

The Serpent's Coil

A Sword & Sorcery Adventure for Fate's Edge

Featuring Isoka Cultists, Midh Ahkaz, and Epic Power Fantasy

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1 Adventure Overview

1.1 Premise

In the frontier city of Midh Ahkaz, wood-elf infiltrators serve Isoka, the Angel of Transformation. Unbeknownst to the cultists themselves, they are pawns in a cosmic game—their "transformation" rituals are actually part of Isoka's mysterious agenda, the full scope of which even she may not completely understand.

A disgraced Black Banners captain, his massive Vilikari friend, and a young Ykrul rogue must penetrate the city's defenses to rescue a chieftain's child, but they will discover that all is not as it seems. The serpents slither in unexpected ways, and what begins as a simple rescue mission escalates into an epic battle where the heroes must choose between personal power and cosmic responsibility.

1.2 Themes

- **Sword and Sorcery Adventure:** Fast-paced action with escalating stakes
- **Cosmic Power Fantasy:** Characters grow in power as the adventure progresses
- **Hidden Truths:** Enemies may not know they're enemies
- **Epic Transformation:** Physical and spiritual evolution through conflict
- **Moral Complexity:** Heroes may need to embrace partial corruption to fight greater evil

1.3 Power Fantasy Elements

This adventure uses a Momentum Clock system instead of Sanity mechanics:

Momentum Clock (4 segments):

- **Segment 1:** +1 Success to all rolls
- **Segment 2:** Remove 1 Banked CP
- **Segment 3:** +2 Successes to each roll
- **Segment 4:** Clear all CP, +1 die to all rolls until end of scene

When the clock fills, heroes gain temporary epic power. When it empties (through failures/backlash), they suffer temporary weakness:

- **Segment 3:** -1 Success to all rolls
- **Segment 2:** Generate 2 CP on next roll
- **Segment 1:** -1 die to all rolls
- **Segment 0:** +2 DV to all checks, generate 4 CP

2 Key NPCs

2.1 Captain Marcus "The Disgraced" Dravik

A former condotta captain whose unit was disbanded after a mission went catastrophically wrong. His reputation in tatters, he now takes on desperate jobs to survive. Dravik is haunted by the screams he heard in the Mistlands and drinks to forget—but the memories only grow stronger.

Attributes: Body 4, Wits 3, Spirit 2, Presence 3

Skills: Melee 4, Command 3, Survival 2, Insight 2

Background: Former Black Banners Captain

Motivation: Redemption through one last heroic act

Secret: He witnessed something in the Mistlands that should not exist

2.2 Korvash the Iron-Blooded

A massive Vilikari warrior whose family was destroyed in the Ykrul Wars. He fights not for coin, but for the satisfaction of battle and the protection of the innocent. Korvash carries the ancestral war-axe of his house, a weapon that remembers every life it has taken.

Attributes: Body 5, Wits 2, Spirit 4, Presence 2

Skills: Melee 5, Athletics 4, Endurance 3, Lore 1

Background: Vilikari Warrior

Motivation: Honor and protection of the weak

Weakness: Prone to berserker rage when allies are threatened

2.3 Szik the Swift

A young Ykrul who left the steppes seeking fortune in the cities. Quick-witted and quicker with a blade, Szik has survived by his wits and agility. He has a particular talent for picking locks and pockets, and an even greater talent for talking his way out of trouble.

Attributes: Body 3, Wits 4, Spirit 2, Presence 3

Skills: Stealth 4, Skullduggery 3, Athletics 3, Deception 3

Background: Ykrul Outlander

Motivation: Wealth and adventure

Quirk: Speaks to his daggers as if they were old friends

3 The City of Midh Ahkaz

3.1 Geography and History

Midh Ahkaz sits at the crossroads of three great powers: the Utaran successor states to the west, the Ykrul steppes to the north, and the mountain kingdoms to the east. Once a frontier camp during the Second Ykrul War, it grew into a proper city when the Treaty of Flintpike made it a neutral trading post.

The city is built in three tiers:

1. **The Low City:** Merchant quarters, workshops, and the docks
2. **The Middle City:** Administrative buildings, temples, and the homes of minor nobles

3. **The High City:** The Council Hall, the Governor's Palace, and the homes of the wealthy

3.2 Political Structure

The city is governed by a Council of Twelve, drawn from the merchant families, the military, and the clergy. Recently, three new council members have joined—each with mysterious backgrounds and unsettling mannerisms.

When approaching Midh Ahkaz, draw cards using the regional generator:

- **Spade:** The city gates (tall stone walls with iron reinforcements)
- **Heart:** The Gate Captain (suspicious military officer)
- **Club:** Curfew has been imposed due to "security concerns"
- **Diamond:** Emergency passage papers (good for one entry)

Clock Size: 6 segments (standard journey complications)

4 The Isoka Cult

4.1 Origins and Beliefs

The Isokai are wood-elf infiltrators who serve Isoka, the Angel of Transformation. They believe they are working toward a glorious future where mortals transcend their limitations through sacred transformation rituals. What they don't know - and what even their goddess may not fully understand - is the true cosmic significance of their actions.

Their bodies have been subtly altered through generations of communion with Isoka, gaining scaled skin patches, enhanced senses, and the ability to regenerate minor wounds.

4.2 Organization

The cult operates in cells of 3-7 members, each led by a Serpent Speaker who can commune directly with Isoka. The hierarchy includes:

- **The Coil Master:** The overall leader of the cult in Midh Ahkaz
- **Serpent Speakers:** High priests who can channel the god's will
- **Fang Bearers:** Warrior-priests who serve as the cult's muscle
- **Scale Singers:** Infiltrators who maintain cover identities
- **Egg Tenders:** Cultists who care for the serpent spawn

5 The Adventure

5.1 Opening Scene: The Job

The PCs are approached in a dim tavern in the Low City by an elderly Ykrul chieftain named Grok the Steadfast. His daughter, Yara, has been "taken" by city guards under mysterious circumstances. He offers them a substantial reward to rescue her before she is "transformed into the cornerstone of the new serpent age."

Grok the Steadfast: An aging Ykrul chieftain whose people have trading rights with Midh Ahkaz. He is desperate and willing to pay well for his daughter's return.

Attributes: Body 3, Wits 3, Spirit 4, Presence 3

Skills: Command 3, Survival 3, Insight 2, Diplomacy 2

Motivation: Rescue his daughter at any cost

Secret: He suspects the city is under supernatural influence

5.2 Investigation Phase

Before the rescue, the PCs should have opportunities to investigate the city and gather information. Key locations include:

5.2.1 *The Black Goat Tavern*

A rough establishment in the Low City where mercenaries and soldiers gather. The bartender, an aging human woman named Mira, has noticed strange things happening in the city.

Mira the Bartender: Sharp-eyed and sharp-tongued, Mira has ears everywhere and knows most of the city's secrets.

Attributes: Body 2, Wits 4, Spirit 3, Presence 4

Skills: Insight 4, Deception 3, Diplomacy 3, Lore 2

Information: Guards have been acting strangely; several people have "disappeared" after being taken to the High City

5.2.2 *The Temple of the Open Sky*

A Ykrul shrine where travelers can seek guidance. The priest, an elderly shaman named Whisperwind, has been having disturbing visions.

Whisperwind: A Ykrul shaman who has served the temple for thirty years. Recently, his visions have become increasingly disturbing.

Attributes: Body 2, Wits 3, Spirit 5, Presence 3

Skills: Faith 4, Insight 4, Lore 3, Healing 2

Vision: He has seen serpents coiling around the city's heart, and heard whispers of transformation and power

5.3 The Rescue Mission

The PCs learn that Yara is being held in the Governor's Palace in the High City. Getting there will require navigating the city's defenses and avoiding the enhanced security measures.

5.3.1 Approach Options

1. **Direct Assault:** Storm the gates and fight their way through the guards
2. **Stealth Infiltration:** Use Szik's skills to sneak in through service passages
3. **Social Engineering:** Convince the guards they belong through deception

5.3.2 The Governor's Palace

The palace has been subtly altered. Hallways seem to stretch longer than they should, and the air carries a faint, energizing scent that makes people feel more confident. The architecture incorporates serpentine motifs—coiling banisters, snake-headed spouts, and murals depicting glorious transformations.

As the PCs explore the palace, they should notice:

- Shadows that move with purpose and strength
- Whispers of power and transformation in an unknown language
- Rooms that seem to enhance their abilities
- A growing sense that they are becoming more than they were

Each of these observations should advance the Momentum Clock by 1 segment.

5.4 The Revelation

When the PCs finally reach Yara, they discover that she has willingly joined the cult, believing she will gain power beyond her wildest dreams. However, she has begun to suspect that something is wrong with the transformation process—her friends who underwent the ritual are changing in disturbing ways.

Yara Grokdaughter: A headstrong young Ykrul woman who joined the Isokai seeking power, but is beginning to question what she's become.

Attributes: Body 2, Wits 3, Spirit 2, Presence 4

Skills: Deception 3, Diplomacy 3, Performance 2, Insight 1

Condition: Beginning transformation into serpent form

Motivation: Power and transcendence, but growing doubts

Weakness: Vulnerable to appeals to her love for her father

Doubt Mechanic: Yara's internal conflict grows as she witnesses disturbing signs:

- Seeing transformed cultists behave erratically (+1 doubt)
- Hearing Isoka's whispers firsthand (+1 doubt)
- Learning of previous "transformations" that went wrong (+1 doubt)

When doubt reaches 3, she becomes a potential ally to the PCs.

5.5 The True Power

The PCs discover that Yara is just one of many young people who have been "initiated" into the cult. In the palace's basement, they find a vast chamber where hundreds of enhanced cultists are being trained. At the center sits the Coil Master, preparing the ritual to transform Midh Ahkaz.

However, a captured Inaeon priest reveals conflicting information about the truth. Some of his claims seem exaggerated, other information is deliberately obscured, and his fanaticism may lead him to lie about key details. He speaks of cosmic catastrophe and divine intervention, but his version of events may not be entirely reliable.

The Coil Master - Serpent Speaker Thaliss: A former high elf who has achieved partial transformation, believing he serves a noble cause.

Attributes: Body 3, Wits 5, Spirit 4, Presence 4

Skills: Arcana 5, Deception 4, Command 3, Insight 3

Abilities: Can cast Umbramancy and Geomancy spells, immune to mind-affecting effects, can regenerate from severe injuries

Motivation: To serve Isoka and bring about beneficial transformation

Weakness: Vulnerable to bright light and holy magic

The Coil Master never reveals the full truth about Isoka's cosmic role. He speaks in riddles and half-truths, making claims about knowledge he may not actually possess. His certainty may be based on faith rather than facts, leaving the PCs to piece together what's really happening.

6 Combat Encounters

6.1 Palace Guards

Standard city guards who have been enhanced by the cult's presence.

Attributes: Body 3, Wits 2, Spirit 2, Presence 2

Skills: Melee 3, Athletics 2, Perception 2, Command 1

Equipment: Longsword, shield, chainmail

Special: 25% chance each round to gain +1 die from serpent enhancement

6.2 Fang Bearers

Elite cult warriors who have begun their transformation into serpent beings.

Attributes: Body 4, Wits 3, Spirit 3, Presence 2

Skills: Melee 4, Athletics 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Equipment: Serpent-bladed spear, leather armor reinforced with scales

Special: Can regenerate 1 Harm per scene, immune to fear effects, bite attack deals poison damage

6.3 Serpent Spawn

Enhanced creatures that are part snake, part human, created through the cult's rituals.

Attributes: Body 2, Wits 1, Spirit 1, Presence 1

Skills: Melee 2, Athletics 2

Special: Move through enhanced speed, can climb walls, regenerate when near ichor pools

7 Magic and Supernatural Elements

7.1 Serpent Magic

The Isokai have developed unique magical practices based on their communion with Isoka:

Umbramancy - Serpent's Coil (DV 4): Effect: The caster can enhance a willing target's physical abilities over the course of combat. The target gains temporary serpent characteristics and combat prowess.

Backlash:

- 1-2 CP: Caster gains minor serpent features (fangs, scaled patches)
- 3-4 CP: Caster becomes partially transformed (gain 1 Attribute, lose 1 social die)
- 5+ CP: Caster becomes a powerful serpent spawn under GM control

Geomancy - Earth's Embrace (DV 3): Effect: The caster can sense and manipulate underground spaces, creating tactical advantages and detecting movement beneath the earth.

Backlash:

- 1-2 CP: Caster becomes temporarily deafened
- 3-4 CP: Ground becomes unstable in a 10-foot radius
- 5+ CP: Ancient entity beneath the city stirs and begins to offer power

8 Momentum System and Power Fantasy

8.1 Momentum Clock Advancement Triggers

Throughout the adventure, the GM should advance the Momentum Clock for the following events:

- First victory over enhanced cultists: +1 segment
- Discovering the scope of the transformation ritual: +1 segment
- Hearing the empowering whispers of Isoka: +1 segment
- Seeing allies begin enhancement: +1 segment
- Direct contact with Isoka's power: +2 segments
- Realizing the potential for personal transformation: +1 segment
- Overcoming significant tactical challenges: +1 segment

8.2 Power Fantasy Effects by Momentum Level

Segment 1 - Rising Heroes: Characters feel confident, +1 die to social rolls involving intimidation, minor combat enhancements

Segment 2 - Gathering Strength: +1 die to all rolls when fighting for a cause, start to notice enhanced physical capabilities

Segment 3 - Epic Power: +2 dice to rolls involving combat or overcoming obstacles, temporary attribute boosts

Segment 4 - Legendary Moment: Clear all CP, +1 die to all rolls until end of scene, one automatic success per scene

8.3 Momentum Loss Effects

When heroes suffer major defeats or setbacks:

- Major tactical failure: -1 segment
- Seeing allies fall to corruption: -1 segment
- Being overwhelmed by superior forces: -2 segments
- Personal moral compromise: -1 segment
- Failure to protect innocents: -1 segment

Segment 3 - Minor Setback: -1 die to rolls involving confidence, temporary weakness

Segment 2 - Significant Defeat: Generate 2 CP on next roll, tactical disadvantages

Segment 1 - Crushing Blow: -1 die to all rolls, major tactical disadvantages

Segment 0 - Catastrophic Failure: +2 DV to all checks, generate 4 CP, temporary removal from combat

9 Resolution Paths

9.1 The Greater Good Victory

The PCs embrace their role in the cosmic order, working with Isoka to fulfill her mysterious agenda. They become the new shepherds of whatever grand design the angels are enacting.

Reward: 15-18 XP, fundamental change in character worldview, cosmic responsibilities

9.2 The Heroic Stand

The PCs destroy the ritual and drive back the Isokai, but at great cost. They gain legendary status as heroes who saved the city, though they may have disrupted forces beyond their understanding.

Reward: 18-20 XP, gain Prestige Abilities, become local legends, uncertain cosmic consequences

9.3 The Tactical Retreat

The PCs evacuate civilians and destroy key components of the ritual, preventing the immediate transformation but allowing the cult to regroup. The cosmic mystery remains unsolved.

Reward: 12-15 XP, create ongoing campaign thread, gain resources, temporary reprieve from cosmic threat

9.4 The Power Bargain

The PCs negotiate with the cult, finding a way to harness transformation energy for beneficial purposes while maintaining mortal free will and development within safe parameters.

Reward: 14-17 XP, gain unique magical abilities, create new faction relationships, partial solution to cosmic dilemma

9.5 The Sacrifice Play

The PCs use themselves as bait or components in a counter-ritual, gaining temporary godlike power to destroy the cult at personal cost, but potentially triggering consequences they cannot foresee.

Reward: 16-19 XP, temporary epic abilities, permanent scars or changes, uncertain cosmic consequences

10 Bestiary

10.1 Isokai Cultist

Wood elves transformed by dark rituals into enhanced serpent-like beings.

Attributes: Body 3, Wits 3, Spirit 3, Presence 2

Skills: Stealth 3, Melee 3, Survival 2, Arcana 2

Special Abilities:

- **Enhancement:** Gain +1 die when Momentum Clock is at 2+ segments
- **Scaled Skin:** +1 Armor against physical attacks
- **Serpent Senses:** Can detect enemies in 30 feet
- **Poison Bite:** Deals 2 Harm and +1 CP generation on successful grapple

Weaknesses: Vulnerable to cold iron, afraid of fire

10.2 Isoka, the Serpent Ascendant

Ancient entity of transformation and power, currently partially manifest.

Attributes: Body 6, Wits 5, Spirit 6, Presence 5

Skills: Command 6, Arcana 6, Insight 5, Presence 5

Special Abilities:

- **Power Bestowal:** Can grant temporary epic abilities to followers
- **Reality Enhancement:** Can improve local physics within 100 feet

- **Mind Empowerment:** Can enhance willing individuals' capabilities
- **Spawn Creation:** Can create new enhanced followers from willing subjects
- **Divine Presence:** Automatically advances Momentum Clock for allies

Manifestation: Appears as a massive serpent with divine features, speaks in empowering whispers that boost abilities

10.3 Serpent Spawn (Adult)

Fully formed enhanced creatures that were once human.

Attributes: Body 4, Wits 2, Spirit 2, Presence 1

Skills: Melee 4, Athletics 3, Stealth 3

Special Abilities:

- **Constrict:** Grapple automatically deals 1 Harm per round, +1 Momentum
- **Poison Immunity:** Unaffected by toxins
- **Wall Crawl:** Can move on walls and ceilings at full speed
- **Fear Aura:** Enemies within 10 feet gain +1 Momentum (for enemies) or must make Spirit + Resolve (DV 4)

11 Treasure and Magic Items

11.1 Cult Artifacts

Serpent's Fang: A dagger carved from a single piece of black stone that whispers promises of power.

Effect: +1 die to Stealth and Intimidation rolls, deals +1 Harm to living targets, generates 1 CP on kills

Empowerment: When Momentum Clock is at 3+ segments, gains +2 dice to all rolls

Serpent's Coil: A length of rope that moves like a snake and obeys the wielder's mental commands.

Effect: Can be used to bind enemies, climb impossible surfaces, or constrict targets at range

Enhancement: When Momentum is high, can animate independently to assist in combat

11.2 Heroic Items

Blade of the Fallen Empire: An ancient sword that grows stronger as its wielder faces greater challenges.

Effect: Base +1 Harm, +1 Harm for each segment on Momentum Clock (allies)

Special: When wielder's Momentum drops, sword becomes heavier and more difficult to use

Shield of the Unbroken Wall: A massive shield that can protect multiple allies.

Effect: Provides +2 Armor to wielder and adjacent allies, can be used as cover

Empowerment: When Momentum is high, becomes nearly indestructible

12 Campaign Hooks and Extensions

12.1 Ongoing Cosmic Threats

If the PCs don't completely resolve the Isoka situation, the cosmic mystery remains. Other Angel-Sisters may take action, or forces beyond mortal comprehension may stir.

12.2 The Greater Conspiracy

The events in Midh Ahkaz may be just one front in a larger conflict between cosmic forces and mortal ambition, leading to epic campaign-scale warfare.

12.3 Personal Evolution

PCs who were exposed to the cult's influence may find they're not entirely free of its effects, but can channel the power for heroic purposes, creating personal epic storylines.

12.4 The Angel Wars

The revelation about Isoka and her sisters may be just the beginning. What other cosmic entities are manipulating mortal affairs, and what are their true motives?

13 GM Tips and Advice

13.1 Building Epic Tension

- Use the Momentum Clock as a visual representation of rising and falling power
- Let victories feel truly epic and defeats genuinely crushing
- Describe how characters become more impressive as power grows
- Make the stakes clear: not just survival, but the fate of the universe

13.2 Managing Power Fantasy Elements

- Power should feel earned through heroic actions and clever play
- Let players feel increasingly awesome as the adventure progresses
- Provide opportunities to showcase enhanced abilities
- Balance empowerment with meaningful challenges that can still threaten heroes

13.3 Narrative Techniques

- The known should become legendary through the characters' actions
- Revelations should be both satisfying and empowering
- Partial knowledge can drive heroic ambition
- Let destiny be part of the power fantasy

13.4 Combat Pacing

- Early encounters should establish the threat level
- Mid-adventure combats should showcase growing heroism
- Climactic battles should feel truly epic with high Momentum
- Allow for dramatic reversals that test heroic resolve

14 Adventure Conclusion

The adventure should end with a climactic confrontation where the PCs must choose between several epic options, each with significant consequences. The true power fantasy lies not just in defeating monsters, but in the heroic choices that define legends.

Whether they embrace their role in cosmic mysteries, save the city through pure heroism, or sacrifice everything for uncertain greater good, their actions should echo through the rest of the campaign, making this not just an adventure, but a defining moment that establishes their legendary status.

Remember that in Fate's Edge, power comes with responsibility. Every epic victory should plant seeds for future challenges, and every choice should shape the world in meaningful ways. Let the serpents offer power, but let the heroes choose their own destiny.

Final Note: In true sword and sorcery fashion, this adventure rewards bold action, clever tactics, and heroic sacrifice. The Momentum Clock represents the ebb and flow of epic combat and adventure - heroes rise to legendary heights, face crushing setbacks, and rise again even greater than before. Make every victory feel hard-won and every defeat a setup for an even greater comeback. This is not just a test of skill, but a proving ground for legends.

The serpent's coil tightens around the world, but heroes can become strong enough to break any coil - or perhaps become something even greater in the process.