to retrieve.

The northwest room is overgrown with spiky vines and brambles. At the end of the room is one puzzle piece wrapped in the greenery. Traversing the room requires a successful DC 13 Dexterity check to avoid tripping on the plants. On a failure, the character takes 2d6 piercing damage from the sharp thorns.

The northeast room is the room of reflection. Lit by candlelight and adorned in blue and green drapery, it seems to be untouched by the changes of the temple. One puzzle piece is bolted down on a pedestal standing in front of a large multi-headed snake. An inscription gives a clue to the party:

Like water, we are never still and ever changing. Wash away the past without judgment.

The characters have to wash themselves with water from the temple and spend a brief moment meditating on past regrets. A DC 10 Intelligence or Wisdom check can be used to give the characters a hint.

The piece can be removed by force (a successful DC 18 Strength check is required); doing so results in -1 reputation point.

Combat Alternative: Characters still need to go to all four of the rooms. Instead of looking for pieces, a lever is pulled to reveal the pieces. When the party returns to the entrance, two **bone naga** appear.

RETURNING THE RELIC

Once assembled, the puzzle pieces reveal an image of what appears to be Soriya in her half serpent, half human form. The door to the chamber opens to the relic chamber. Once the party enters, they see a naga in its multi-headed serpent form. The party may recall that a statue of a serpent was there in its place. The naga doesn't attack the characters, but it watches them intently.

The party may walk up to the naga and present the relic. The naga accepts the return of the relic and turns back into stone. If the party asks for safe passage, they gain +3 reputation.

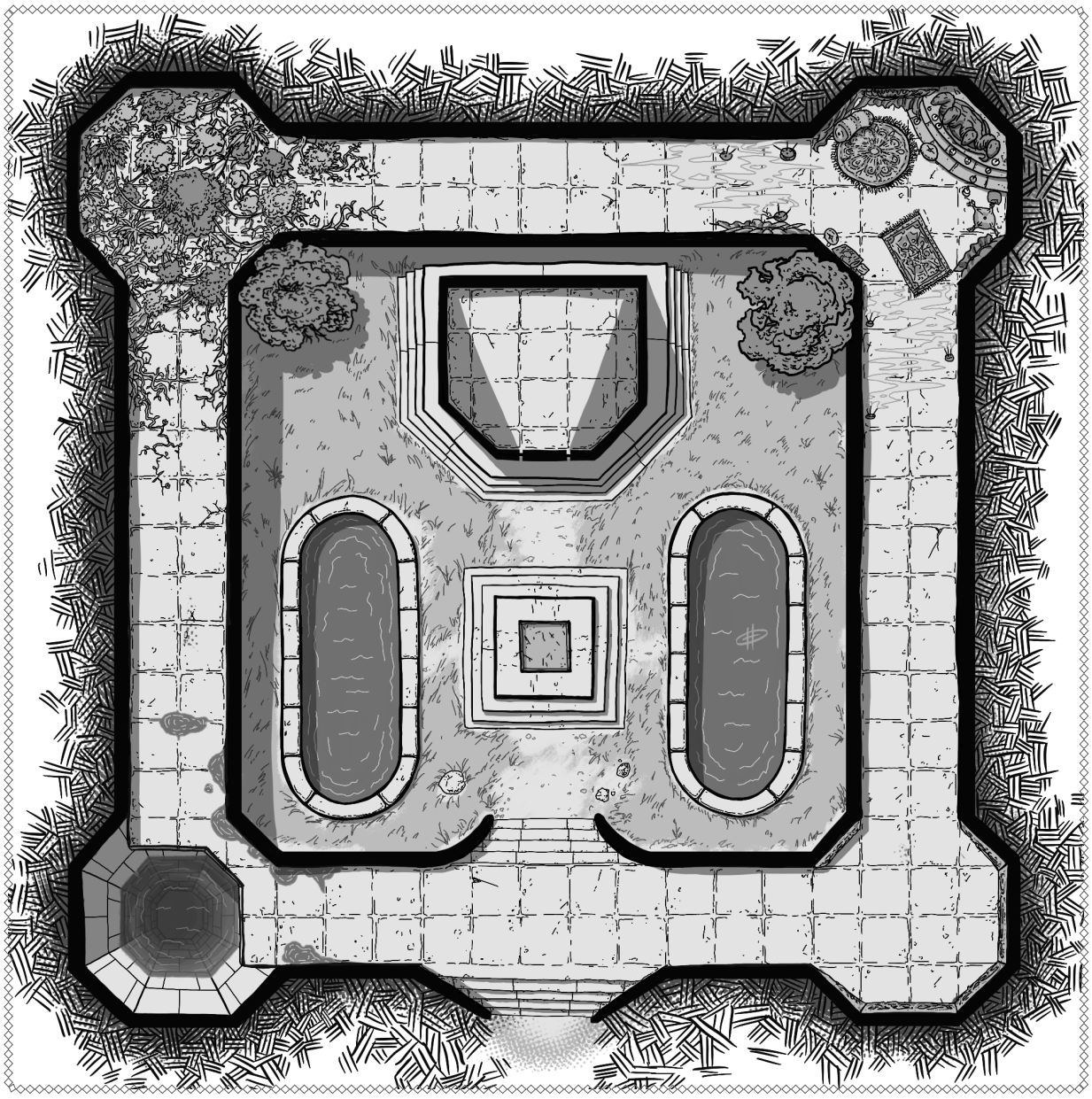
Killing the serpent results in loss of all reputation. Any attack roll of 14 or higher kills it instantly: the serpent crumples to the floor, replaced by a pedestal.

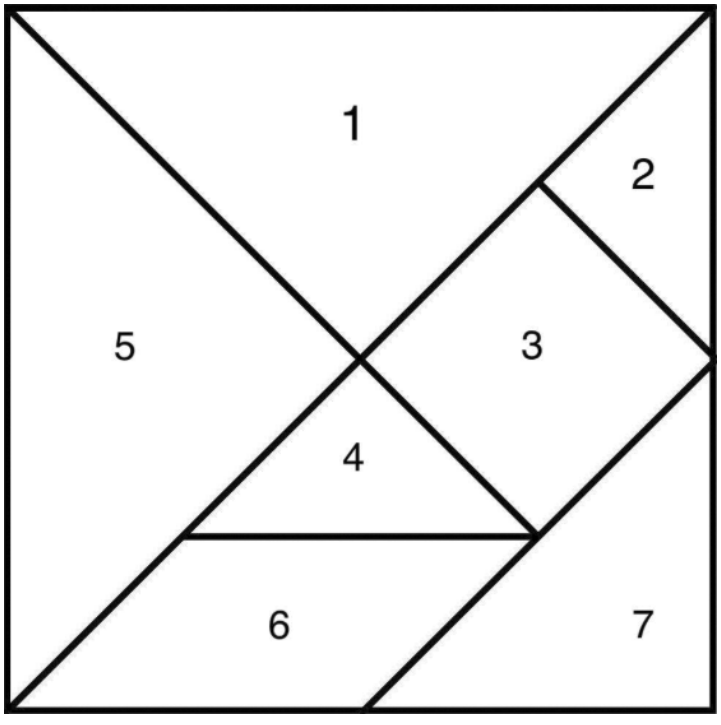
Upon leaving the chamber, the festival goers quickly head inside the temple for shelter. The pools of water are now a clear blue as opposed to the previous green hue.

DEVELOPMENT

When the party exits the temple, Soriya is waiting outside. There is a strong wind and the sky is grey. She notes that the storm is not yet over. The festival goers quickly are heading inside the temple for shelter.

She urgently leads the characters back to the beach and up onto a cliff overlooking the sea. There the party can see the *Angkor* locked in combat with Ferris' ship. Soriya asks the party if they are still with her, but does not wait for an answer before leaping off the cliff. She shifts into her nine-headed serpent form and swims toward the *Angkor* (100 feet away).





Map by D.W. Dagon

CHAPTER 3 – BATTLE FOR THE RELIC

HYDRA: FURY OF THE CRASHING SEA

At the start of combat, a **hydra** appears from the water, attacking both ships. The DM rolls a d10 to decide which ship it attacks. On a result of 1-5, the hydra attacks the *Angkor*, on a 6-10 it instead attacks Ferris' ship.

> As you look above the skies begin to grey. Beneath the approaching ships there is a rumbling from the depths. Erupting from the waters a hydra appears, its multiple heads gnashing at both ships. The fury of the sea is here!

FOR THE ENCOUNTER

Soriya can be played by the DM or placed under the control of a player. Ferris does an additional 1d6 poison damage to all attacks.

The characters, Soriya, the hydra, and Ferris are part of the initiative order. The ships themselves are last in the initiative order. During the ship phase, use the table below for encounters.

Once the hydra is at half health, the ships board one another.

D10 Result	Description
1	The enemy ship rams into your own. Roll a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.
2	The enemy ship fires cannons at your ship. Use the fireball spell at 4th level to determine damage with a DC 14 Dexterity save for half. Cannons can not be fired at your ship for 2 rounds. Instead treat the roll as fire spreading.
3	A strong crosswind from the storm hits. For the next round of combat movement is halved.
4	The enemy crew fires a volley of arrows at the party. Roll a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. Take 5d6 piercing damage on a failed save. On a success, characters may explain how they avoid the arrows for either half or no damage.
5	The party's ship fires cannons at the hydra. Follow rules of 2.
6	The party's ship fires cannons at the enemy ship. Follow rules of 2.
7	Ships are at a stand still.
8	The crew fires a volley of arrows at the hydra. Follow rules of 4.
9	The crew takes aim at the enemy captain. Follow rules of 4.
10	Your ship rams into the enemies. Follow rules of 1.

REPUTATION

Depending on how well the party interacted with the festival and temple there can be one of three boons.

Boon of the Naga (5+ Reputation)

The hydra prefers to attack Ferris' ship over yours. If the DM rolls to determine who it hits, roll with advantage.

> You feel the waves rock the boat, the sea breeze against your face. Even with the hydra towering above you, you feel at peace with the ocean.

Guardian (1- 4 Reputation)

During the ship/ocean initiative, roll at advantage/ben-

efiting the player.

Invaders (0 Reputation)

PCs have advantage on hitting the hydra and any naga targets.

> The boat rocks beneath you as you face the hydra. You braved these seas before and you can ride the waves against your foes.

Development

> You see the storm get closer to the mainland. Even with the relic returned, something else has upset the seas. But that doesn't matter, you want to go back home.

When the hydra is killed and the opposing ship is defeated, the storm subsides.

Conclusion

Soriya thanks the players for their dedication to helping the people, despite being hired to steal from them. She makes preparations for a ship to return the party back across the sea. Read the following for Soriya:

Read this if reputation is low (less than 3 points):

> *"Thank you, adventurers, for returning the relic, especially when you didn't know anything about it. As you've seen, something so small can mean a lot."* She signals some of her crew. They nod and head below deck, bringing up a sword and armor. *"For your help. It's not every day we give naga-crafted items to strangers. Take care of these pieces, as a memento from this side of the ocean."*

Rewards

> Soriya speaks in a tone that feels distant.*"I arranged a ship to take you back across the sea. While I appreciate your help, it's best for you to return home as soon as you can. Here." S*he signals some of her crew. They look at her with some hesitation before heading below deck, bringing up a sword and armor. *"I shouldn't even be giving you these, but I pay my debts."*

Completing this adventure with Soriya grants the party two items.

Dav-Vasuki

Weapon (Any Sword), Rare (requires attunement)

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls. Additionally, you can cast the *control water* spell through the sword. You cannot cast it again until after your next long rest.

This machete-like sword is used by Soriya and her crew. While not ornate, these blades are reliable tools both in and out of combat.

Vestments of the Naga Guardian

Armor (Hide), Rare (Requires attunement)

You gain a bonus of +1 to your armor class while wearing this armor. In addition, you gain a swim speed of 30 feet if you do not already have one, otherwise your swim speed is doubled. You can also hold your breath for an additional 2 minutes.

The armor is a mix of hide and serpent skin, adorned with blue and green fabrics similar to the ones seen at the ancestor shrine. The serpent scales glisten in the sun.

XP REWARDS	***MONSTER XP***
Bone Naga	1,100 each
Completing all the Festival events	100
Defeating the opposing ship	2,500
Hydra	3,900

AUTHOR'S NOTES

I was inspired by Thai and Cambodian culture, where nagas often appear in art and architecture. I have family from those countries, though I never was immersed in it until I learned about the naga. From there, I explored the culture on my own and quickly fell in love with all of it.

Thank you to the entire *Uncaged* crew for being such a supportive community. This was my first published adventure and I appreciate every single person who has welcomed me into this space.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Collette is a California-based writer and game designer. She has a strong passion for diversity and inclusivity either by creating or inspiring those to get into creating themselves. Follow her on Twitter @collettequach.

Soriya Aspara

Medium humanoid (shapechanger), lawful neutral

Armor Class 14
Hit Points 88 (16d8 + 16)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +3 Cha +5
Skills Nature +3, Perception +2
Damage Immunities Poison
Condition Immunities Poisoned
Senses Darkvision 120ft (penetrates magical darkness), passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 5 (1,800 xp)

Shapechanger. Soriya can use an action to polymorph into a naga serpent (see NPC description). Her statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. She doesn't change form if she dies.

Innate Spellcasting (Naga Serpent Form Only). Soriya's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *animal friendship* (snakes only)
3/day: *suggestion*

Magic Resistance. Soriya has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spellcasting (Naga Serpent Form Only). Soriya is a 6th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). She regains expended spell slots when she finishes a short or long rest. She knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *eldritch blast (*range 300 ft., +3 bonus to each damage roll*), friends, guidance, mage hand, message, poison spray*
1st-3rd level (2 3rd-level slots): *command, counterspell, hellish rebuke, invisibility, misty step, unseen servant, vampiric touch*

Actions

Multiattack (Naga Serpent Form Only). Soriya makes two bite attacks with serpent heads.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (ld4 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Scimitar (Humanoid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.