Cyclopean Confrontation: A Snake in the Grass Encounter

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Screenshot

Read to Player (Hook):
As you venture deeper into the ancient temple, the air grows thick with the scent of decay and forgotten knowledge. The crumbling walls seem to whisper secrets in the wind, but it’s the eerie silence that strikes fear into your hearts. Suddenly, a frigid fog swirls around you, obscuring your vision. You hear the distant sound of scuttling serpents and the ominous rumble of a giant club striking the stone floor. A cyclops emerges from the mist, its single eye fixed on you with an unnerving intensity. The air is heavy with anticipation as the cyclops begins to circle around you, accompanied by multiple giant snakes slithering through the fog.

Setting:
The encounter takes place within a limited area of the ruined temple, specifically the central chamber. The room is approximately 30 feet in diameter, with stone walls covered in vines and moss. A large, crumbling statue of an ancient deity stands at the center of the room, surrounded by a circle of worn, black stones.

Player Configuration:
Recommended for 1-4 players, each with a level range of 4-5 (approximately 15 total levels).

Main Challenge:
As the party approaches the cyclops and giant snakes, you'll need to make a reaction check.

If the encounter does not result in combat, then the main challenge could be any of the following:

1. The cyclops' mate has gone missing, and it's convinced that one of the party members knows its whereabouts. The cyclops will ask probing questions, trying to get information out of them.
2. The cyclops is being threatened by the snakes and requests help from the party in defeating them.
3. An ancient prophecy speaks of strangers coming to the swamp, bringing either great danger or great reward. The cyclops is torn between believing this prophecy and taking action against the party, or waiting to see if it unfolds as predicted.

If the encounter escalates into combat, the party will face a formidable foe. The central challenge is defeating the cyclops and its entourage of giant snakes. The cyclops will use its club attack and hurl boulders at the party, while the snakes will constrict and bite.

NPC Characters:

- Cyclops:
  - Neutral good alignment
  - Rare humanoid with a single eye in the middle of its forehead
  - Large size, 18 armor class, and 52 hit points (13 Hit Dice)
  - Can attack with a club or hurl boulders up to 60 feet away for 4d10 damage

- Giant Snakes:
  - Neutral alignment
  - Huge size, 15 armor class, and 24 hit points (6 Hit Dice)
  - Can constrict and bite opponents

Tactics in Combat:
The cyclops will initially circle around the party, using its keen eye to spot weak points. It may attempt to hurl boulders at the party if it feels threatened or cornered. The giant snakes will slither into position, attacking anyone within their reach, including the cyclops.

Possible Player Actions:

- Attempt to reason with the cyclops
- Try to dodge or block the cyclops' club attacks
- Use ranged attacks to take down the cyclops from a distance
- Focus on taking down the snakes first to reduce the threat they pose
- Use terrain features to your advantage, such as using the statue or walls for cover

Potential Outcomes:

- Defeating the cyclops and snakes can grant 1d6 x10 gold pieces, 1d4 gems, and one potion per individual.
- Help the cyclops and be rewarded. I recommend a special quest item or magic item
- The lair of the cyclops may contain additional treasure, including 1d10×1,000 cp (5%), 1d12×1,000 sp (25%), 1d8×1,000 gp (25%), 1d12 gems (15%), 1d8 jewelry (10%), 3 magic items (25%), and 2d8 potions and one scroll (40%).

Further Ideas:

- The cyclops may have a hidden stash of treasure or valuable artifacts within the temple.
- The snakes could be connected to a larger threat, such as a giant serpent queen or a snake cult.
- The party may discover ancient texts or murals within the temple that hold secrets about the cyclops and its role in protecting the temple.