

THE DM TOOL CHEST

CURSE OF SERPENT'S RISE

A CURSED LEGACY LIVES ON IN A TEMPLE ON THE CUSP OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS



CURSE OF SERPENT'S REST

Curse of *Serpent's Rest* is a Fifth Edition adventure for **three to five characters of 6th to 8th level** and optimized for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 7**. Dare you to venture into the haunting depths of Mourning Marsh to unravel the serpentine curses of Lunis's Rest? Brave perilous traps, otherworldly puzzles, and venomous guardians to unearth secrets so dark they could reshape destinies and doom realms.

This adventure is designed to be dropped into any campaign setting with a few name changes. While the story takes place in a sunken temple in a marsh, it can fit into a coastal or water-adjacent location.

ADVENTURE RULES

The 5th Edition core rulebooks are recommended to run this adventure. A free copy of the 5th Edition System Reference Document (SRD) and basic rule set can be found online and can be used in place of the core books.

A boxed description like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players. These suggested prompts may be used or disregarded at the GM's discretion.

In this adventure are references that point to information presented outside the module. Magic items, spells, and equipment are *italicized*, and NPC and creature names are **bolded** to indicate the stat block referenced for combat purposes. These statistics are in the core 5th edition source books, the 5th Edition SRD, or an attached Appendix.

BACKGROUND

Once a revered high priestess serving an obscure snake deity, Etilia of Tidewater was transformed into a medusa as punishment for her attempts to steal divine power. Banished and deformed, she sought refuge in Mourning Marsh, where she discovered an ancient, half-submerged temple called Lunis's Rest. Etilia corrupted its once-sacred halls with her venomous malice and dark spells, taking the temple as her lair.

This temple was no ordinary ruin; it was originally dedicated to Lunis, a goddess of the moon and rebirth. The temple had been a sanctuary until a mysterious blight tainted the land and rising marsh waters engulfed its grounds, causing its original inhabitants to flee.

In her newfound lair, Etilia inscribed the walls with malevolent glyphs and laid treacherous traps to deter trespassers. Her corrupting influence seeped into the surrounding marsh, altering its native flora and fauna.

As decades turned to centuries, Etilia's dark legend grew, until she was finally defeated by a group of adventurers led by a Paladin named Loradin. Although Loradin fell in battle, his comrades succeeded in decapitating Etilia and sealing her head in an enchanted urn, buried deep within the temple to prevent her return.

Yet, Etilia's malevolent spirit left a lingering influence. The snakes inhabiting the temple evolved into increasingly monstrous forms. One snake, a severed piece of Etilia's own body, mutated to acquire her paralyzing and petrifying abilities. It resides within the temple, cared for by the last of the hisskin warriors still loyal to Etilia, biding its time to bring their mistress back from the cold embrace of the void.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters enter Mourning Marsh to investigate Lunis's Rest, an old temple that has come under recent scrutiny. They must first navigate a dangerous swamp full of mutated flora and fauna. At the temple entrance, they discover a multitude of statues and must solve a puzzle or find a hidden entrance to the temple. Inside, they encounter traps, puzzles, and hostile snake-like creatures. They may find allies like a talking snake and discover hidden rooms that hint to the temple's past and how to restore it to its former glory. Eventually, the party faces a monstrous serpent with the blood legacy of the medusa that once dwelled here. The adventure concludes with the characters finding evidence of past evil and a way to bring the petrified victims back to life.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are a few ways to get your characters hooked into this adventure:

GHOST LIGHTS

A reclusive fisherman named Old Man Wren comes to the party with a tale of strange, glowing lights seen dancing above Mourning Marsh. "They always hover around the temple ruins," he claims, pulling a worn map from his coat. "People say the lights could be spirits guarding untold riches or arcane artifacts."

THE STONE CHILD

In the troubled village of Greendale on the outskirts of Mourning Marsh, the characters encounter a haunting scene: a child turned to stone, preserved in an expression of terror. Village leader Samuel implores the adventurers with sorrowful eyes, "We believe this curse emanates from Lunis's Rest. Please, lift this torment and bring our children back."

QUILL & INK

Theranos the Arcanist, a well-known scholar from the Librarium of Veritas, offers a rare prize: a quill enchanted to transcribe thoughts onto parchment. This quill is part of a matching set, the other piece being an inkpot said to be hidden within Lunis's Rest. Theranos hints, "The quill and inkpot together can translate any language, even the tongues of forgotten civilizations." The scholar offers 200 gp to a party that can retrieve the ink pot for him to use on a particular project.

ETILIA OF THE TIDEWATER

Once anointed as the epitome of piety, Etilia rose as a high priestess at Tidewater Temple, a sanctuary isolated on a distant isle and devoted to the snake deity Sisikar. However, beneath her facade of devoutness simmered an insatiable ambition. Feeling constrained by her god's limitations, Etilia nurtured a dangerous desire: to usurp the divine power of Sisikar for herself.

After a decade of covert research, Etilia unearthed an arcane ritual designed to siphon the essence of a god. One fateful night, shrouded by darkness, she initiated the forbidden ceremony within the Tidewater Temple. Her ambition, however, proved to be her undoing. The ritual backfired, invoking Sisikar's wrath. Transformed into a grotesque figure, her flowing locks became a tangled nest of serpents, and her once vibrant eyes morphed into petrifying stones.

Reviled and expelled from her temple, Etilia sought refuge in Mourning Marsh, where she stumbled upon Lunis's Rest. Initially dedicated to the goddess Lunis but long since corrupted, this forsaken temple proved a fitting sanctuary for her twisted spirit. Etilia took possession of the temple, warping its residual sanctity with her own malevolent essence. Glyphs of despair soon adorned its walls, and its corridors became a twisted maze designed to trap and confound.

Gathering a following of hisskin (snake-like Humanoids) and other mutated creatures from the marsh, Etilia sought vengeance against a world that had, in her eyes, betrayed her. Her dark reign persisted until she met her end at the hands of a group of adventurers led by the Paladin Loradin. After a grueling battle in her unholy sanctuary, Loradin sacrificed himself to deliver the killing blow, severing Etilia's head from her body. His comrades took it upon themselves to seal her remains in an enchanted urn, entombing it within a hidden vault beneath the temple floors.

Yet, the malevolence of Etilia lingers in Lunis's Rest. The temple's walls still pulse with the dark magic she infused, and the corrupted creatures of the marsh stand as living testaments to her wicked influence. Though she may be physically vanquished, the legacy of Etilia's dark ambitions haunts Mourning Marsh, a chilling reminder that her story may still hold chapters yet unwritten.

MOURNING MARSH

Mourning Marsh is a sprawling, damp expanse situated west of the Verdant Hills and east of the Shimmering Forest. The marsh spans roughly 20 square miles and is a labyrinth of stagnant pools, twisted willow trees, and thick mists that shroud the area in an ever-present, grayish gloom. Towering reeds form natural barriers, and the earth is soft and treacherous, willing to swallow anyone who steps carelessly. The air carries the constant, heavy scent of decaying plant matter, tinged with a brackish undertone.

At its heart lies Lunis's Rest, a decaying stone temple sunken into the dark waters. Covered in moss and creeping vines, the temple has been slowly swallowed by the marsh over the centuries. To reach the temple, adventurers must traverse approximately 10 miles of difficult terrain from the marsh's outskirts.

BRIEF HISTORY

Long ago, this region was a fertile meadowland, brimming with wildflowers, and served as a gathering place for priests and druids who worshiped the moon goddess Lunis. That all changed when a magical blight known as the "Darkening Veil" descended upon the land. Caused by a curse by an unknown source, the blight drained the vitality from the soil and sky, twisting the flora and fauna into aberrant forms.

The priests attempted to seal away the blight, but despite their efforts, the meadow decayed into the boggy, inhospitable terrain now known as Mourning Marsh. The temple at its center was originally built to honor Lunis, an ancient moon goddess, but has since been corrupted by the malevolent forces that spread across the region. Its stones are said to weep with the sorrow of the land, and it stands as a haunting testament to the dangers of unchecked magical power.

TRAVELING THE MARSH

The party must make a series of Survival checks to navigate through Mourning Marsh to Lunis's Rest. They require three successful checks before accumulating five failures to reach the sinking temple. Each Survival check represents approximately 3 miles or 1 hour of travel through the marsh. Assign a DC of 15 for each Survival check, modified at your discretion based on any additional environmental conditions or magical interference.

After each Survival check, roll a d20, and on a roll of 18 or higher roll a d8 and consult the Marsh Random Encounters table to determine what additional challenges or interactions the characters face. The random encounter roll is made with advantage if the Survival check failed. Additionally, if a scenario from the table includes a combat encounter, a failed Survival check also imposes disadvantage on the party's initiative.

MOURNING MARSH RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d8 Encounter

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | A giant crocodile named Jak rolls up from the marsh waters to the party. The former druid familiar offers guidance through the marsh for the price of a shiny trinket or jewelry worth at least 10 gp. If a deal is brokered, the party gains advantage on their next travel Survival check using his directions. |
| 2 | A group of 1d6+2 goblins , led by the mad-eyed Grok Sharpblade with his jagged +1 <i>scimitar</i> , have set a snare trap (DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot) in an attempt to ambush the party for gold and food. |
| 3 | The party encounters a 10-foot-wide patch of quicksand (DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to avoid being restrained) that conceals skeletal remains. A restrained creature takes 1d4 bludgeoning damage from drowning in the sand at the start of its turn and can be freed with a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. The bones cling to a rotting rucksack containing a pouch of 15 gp and a quiver of 1d4+1 +1 <i>arrows</i> . |
| 4 | Morla the Deceiver, a green hag , emerges from the murky waters and proposes a deal: a single vial of enchanted swamp water that serves as a potent antidote (replicating the effects of a <i>lesser restoration</i> spell) in return for a favorite childhood memory. |
| 5 | A pocket of sulfurous gas bursts from the bog, releasing a thick cloud encompassing the party. Each creature must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 1d6 poison damage and is poisoned for 24 hours. |
| 6 | A 20-foot-long giant crocodile with piercing yellow eyes surges from the water to target the party member lagging furthest behind, seeking to pull them under. |
| 7 | A half-submerged map inside a ragged adventurer's tent points at potential shortcuts through the marsh, giving the party a +2 bonus on their next travel Survival check. However, 1d4+1 shadows of the deceased adventuring party emerge from the marsh waters. |
| 8 | Sloppy, Goopy, and Mucky, a mischievous trio of mud mephits , pelt the adventurers with mud while cackling and diving into the muddy ground. The mephits don't engage in combat, and the party suffers disadvantage on their next travel Survival check from the distractions. |

ARRIVING AT THE TEMPLE

Once the characters arrive at the temple, read aloud the following:

The looming silhouette of a crumbling temple emerges from the fog. Its once-majestic spires are broken, and it leans slightly into the waters. Vines and moss have claimed the stone walls, thriving in the damp atmosphere. A pair of doors adorned with a twisting mass of iron-wrought snakes bars the entrance.

Scattered around the mud and murk is a collection of random statues covered in mold and vegetation. Some are animals, others possibly warriors, priests, or druids; it's hard to say as both the muck and time have claimed them.

Around the temple entrance are a dozen statues strewn haphazardly, half-submerged in the mire, and coated with layers of moss and mold. Upon closer inspection and a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character can surmise that these are petrified individuals.

Once the characters approach the front doors, proceed to the Gate of Scales on page XX.

PETRIFIED STATUES

There are 1d4 statues that are intact enough to free a living NPC. A *greater restoration* or similar effect ends the petrification, and the freed NPCs are highly grateful. They immediately offer their services in line with their respective goals. They remain willing to assist the party until their goals are met or prove unattainable. The muck and mire have covered each statue to the point they are too obscure to determine who they were. If an NPC is unpetrified, roll a d8 or choose from the options on the Petrified NPCs table, re-rolling on duplicates.

PETRIFIED NPCs

d8 NPC

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Moirana (neutral good, human druid) is a wise and patient woman with an unyielding dedication to nature. Once a guardian of these sacred grounds, she sought ancient seeds said to purify the tainted land. |
| 2 | Borrim (lawful neutral, dwarf veteran) is a stout, gruff dwarf who relentlessly focuses on his mission. He ventured into the temple to recover a lost ancestral weapon—the Moonblade—and isn't above battling the party to reclaim it, although it is not in this temple. |
| 3 | Jenivere (chaotic neutral, elf mage) is a whimsical and somewhat aloof elf fascinated by rare spell components. She had come to the temple searching for knowledge of Lunis but might be willing to betray the party for her own gains. |
| 4 | Niall (neutral, gnome artificer, uses spy statistics) is a tinkerer at heart, perpetually curious but easily distracted. He entered the temple to recover a lost invention, the Aqua Gear, and could either be a valuable ally or an unpredictable nuisance. |
| 5 | Ghara (chaotic good, tiefling scout) is sly, quick-witted, and charismatic. She intended to find a treasure rumored to be cursed; upon being freed, she might pursue this at the expense of the party's safety. |
| 6 | Odon (lawful good, dragonborn paladin, uses knight statistics) is a stoic and honorable warrior who follows a strict code. He came to eradicate an evil presence corrupting the marsh but could turn against the party if they showed any signs of moral weakness. |
| 7 | Lyria (neutral good, elf priest) is gentle yet fervently devoted, exuding a calm presence. She was at the temple to purify a desecrated shrine and would use her divine abilities to either aid or judge the party based on their actions. |
| 8 | Yorik (chaotic neutral, halfling bard, uses spy statistics) is an irreverent, opportunistic halfling with an eye for drama. He was in the temple to compose an epic saga and may be willing to bolster the party's courage or embellish their failures, depending on what makes a better story. |



LUNIS'S REST

In an age nearly lost to memory, the meadowlands thrummed with natural energies under the stewardship of the clerics of Lunis. With Lunis's Rest at its center, the land was a sanctuary where the cycle of life and death unfolded in beautiful, intricate patterns. The priests revered Lunis, the goddess of the moon and natural cycles, and were the beating heart of these sacred grounds, ensuring its balance and sanctity through rites and vigilant care.

Over time, however, a mysterious blight crept into the marshlands. Plants withered, and animals grew sick. The priests traced this decline to a celestial event called "The Waning," when Lunis's light dimmed in the sky. The natural energy drained from the land as if being siphoned by an unknown force. Despite their most potent rituals and desperate pleas to Lunis, the meadows continued deteriorating.

At first, they thought it a test of faith and tried to combat the decline using ancient rites and talismans. But as seasons turned and the once-abundant flora grew sparse, the priests found their powers weakening, their spells turning brittle. Some among the clergy argued for extreme measures—to tap into darker, forbidden magics as a last resort. Divisions broke out, shattering the unity of the priesthood. Some clerics left in despair, while others were excommunicated for their heretical suggestions.

Finally, one tragic night known as the "Eclipsing," a failed ritual intended to restore the goddess's favor, resulted in a magical backlash. The temple trembled, statues cracked, and the very land seemed to wail. Several priests were lost, their life essences snuffed out or absorbed into the deteriorating temple.

The few who survived were scattered, broken, and disillusioned. The marshland continued its slow decay, becoming the perilous Mourning Marsh that adventurers avoid today. Yet, the old legends whisper that the spirits of the lost priests still haunt the temple, their essences bound to the failing sanctuary they could not save. Though Lunis's Rest is now but a shadow of its former self, rumors persist that hidden chambers within the temple still hold the remnants of the priests' wisdom and might, awaiting those with the courage and the purity of purpose to reclaim the lost sanctity of the marsh.

GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout Lunis's Rest unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions.

Ceilings, Floors, and Walls. The temple ceilings are vaulted and reach 12 to 20 feet high, decorated with ancient inscriptions that require a DC 15 Intelligence (History) or Wisdom (Religion) check to decipher the religious script of Lunis. Floors are uneven stone tiles, often flooded with marsh waters, while walls are an

amalgamation of vines, moss, and ancient stone bricks. Flooded sections are difficult terrain.

Doors. Most doors in the temple are heavy, made of aged wood, and bound in iron. A locked door can be opened with a DC 13 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or forced open with a DC 13 Strength check.

Lights. The chambers within the temple are mostly dimly lit by bioluminescent fungi and the occasional scone enchanted with a *continual flame* spell. These sources provide dim light throughout the temple.

Climate. The temperature within the temple is humid and muggy. Each hour spent within requires a DC 12 Constitution saving throw to avoid exhaustion due to the harsh conditions.

Noxious Vapors. In specific locations, as described in the adventure text, clouds of noxious gas filter through cracks. A creature entering or starting its turn in the gas must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 2d6 poison damage and being poisoned on a failed save, or half as much damage and on not being poisoned on a successful one.

KEYED LOCATIONS

The following descriptions correspond to the keyed locations on the provided map of Lunis's Rest.

1. GATE OF SCALES

Elitia's followers changed the entrance to Lunis's Rest to reflect the serpentine nature of their mistress. An intricate nest of iron snakes obscures the doors, each artfully twisted and wrapped around the rest to form an eye-bending display. The craftsmanship is so realistic that the snakes seem almost lifelike. Bioluminescent fungi provide an eerie glow, casting shadows that make the iron snakes appear to writhe.

A *magic mouth* spell activates once a creature enters within 10 feet of the doors. Its voice hisses like a snake, echoing around the clearing in Common. Read aloud the following once the voice speaks:

The air suddenly vibrates with shimmering energy as a voice emanates from an unseen source, thick with a hissing sound, "Only the devoted may enter the sanctum of the Tidemistress. Prove thy reverence, feel her bite, or be crushed by her coils."

A character proficient in Religion or who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Religion) check recognizes the title "Tidemistress" as a title once given to high-ranking clergy of an ancient snake deity said to be wrapped around the moon. On a success, the character may respond to the magical mouth with the phrase, "By scales and tides, I honor the Mistress of the Moonlit Sea." Saying this phrase causes the iron snakes to retract and allow entry into the temple immediately.

Proving Devotion. The characters must take action to



Lunís's Rest
1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

prove their devotion to the moon or to the Tidemistrees in a reptilian, snake-like way. This action could take many forms at the GM's discretion. A few examples are as follows:

- **Moonlight Serenade.** A character can cast any spell or use an item that produces moonlight (such as the *moonbeam* spell).
- **Serpentine Offering.** A character can place a snake scale, snake fang, or vial of snake venom onto a small donation bowl by the entrance. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Nature) check identifies the bowl's purpose for reptilian donations.
- **Venomous Fangs.** A character can willingly take 1d4 poison damage from a snake's fang on the doors.

Failing Devotion. If the party fails to prove their devotion promptly, the iron snakes on the doors animate into four swarms of iron snakes. The swarms of iron snakes use the **swarm of poisonous snakes** stat block with the following additional trait: **Rusting Bite.** Metal armor worn by a creature bitten by the swarm takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. Armor reduced to an AC of 10 is destroyed.

Defeating the iron snake swarms unlocks the door to the temple, allowing the party to enter freely.

2. VESTIBULE

This chamber once acted as the spiritual and educational center for the priests and druids of Lunis. Read aloud the following when the characters enter this room:

The air in the room is thick with the mingling scents of mildew and aged incense. Scattered across worn tables lie faded herbs, brittle scrolls, and skeletal remains of small animals. Vines and moss creep over walls of shelves filled with mildewed books. The encroaching vegetation partly hides a fresco on one wall, portraying hooded figures dancing beneath a full moon.

A DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check can identify 1d4+2 piles of herbs as *shadowthorn*, a strong numbing medicine that also induces hallucinations. A creature ingesting a dose gains 1d8+2 temporary hit points for 1 hour and must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or suffer a -1 penalty to Wisdom checks and saving throws for the duration.

Characters who search the tables notice inscriptions on some animal bones that are Druidic runes. A DC 15 Intelligence (History) or Wisdom (Religion) check to decipher them unveils a Druidic lament about the deterioration of the meadows into marshland.

Trap: Pit Trap. A concealed trapdoor lies near the center of the room on the location marked with a red X on the provided map. A character searching the floor who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check uncovers the trapdoor, which leads to a 10-foot-deep

pit lined with barbed vines. A creature stepping on the trapdoor must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall into the pit and take an additional 1d6 piercing damage from the thorns.

TREASURE

A search of the bookshelves with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers a *scroll of moonlight serenade* tucked under a rotting shelf. The scroll can be used to cast a more powerful version of the *moonbeam* spell that fills a 20-foot radius.

3. TOXIC BOG

Originally a tranquil meditation space, this chamber has become a festering bog filled with noxious vapors (see General Features). The air is acrid with a mist that clings to everything it touches. Below the hovering mist lies a stagnant pool of swamp water, tinged with an unnatural hue. Thick, twisted plants grow at the water's edge, their vines twitching as if sensing prey. Calcified remnants of ritualistic totems jut out from the murk, their features warped and barely recognizable.

Four mutated plants with masses of thorny vines (they use **violet fungus** statistics with a +6 attack bonus to Rotting Touch) are situated around the room. On a successful hit with their Rotting Touch attack, the target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or become grappled (escape DC 15). A grappled target takes 3 (1d6) piercing damage at the start of each of its turns.

Cleansing Totems. A DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals inscriptions on the totems as a purification ritual. A druid or character proficient in Religion can finish the ritual in 10 minutes with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Religion) check. This ritual causes the totem inscriptions to glow with a healing aura and cleanses the room of the toxic gas, replacing it with clean, fresh air. Characters who take a short rest in this location regain double as many restored hit points.

TREASURE

Buried beneath the toxic sludge is a vine-wrapped chest that can be spotted with a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check and unlocked with a DC 12 Dexterity check using Thieves' Tools. It contains a *potion of poison resistance* and a *scroll of lesser restoration*.

4. RELIQUARY

Once a sacred place housing holy artifacts and relics of valorous heroes, the Reliquary has been long plundered, its sanctity desecrated. Though the marble columns are chipped and cracked, their once gleaming surfaces dulled, there is a muted grace to the ruin. Many niches are empty, once-precious artifacts stolen or lost to time. An electrum plaque (35 gp) emits a soothing aura of calm as per a *calm emotions* spell. Inscribed upon it are words honoring Loradin, the fallen paladin, whose deeds are memorialized in faded etchings.

*"In valor clad, Loradin stood,
Against the Tidemistress' twisted brood.
His light did pierce her shadowed veil,
His sacrifice ensures we yet prevail."*

If the plaque is removed, the lingering sense of peace dissipates, and divine casters such as Clerics and Paladins suffer disadvantage on Wisdom checks within the temple for the next 24 hours. A Paladin using Divine Sense or a character using a *detect evil and good* spell senses a divine aura emanating from the electrum plaque. A DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) or Intelligence (Religion) check reveals that the inscription on the plaque follows a poetic structure often used in religious texts to hide coded messages. The hidden message states, "Faith Breaks All Walls."

Illusory Wall. A DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check or casting *detect magic* reveals that the wall behind the plaque is an illusion (as per the *major illusion* spell) leading to area 4a.

4A. LORADIN'S MEMORIAL

This alcove holds a marble statue of Loradin, etched his likeness in his paladin's armor. Shattered remains of what seems to be Loradin's gear are meticulously placed below the statue. Among the bits of armor is a *mace of monster smiting* (a *mace of smiting* that works against Monstrosities instead of Constructs). The mace is protected by an aura that activates when a non-good creature touches the weapon. The creature must succeed on a C 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 6d6 radiant damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. This effect only occurs once and only while the mace is in this room.

5. SLISS'S LAIR

Upon entering this chamber, the damp, earthy aroma of the marsh invades the senses. The room's dim illumination is provided by phosphorescent fungi that litter the walls. A net, cleverly hidden among the dangling vines above, hangs poised above the 10-foot-square location marked on the provided map. A character who succeeds on a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the network of fine strings that triggers the rigged net.

Secret Staircase. The staircase to the subterranean garden (area 8) is hidden beneath an altar adorned with carved vines and leaves. A character inspecting the altar who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a leaf that can be rotated and pressed into the stone. Once pressed, the altar splits down the center and slides to either side, revealing a staircase leading down into the hidden garden (see map on page XX).

SLISS



THE CURIOUS SERPENT

Sliss (see “Sliss the Serpent” sidebar) slithers forward, his black and green scales shimmering in the dim light and his eyes reflecting an uncanny intelligence. The character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score notices that Sliss is not making any hostile moves and appears curious yet cautious. If a character attempts to influence Sliss with an Animal Handling check, the serpent bursts into laughter and hissing replies, “No need for that, two legsss, we can ssspeak.”

A DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces Sliss to ally with the characters. On a failure or showing hostility, Sliss triggers his net and attacks. A creature under the net’s area must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained. A creature can use its action to make a DC 14 Strength check, freeing themselves or another within reach on a success.

On a success, he shares the following information along with the history of Elitia as told in the “Background” section:

- “Temple old, very old. Moon above, tide below—both important.”
- “Noble warrior ssslew the Mistress, tomb not far. Sssmells different, don’t like.”
- “Traps many, but words powerful. Old tongue will uncoil the path and make sssafe.”

TREASURES

A search of the room and a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveal loose stones in the far corner of the room hiding Sliss’s hoard. It contains a collection of worthless odds and ends from the swamp, bones, and shiny rocks, a loose stash of coins and small gems worth 50 gp, and a *scroll of hold monster*.

6. ETILIA’S STUDY

Originally the High Priest of Lunis’s Rest’s office, this chamber became a Etilia’s office and lab for experimentation. While the swamp has consumed the temple, this study has remained relatively untouched, albeit in disorganized decay. The air is thick and musty with the scent of mold. The room has wooden tables with religious manuscripts, arcane scrolls, and alchemical apparatus.

Gleaning Information. The following information can be found in the study with 10 minutes of casual searching per clue, rolling on the table below or choosing a clue that has yet to be found:

TREASURE

A character searching the desk who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers a false bottom drawer holding a Lunite prayer book, granting a one-time advantage on a Religion check within the temple. The book is worth 100 gp to an antiquities collector of religious texts. Additionally, a *scroll of serpentine tongue* casts the *speak with animals* spell limited to snakes and other reptile Beasts.

SLISS THE SERPENT

Once a mere creature of the marsh, Sliss (giant constrictor snake, he can speak Common) is a living paradox. The massive serpent transformed a lunar eclipse when arcane energies seeped out from the temple’s inner sanctum during one of Elitia’s rituals. These energies endowed Sliss with an elongated lifespan, a human-like intellect, and the ability to speak and understand Common. He is an anomaly, caught between his instinctual drives and newfound sentience. Sliss’s body, stretching over 20 feet, bears scales of obsidian midnight and murky green, mimicking the marsh waters. His lidless yellow eyes are particularly unnerving—eerily human-like, revealing a depth of intelligence and emotion no snake should possess.

Sliss’s internal battle mirrors his external actions. At first glance, he may appear menacing, but his hesitations and dialogues, if allowed to unfold, reveal a being desperate for understanding and companionship. Despite his alarming size and strength, Sliss has a philosophical mind and constantly ponders the meaning of life in the universe. His motivation? A relentless search for his own identity and purpose, trapped as he is within the temple’s mystical boundaries.

His condition also offers clues to the temple’s very nature, highlighting its lunar power and its symbiotic connection to celestial events. Sliss exists as both a threat and a potential ally. A patient and understanding character could turn him into a helpful friend, offering information and tactical aid. Yet, failing to understand his complicated nature and treating him as a Beast causes Sliss to revert to his baser instincts. Can Sliss break free from the temple, or is he forever a prisoner inside this room and its corrupted influence?

d6 Clue

- 1 Within a tome that covers rites and rituals praising Lunis, the phrase “Sselythra Nal’enth” is scratched into the margin. A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) check allows characters to recognize the phrase is from an ancient religion that worshiped a snake deity and means “Uncoil the Path.” This phrase is used to reveal the path in area 7.
- 2 A passage in an ancient manuscript reveals that the temple was built initially atop a nexus of lunar energy, giving it a particular connection to the cycles of the moon.
- 3 Among Etilia’s scattered notes, a journal entry confirms her interest in exploiting this lunar nexus for arcane purposes, specifically transforming serpents into magical and sentient creatures.
- 4 A detailed mural depicts the high priest of Lunis wielding a Moonblade, a powerful artifact connected to the deity. A nearby plaque suggests that only the chosen high priest could wield it safely.
- 5 A stone tablet in the shape of a moon calendar, etched with a specific pattern of moon phases, alludes to sacred ceremonies that could be performed on specific lunar events to grant blessings from Lunis. This progression of moon phases can help unlock the ritual nook in area 9a.
- 6 An older, moldy scroll discusses the existence of underground sacred pools within the temple that were believed to hold curative properties during the full moon but which Etilia planned to use for sinister experiments. These mentions hint at the Secret Garden (area 8).

7. SERPENT'S HALL

This hall once served as an entrance to the temple's grand cathedral, where Lunis's most sacred rituals were conducted. Now, the area is a perilous passageway, its original purpose obscured by decades of neglect and the disruptive presence of Etilia's experiments.

The walls of this hall are ornately decorated with murals of serpents weaving towards a door at the far end of the room, shaped like a gaping viper's maw. The air is stale, tinged with a faint aroma of moss and decay. Intricately carved marble columns support the ceiling, each one elegantly adorned with gilded snakes coiling upward. A soft hissing sound fills the air as if the painted serpents on the wall were whispering.

A DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the edge of multiple pressure plates in the tile floor (marked with red X's on the provided map). Stepping on a plate triggers the release of a 10-foot-radius cloud of noxious vapors (see General Features) from the mouths of the gilded snakes on each column. The vapors last for 1 hour or until dissipated by a strong wind.

If the characters previously located the *scroll of serpentine tongue* or used the spell *Speak with animals*, they can utter the phrase "Sselythra Nal'enth" in the language of snakes (see area 6). Doing so causes the tiles on the floor to momentarily animate, slithering aside to reveal which tiles are pressure plates showing the safe path forward.

TREASURE

A DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers a hidden compartment within one of the columns. Inside is a small cache of ritualistic items, including a *vial of antitoxin* and a moonstone worth 50 gp.

MOON PROGRESSION

A character taking the time to examine the murals on the walls who succeeds on a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices subtle etchings hidden beneath the snake murals. These etchings are from the temple's past and show a specific celestial alignment of the full moon progressing to a divine rotation. This progression is the key to unlocking the ritual nook in (area 9a).

8. SECRET GARDEN

Hidden beneath the temple and accessible from Sliss's Lair (area 5) and the sinkhole behind the temple, the secret garden was once a sanctuary for sacred rites and rituals in worship of the moon goddess Lunis. The chamber is half-submerged and teeming with plant life, and remains an abundant trove of alchemical ingredients. A sinkhole in the ceiling leads to the grounds above.

This cavern smells of damp earth and strange flora. The floor is spongy underfoot, covered in patches of moss and mud, and a pool of water sloshes in a sunken area. A marble statue of a female elf stands at the far end, her face serene, holding a crescent moon in her outstretched hand.



The cavern houses two **shambling mounds** lurking within the watery muck. They attack intruders on sight. In addition, a patch of moonblossom fungus (uses **violet fungus** statistics) near the statue releases a stream of spores at any non-Plant creature that comes within 10 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the start of its next turn. The fungus has 1d3+1 spore streams in 24 hours.

Lunis's Boon. A DC 16 Wisdom (Religion) check, or proficiency in Religion, allows a character to recognize a ritual to honor Lunis at her statue. Completing this grants a boon on the entire party: a *bless* spell lasting up to 24 hours.

HERBS AND MUSHROOMS

A character proficient in Nature or who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Nature) check recognizes the following herbs and mushrooms growing among the old planters. Each requires a harvesting check to gather successfully. Failing a harvesting check reduces the number that can be harvested by 1.

Moonblossom fungus has bioluminescent caps that softly glow in the dark, emitting a soothing lavender aroma. A character can harvest 1d2+1 clumps of this fungi with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Nature) check. A creature eating a fungus raw sends it into an immediate slumber, and it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be unable to wake for 1 hour. A character proficient in Alchemical Supplies can add it to any potion that adds gaining the benefits of a short rest to its existing effects.

Second, the *starpetal herb* stands out with its star-shaped leaves that shimmer in even the dimmest light and exude a scent reminiscent of aged cedar. A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Nature) check can harvest 1d4+1 leaves of this unique herb. A creature eating a leaf raw gains a +1 bonus on Wisdom saving throws for 1 hour and must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or suffer from nausea and a -1 penalty to attack rolls for the same duration. A character proficient in Alchemical Supplies can add it to any potion to increase the potion's effectiveness to last 50 percent longer and add gaining advantage on Wisdom saving throws for the duration.

Lastly, the *lunaria root* hides in the earth, its above-ground foliage deceptively plain, but the root itself emits a sharp, medicinal scent detectable when unearthed. With a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Nature) check, one can procure 1d4 of these valuable roots. A creature eating the root raw can cure 1 disease afflicting it at random but must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or take 2d6 poison damage. A character proficient in Alchemical Supplies can add it to any magical potion to change it into a Panacea. This powerful antidote cures all diseases and removes all conditions affecting the imbiber.

TREASURE

A DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check notices that the moon-shaped amulet around the statue's neck is removable. If the party has gained Lunis's boon (see above), it is an *amulet of adaptation*. However, if the party has not been given the boon, it is a cursed magical item that causes the wearer to suffer a -1 penalty to Wisdom checks and saves until removed with a *remove curse* spell or similar effect.

9. GRAND CATHEDRAL

This space once held the inner sanctum of the clerics of Lunis before being transformed into Etilia's throne room. A stone door etched with moon and tidal markings sits beneath the central staircase leading up to the iron throne. It opens to a staircase leading down into the Ritual Vault (area 9a).

Columns resembling serpents stretch toward the ruined domed ceiling of this grand cathedral. Broken balconies hang in a precarious state of decay, draped with vines that dangle into the interior. Stagnant swamp water seeps between worn stone tiles, pooling in various crevices. Snake motifs adorn almost every available surface, including a tarnished iron throne at the top of a central set of stairs.

A massive serpent with eyes glowing a chilling crimson hue uncoils in the shadowy recesses around the throne. Adjacent to the serpent, a humanoid warrior with the hooded head of a viper grips a twin-bladed spear, spinning it in his hands with ease.

The massive **stonecoil** (see Appendix) is a mutated creature that grew and adapted from a viper severed from Etilia's head during the final battle for her life. The **hisskin warrior** (he is wielding a *spear of the twin stars*, see Appendix for both statistics) is the descendant of those dedicated to the medusa who devoted themselves to tending to her surviving brood. The serpent, a grotesque abomination, is an unsettling blend of dark green and black scales, with unnaturally large, hypnotic eyes that shimmer in shades of red and gold. Its fangs are sickly yellow, and its mouth secretes a paralyzing venom. The hisskin warrior, in contrast, is a humanoid figure with a viper's hooded head, clothed in tattered ceremonial robes. He wields a twin-bladed spear, its blades shimmering with an eerie, otherworldly light. Refer to Appendix A for their stat blocks.

TACTICS

In combat, the serpent aims to control the battlefield with its petrifying bite and stunning gaze. It tends to target characters displaying magical abilities first, seeking to remove the most unpredictable elements. Simultaneously, the hisskin warrior utilizes its agility to move across the field swiftly, engaging ranged attackers and casters, and leaping off balconies for plunging attacks.



Environmental Features. Vines hanging from the ceiling can be swung upon (DC 14 Acrobatics check) to leap over the swampy water or gain access to the balconies 10 feet up. Some of the stone tiles are engraved with lunar glyphs that glow dimly in the light of magical effects. These are marked with yellow X's on the provided map. Standing on one grants resistance to poison damage while standing on the tile.

TREASURE

Defeating the hisskin warrior gives the characters access to his *spear of the twin stars* (see Appendix). Additionally, hidden under a collapsed column is a stash of rare gemstones worth 500 gold. Among the stash is a leatherbound journal of Etilia's notes detailing her curse and subsequent attempts to build her army of worshippers.

9A. RITUAL VAULT

Once a hallowed ground for conducting sacred rites to Lunis, the Moon Goddess, this room later transformed into Etilia's private chamber. Dark motifs adorn the walls, intermingled with faded moon symbols and intricate snake reliefs to form an intricate wall carving. The air is thick with the scent of ancient incense, mingled with the dampness of the swamp creeping through cracks in the walls.

LUNAR RELIQUARY

The celestial wall carving is a moon phase manipulable puzzle. To unlock it, the heroes must align the moons in the pattern depicted in the Serpent's Hall. A character proficient in Religion who succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (History) check can determine the correct sequence to align the moon phases. Once aligned, the center of the floor shifts and opens, revealing the protected nook beneath the stone floor. Failure to solve the puzzle results in a loud, unnerving "click," though no immediate hazard presents itself.

If the vault is opened, read aloud the following:

Inside the hidden compartment is a severed head, remarkably well-preserved, with a crown of intertwining snakes—one snake noticeably severed. Resting beside the head are three luminescent moonstones, each glowing softly with an inner light. The compartment also contains an ornate, leather-bound tome and several rolled scrolls. The materials are laced with silver and inscribed with sigils that match some of the symbols you've seen earlier in the temple.

Amid the ritualistic tools and Etilia's severed head are parchments written in Abyssal and Draconic that lay out the steps for the resurrection process to bring Etilia back to life (at the GM's discretion). They are translat-

able with a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) or proficiency in both languages. This creates an opportunity for the characters to bring the medusa back to life in exchange for information leading to the fabled Moonblade (at the GM's discretion). Alternately, these documents can be replaced with others that better fit your campaign or story.

TREASURES

The moonstones are potent magical items that, when used appropriately, have the power to reverse petrification. These gems are essentially single-use consumables that can cast a modified *greater restoration* spell that only works to reverse petrification effects. A character proficient in Arcana or who succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check while examining the stones recognizes their properties.

GM's Note. If there are any quest objects the characters or rescued NPCs are searching for, they can be found here at your discretion.

CONCLUSION

With the monstrous serpent defeated and the haunting visage of Etilia's severed head uncovered, the adventurers have lifted a shroud of darkness from Mourning Marsh. Lunis's Rest may never fully recover from the malevolent taint it endured, but the temple's gradual restoration represents a new chapter in its long and storied history. Although Etilia's presence has been excised, the discoveries made within the temple's labyrinthine halls indicate that her malevolent influence persists and could rise anew. The heroes exit the marsh with more than just the spoils of their quest; they leave with the burden of an unresolved evil, a story yet unfinished.



CREDITS

Author: TJ Phoenix

Production & Design: [THE DM TOOL CHEST](#)

Cover Illustration: Midjourney

Cartography: TJ Phoenix, DungeonDraft using assets from [SKRONT STUFF](#) and [THE MAD CARTOGRAPHER](#)

Interior Illustrations: Midjourney

LICENSING

This work includes material taken from the System Reference Document 5.1 ("SRD 5.1") by Wizards of the Coast LLC and available at <https://dnd.wizards.com/resources/systems-reference-document>. The SRD 5.1 is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

"Curse of Serpent's Rise" © 2023

The DM Tool Chest, Author TJ Phoenix

ADVENTURE HOOK RESOLUTIONS

If using any of the provided adventure hooks at the beginning of the adventure, a few possible resolutions are as follows:

GHOST LIGHTS

Upon returning to Old Man Wren with news of their discovery, the party learns that the lights were manifestations of the tormented spirits bound to the temple. Their liberation earns the characters Wren's everlasting gratitude and reveals that the lights were, in fact, a sign of the magical defenses and traps Etilia had in place. Wren offers them a small artifact he found in the marsh as thanks—a talisman that glows in the presence of restless spirits.

THE STONE CHILD

The villagers of Greendale welcome the adventurers as saviors when they use the moonstones to reverse the petrification of the stone child. Village leader Samuel, his eyes brimming with tears of joy, bestows upon them the village's most prized possession: a sword handed down through generations, known to hold the power to repel evil.

QUILL & INK

Upon returning to Theranos the Arcanist with the fabled inkpot, the party receives not just the promised 200 gold pieces and gains the scholar's favor. Theranos is particularly interested in the ritualistic preparations discovered and asks the adventurers to watch for similar arcane phenomena. The quill and inkpot together reveal encrypted texts that will provide further adventures, pushing the characters into deeper and more complex challenges.

The curtain falls on this chapter, but the stage is set for the next, as the adventurers depart Mourning Marsh, each wrestling with the moral and existential questions raised during their quest. Though they've achieved much, it's clear that the true struggle—against the lingering taint of Etilia's curse and the mystery of the malevolent forces at play—has only just begun.

APPENDIX

This section includes new content introduced in this adventure.

MAGIC ITEMS

This section contains the new magic items presented in this adventure.

SPEAR OF THE TWIN STARS

Weapon (spear), uncommon (requires attunement)

This double-headed spear has a subtle glow emanating from its twin tips. While attuned to this magical weapon, you gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. Additionally, if you successfully hit a target with a melee attack using this spear, you may use a bonus action to make another attack with it against the same target. This feature can be used once per turn. The spear has a 2 charges that renew at dawn. You can expend a charge as an action to cast *faerie fire* at up to two targets of your choice.



SPEAR OF THE TWIN STARS

MONSTERS & NPCs

This section contains the new monsters and NPCs presented in this adventure.

HISSKIN WARRIOR

Hisskin warriors are a reptilian race bearing the distinctive features of serpents. Unlike their distant yuan-ti relatives, hisskins have distinctively humanoid bodies but feature snake-like heads complete with venomous fangs. Their scales range from dark green to obsidian black, often shimmering in the dim light of their swampy habitats. With eyes like molten gold, they possess an uncanny focus that unnerves many who cross their path.

Residing predominantly in the labyrinthine waterways of marshes and swamps, their culture centers around the veneration of monstrous serpents. They often serve as temple guardians or hunters, relying on their intimate knowledge of the treacherous swamp to ambush intruders or capture prey. Highly territorial, they view outsiders with suspicion but treat those who gain their trust with a reserved respect.

The ecology of the marshes are shaped by their dark practices. The flora and fauna carry a taint of their venomous magic, leading to the evolution of poisonous plants and aggressive, mutated animals. Hisskins are known for their affinity to poison, crafting not just weapons but also ritualistic concoctions that reinforce their bonds to the swamp's twisted ecology. Though once isolated, increasing activities in their domain suggest that their story is far from over.

Swamp Guardians. Serving as stewards of the swamps, they have unparalleled knowledge of its treacherous terrain. They use the terrain to their advantage, setting up ambushes and traps to deter intruders and protect their territory.

Serpent Cultists. Hisskin culture centers on the veneration of monstrous serpents, believed to be direct descendants of the World Serpent. They maintain temples hidden deep in the swamp, where they conduct rituals and ceremonies in their honor.

Ritualistic Craftsmen. Hisskin warriors are adept at crafting intricate weapons and artifacts, especially those imbued with venomous magic. Their unique craftsmanship is sought after by those willing to brave the marsh to acquire it.



HISSKIN WARRIOR

Medium Humanoid (reptilian), any alignment

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +5

Skills Perception +4, Athletics +6

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Magic Resistance. The hisskin warrior has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hisskin warrior makes two attacks with its Spear and one with its Bite.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., One target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6+3) piercing damage plus 2 (1d4) poison damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20 ft./60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Paralyzing Breath (Recharge 5-6). The hisskin warrior spits paralyzing venom in a 15-foot line. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. A paralyzed creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

REACTIONS

Parry. The hisskin warrior adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the hisskin warrior must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

STONECOIL

Large Monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 115 (11d10 + 55)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +8, Wis +5, Cha +4

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +4

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages understands Draconic but can't speak

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Hypnotic Gaze. When a creature that can see the stonecoil's eyes starts its turn within 30 ft. of it, the stonecoil can force it to make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, provided that stonecoil isn't incapacitated and can see the creature. On a failed save, the creature is incapacitated and hypnotized until the start of its next turn. A creature that successfully saves is immune to this stonecoil's Hypnotic Gaze for 24 hours.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The stonecoil makes two attacks: one with its Bite and one with its Bash.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, the creature is restrained, and stonecoil can't bash another target.

Petrifying Breath (Recharge 5-6). The stonecoil exhales petrifying gas in a 20-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be restrained. They must repeat the saving throw at the end of their next turn, becoming petrified on a failure or ending the effect on a success.



WANT MORE AWESOME 5E CONTENT LIKE THIS?



- 1,000+ PAGES OF**
- **ADVENTURES**
 - **VTT READY MAPS**
 - **MAGIC ITEMS**
 - **MONSTERS**
 - **SUBCLASSES**
 - **SPELLS**
 - **& MORE**

CLICK BELOW TO GAIN ACCESS TO OUR LIBRARY

STARTING AT \$5

[PATREON.COM/THEDMTOOLCHEST](https://patreon.com/thedmtoolchest)

ADVENTURE MORE, WORRY LESS