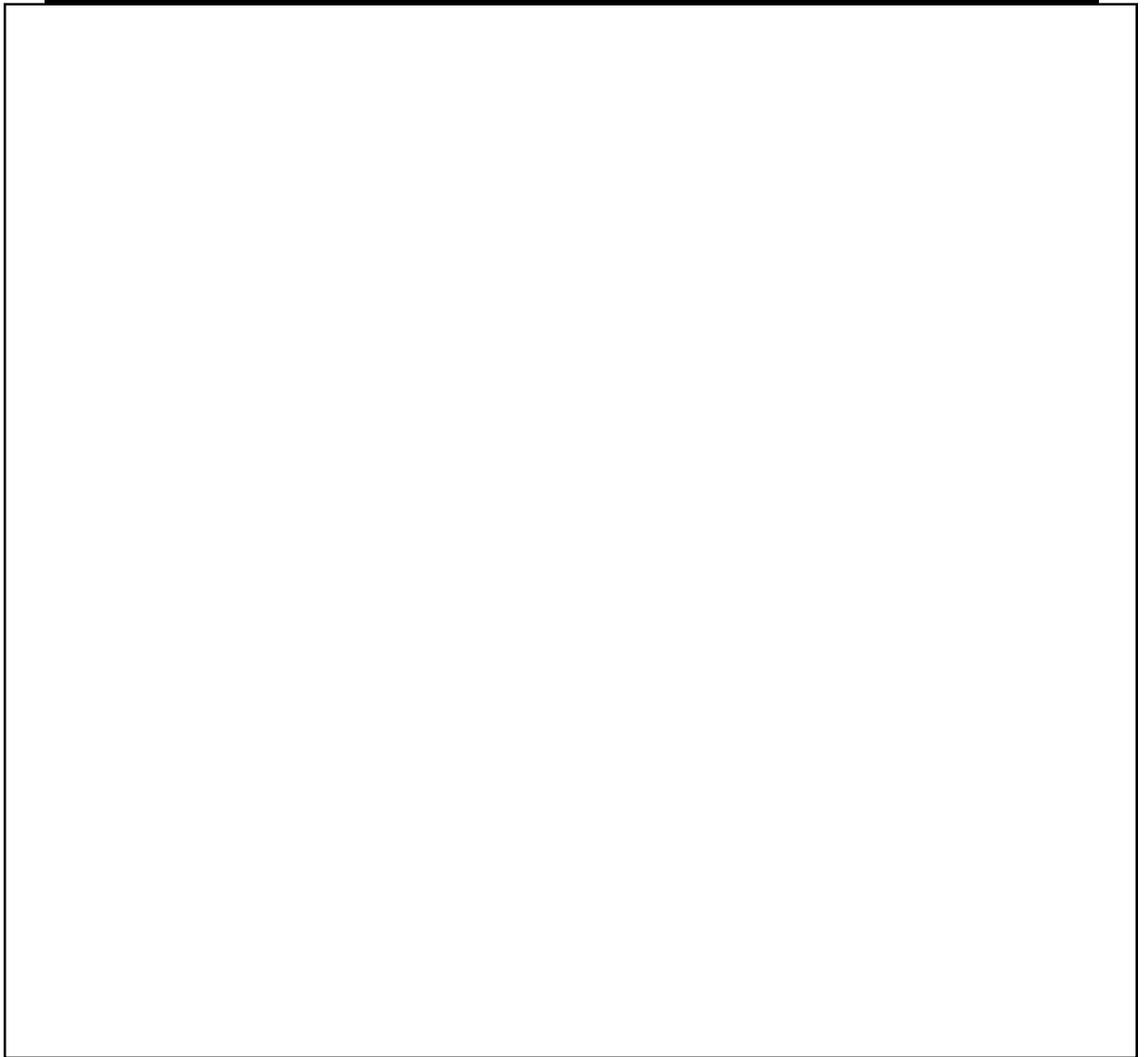
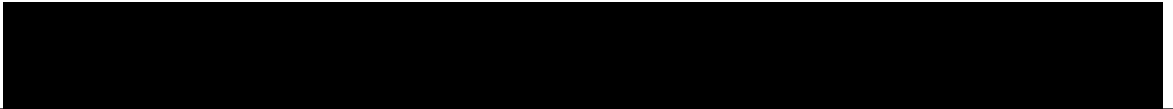
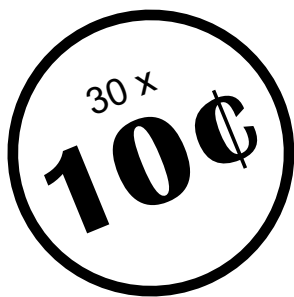


FANGS OF THE SCARLET SERPENT



STEVEN S. LONG

FANGS OF THE SCARLET SERPENT



A Hero Plus Adventure for

PULP HERO

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(try it! It's great!)

Everything Else: Stev... you get the picture

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Adventure Background	4
Adventure Summary	4
Part One: Singapore Sling	5
Part Two: The Serpent's Lair	7
Part Three: A Nest Of Vipers	8
Conclusion	8

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YOUR SECRET LEAGUE OF HEROES ENCODED MESSAGE!

Attention Secret League Of Heroes
members! Here's your secret message for
this Hero Plus Adventure. Use your secret
decoder ring to read it!

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8-15!

FANGS OF THE SCARLET SERPENT

HERO PLUS ADVENTURES

Fangs Of The Scarlet Serpent is one of Hero Games's *Hero Plus Adventures*, a series of short, no-frills, inexpensive adventures in PDF format. Hero Plus Adventures are designed to provide roughly one game session's worth of entertainment, though they include suggestions on how to lengthen or expand the scenario if you want to. They're written with simplicity and ease of use in mind so you can run them with a minimum of preparation.

PRINTING

The general statement on the credits page notwithstanding, DOJ, Inc. grants each purchaser of *Fangs Of The Scarlet Serpent* permission to make one (1) printed copy of this adventure.

When an ancient serpent-cult rears its scaly head on the streets of Singapore, a message for help from an old friend brings the heroes running to the British colony city. There they clash with the cult and track it to its local lair... just in time to find out about a deadly ritual they have to stop!

Fangs Of The Scarlet Serpent is a *Pulp Hero* adventure designed for characters built on a total of 150 Character Points or less. The optimal number of PCs is four to six, but you can scale it up or down based on the number of opponents you pit against the heroes in various encounters.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Cult of Orobouros Risen, better known in some circles as the Cult of the Scarlet Serpent from the red snake imagery it uses and the tattoos its members often bear (a winding, sinuous red serpent around a devotee's left arm), is an insidious religion devoted to crushing other faiths and, in time, taking over the world. Growing out of snake-worshipping cults so old their origins are lost to time, it venerates the Serpent as the embodiment of power (both mystic and mundane). (Contrary to what a few of the experts who have heard of it believe, it does not equate the Serpent with Satan, or otherwise follow Christian doctrine.)

Only a few occultists or scholars know of the Cult's existence — it's kept itself and its goals largely secret. It's most powerful in Asia, especially South Asia, where it's known as the *Sembahyang Agama Merah Menyala Ular Yg Meningkat* ("Cult of the Scarlet Serpent Rising") or *Agama Ular* ("Cult of the Serpent"), but has also been active in Russia, West Asia, China, and the Near East. The world's leading expert on the group is Doctor Rupert Wellingsley, an assistant curator at the Singapore Museum of History.

The Cult has traditionally been opposed in the South China Sea region by the Mongoose Society. The Society's members practice Bersilat and wear yellow headclothes and face-kerchiefs. Their symbol is a highly stylized Chinese ideogram for "mongoose."

Wellingsley has noted an upturn in what he believes to be Cult activities in the past year or two, and was convinced the group was up to something (which is it — the preparations for and casting of a great ritual to bring it power and weaken its enemies). He was readying a book about the Cult for publication when the Cult learned of this and kidnapped him. The Cult intends to torture him for information, then sacrifice him to Orobouros.

Shortly before being kidnapped, Dr. Wellingsley sent a message to one of the heroes — an adventurer (preferably an occult detective type) with whom he's fought the Cult before, indicating that the situation was worsening and he needed the hero's help.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

After arriving in Singapore the heroes are met by Harrison Marsh, Dr. Wellingsley's assistant... and secret member of the Cult! He leads them into an ambush in an alleyway. Things are looking grim for the heroes until the Mongoose Society shows up to even the odds.

After the fight, the Society members explain that they've just learned the Cult kidnapped Dr. Wellingsley. It no doubt intends to sacrifice him as the capstone of the major ritual it's been working on for the past two years! They must first find out where Wellingsley's being held, and second where the ritual's to be performed (Wellingsley may already know this).

After the heroes rescue Dr. Wellingsley from the clutches of the Cult, he tells them the ritual is to be held soon at a Cult temple just north of Kelantan... and the Cult has kidnapped his daughter for use as a sacrifice! The PCs have to get there before the ceremony begins, stop it, save the girl, and crush the Cult.

PART ONE: SINGAPORE SLING

The adventure begins in the PCs' hometown — New York City, Hudson City, San Francisco, London, wherever you like. One of the heroes receives a telegram from an old friend — Doctor Rupert Wellingsley, an assistant curator at the Singapore Museum of History. Ideally the recipient of the telegram should be a character who's an Occult Detective, a psychic, or someone else who has experience with things mystic and strange. If your group doesn't include such a character, a two-fisted hero or adventuring archaeologist will do. The telegram reads:

O.R. ACTIVE ONCE MORE STOP

YOUR HELP NEEDED IMMEDIATELY
STOP

MUST ASCERTAIN CURRENT PLANS
AND GOALS STOP

MEET ME SINGAPORE MUSEUM NATU-
RAL HISTORY SOONEST STOP

WELLINGSLEY

The "O.R." refers to the Cult of Orobouros Risen (which Wellingsley wisely doesn't want to name in a telegram). What hero could turn down a plot hook like that?

IN SINGAPORE

The heroes make it to Singapore as fast as they can. If they don't have a private plane, they can charter one or take a regularly-scheduled flight (though the latter choice takes at least a day or two longer, if not more). Unless they happen to be near Singapore already, the urgency of the message means sea travel will take too long.

However and wherever the heroes arrive, they're greeted at the docks by a man who identifies himself as Harrison Marsh, Dr. Wellingsley's assistant. Marsh has brought several rickshaws to take the PCs the Raffles Hotel, the best in Singapore, where Dr. Wellingsley has reserved rooms for them. After they've checked in and dropped off their bags, Marsh will take them to see Dr. Wellingsley at the Museum.

Two important points: first, Marsh *does not* mention that Dr. Wellingsley's been kidnapped. Second, if the heroes question how he knew where and when they were arriving (assuming they didn't cable Dr. Wellingsley with the information), he'll respond (truthfully) that he has lots of friends in Singapore and that word gets around about the imminent arrival of a special group of travelers. "If you know how to get things done in this city, it's easy, really."

When the rickshaws leave, they're lined up so Marsh rides in the one in front, the one in the very back carries the baggage, and the PCs ride in rickshaws in between. The runners take a circuitous route due to the traffic-clogged streets. If a hero succeeds with a CK: Singapore roll, he realizes that the route maybe isn't the *best* one possible, but it's not just

meaningless wandering around or an attempt to take the heroes somewhere else.

Suddenly the rickshaws turn into an alley... and stop! Marsh's rickshaw and the baggage rickshaw are turned so as to block either end of the alley. Scarlet Serpent cultists hidden among the trash and in rooms in the buildings on either side of the alley reveal themselves and attack, hoping to kill the PCs.

See the accompanying alley map for details on the ambush site. Be sure to draw in the rickshaws the heroes rode in; the only two already there are the ones blocking the entrances. The numbers on the buildings indicate the number of stories each building has.

The PCs are badly outnumbered — there should be at least two or three cultists per hero, if not more. (Use the *Cultist* character sheet on page 406 of *Pulp Hero*; the cultists carry an assortment of rifles, pistols, and knives.) The heroes can hold their own for a while — feel free to give them the chance to try some cinematic stunts in a valiant effort to win — but before long the situation should start to look grim and dreams of victory should fade.

But suddenly, a ray of hope — the Mongoose Society arrives! Armed with rifles and pistols, the Society members even the score and give the heroes a chance to win (and perhaps even capture a cultist or three). Don't let the Society do all the work (the heroes are the protagonists of your story, after all), just enough of it to make the battle a fair fight for the PCs. The leader of the Society forces is Yusoh Tunku, a forceful, handsome, intelligent Malay man about 30.

Breakout

In the event the heroes get lucky and break free from the alley, turn the fight into a running battle through the streets of Singapore. Eventually you can have the cultists corner the heroes in a blind alley, a courtyard with no good exits, or the like... and then the Mongoose Society can arrive to help.

AFTER THE FIGHT

After the heroes win the fight with the help of Yusoh and his men, he introduces himself, explains what the Mongoose Society is, and tells the heroes they (the Society members) have just learned the Cult kidnapped Dr. Wellingsley and his daughter Amanda. It no doubt intends to sacrifice him as the capstone of the major ritual it's been working on for the past two years!

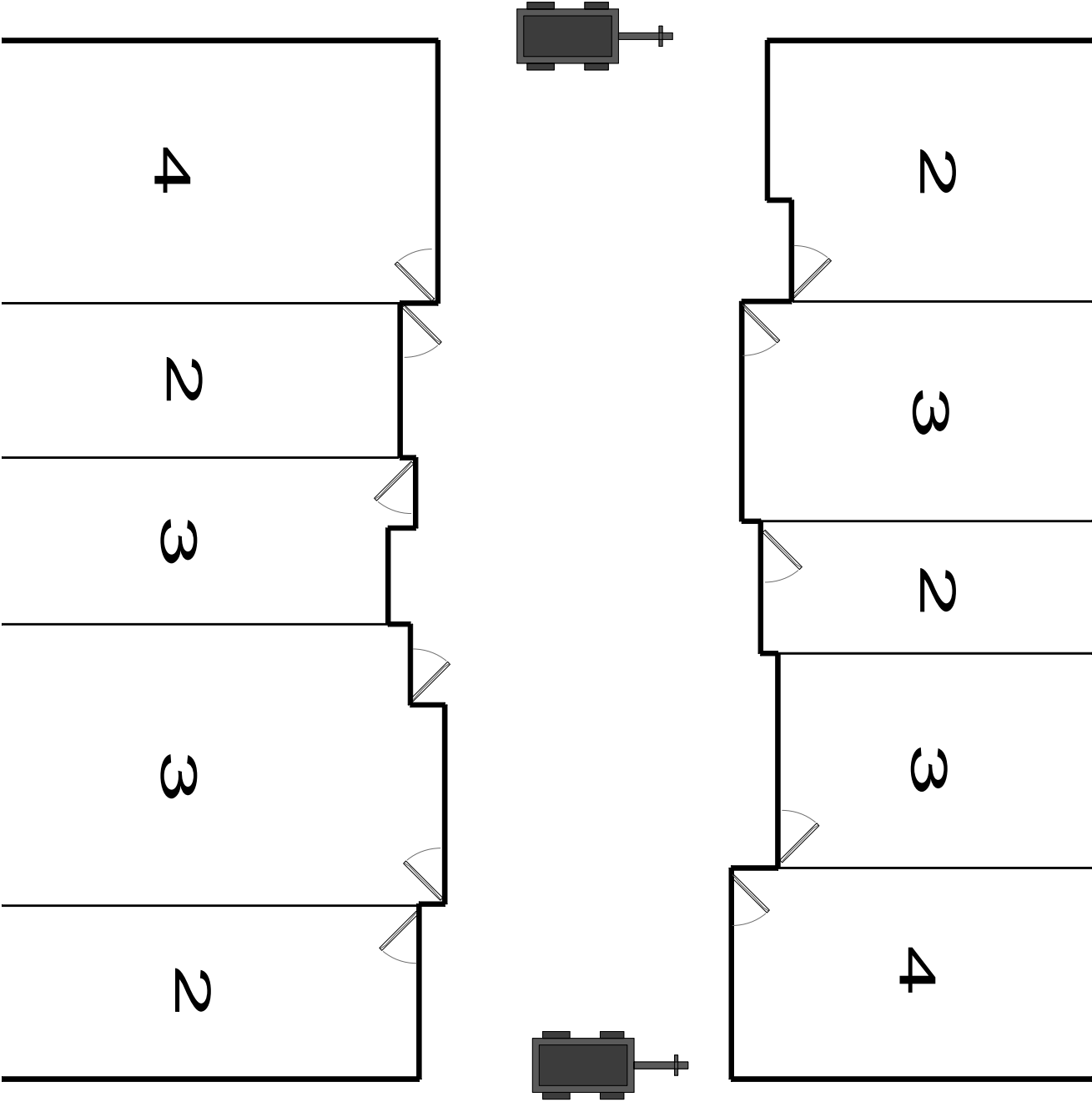
The heroes now have to find out two things; first, where Wellingsley's being held; second, where the Cult intends to perform this ritual. Wellingsley may already know about the ritual, so rescuing him could solve both problems.

Avenues Of Investigation

Some of the possible avenues of investigation the heroes can use include:

—Interrogating captured cultists: If the heroes took a few cultists alive, the heroes may be able to get them to talk. Unfortunately, the cultists are fanatics, so you should consider them to have Resistance (5 points).

—Use Streetwise: This is *highly* unlikely to work because the Cult keeps to itself; it doesn't mingle



with the underworld or reveal its plans. At a minimum, a character would have to succeed with a role at -6 to learn anything, and even then he's only likely to get a lead on the Jao Corporation warehouse (see below). If the character cannot speak both Malay and at least one form of Chinese, increase the penalty to -8; if he has CK: Singapore, he can use it as a Complementary Skill.

—Check out Wellingsley's home and office. His home reveals nothing; it hasn't even been disturbed. In his office, which the heroes may have trouble getting into due to officious museum personnel, the PCs discover a mess — signs of a struggle. This is where the Cult snatched him; it also stole all of his notes and working papers regarding its activities.

If the PCs succeed with a Concealment roll at -2, they discover an important clue among the papers strewn about on Wellingsley's desk top. Realizing the Cult was coming after him, he tore three pages out of his calendar — January, August, October — and stamped them with the “chop” (a small stone seal used to put one's official mark on documents) someone once gave him as a gift. They stand for JAO — he knows the Cult has a local headquarters in a warehouse maintained by the Jao Corporation on the docks of Pulau Blakang Mati (“the Island of Death from Behind,” known in the modern day as Sentosa). Ironically, the warehouse lies in the very shadow of Fort Siloso, one of the British gun emplacements protecting Singapore!

(For a fun prop, visit www.timeanddate.com, print out January, August, and October calendars for the year you run this adventure in, and draw some sort of Chinese-looking character on them in red for the chop.)

PART TWO: THE SERPENT'S LAIR

Now that the heroes have a lead, it's time for action! They proceed to the Jao Corporation warehouse; the Mongoose Society can send a guide, plus as many other members as the heroes need to fight the cult.

For the warehouse itself, use the warehouse map from *The HERO System Resource Kit* or any similar map; just eliminate modernisms like forklifts (which, though invented in 1917, aren't in use at this place) and computers. The Cult is holding Doctor Wellingsley in a small enclosed room, like a closet or office, and has a guard in there with him if you think it's appropriate. Two or three cultists stand guard outside the warehouse, trying (but generally failing) to look like nondescript loafers.

Let the heroes plan their attack in as much tactical detail as they wish, but remember — this is Pulp! If things start to bog down too much, do something to stir the pot (like have a cultist walk toward wherever they're hiding, or having the sound of Dr. Wellingsley screaming under torture waft out of the warehouse). Once the attack begins, if the cultists think there's a chance they'll lose the fight, they will make a desperate

play to (a) kill Dr. Wellingsley, or (b) use Wellingsley as a hostage, or (c) destroy Wellingsley's notes and working papers. (The latter point is especially important to them, since they can always try to kill Wellingsley later.)

NO REST FOR THE HEROIC

The warehouse has several sources of information about the Cult's planned ritual. Either Dr. Wellingsley (if he survives), or his notes (if they survive), or a crude map taken off the body of a deceased Cultist (possibly damaged by the fighting and requiring repair), or a successfully-interrogated surviving cultist reveal the location of the Cult's temple: just north of a largish lake in Kelantan (one of the Unfederated Malay States).

Doctor Wellingsley can also reveal that he overheard the Cultists saying they had an even better sacrifice than him ready — a “British woman,” they said. He's not yet aware that this woman is, in fact, his daughter Amanda (she was kidnapped separately). Word of this will cause him almost to faint from fear and anxiety.

The worst news of all is: the time of the ritual is almost here! To get there in time to stop it, their only option is to take a seaplane, land on the lake, and make a short hike through the jungle. If they leave now they might *barely* get there in time....

LET'S FLY AWAY

Depending on how the scenario is going and how much time you have, you may want to make the plane trip up to Kelantan more eventful than the trip to Singapore was. If the cultists in the north have gotten word about the heroes' involvement, the priests could invoke a storm to try to make the plane crash. Alternatively they might send cultists in canoe-like boats to ambush the heroes after they touch down.

PART THREE: A NEST OF VIPERS

The heroes land on the lake shortly after nightfall. It's pitch-black out here in the wilderness, but they think that, far off through the jungle, they can see a hint of firelight. Trekking that way through dense undergrowth, they slowly and uncomfortably, but surely, make their way toward the light.

At last the heroes come to the edge of a large clearing, and in the center of that clearing is a large, ancient, and mostly ruined temple. For this temple, use any map of the "temple" or "inner sanctum" area of Angkor Wat, but assume most of the walls and roofs have crumbled away leaving a mostly-open area with lots of columns. (Author's note: the one I used is a Campaign Cartographer 2 map from ProFantasy Software's *Temples, Tombs, And Catacombs* collection.) At the very center the Cult's leaders have set up an altar with a large fire... and tied to a nearby column is the helpless Amanda Wellingsley! Gathered all around the altar, eagerly watching the ceremony and chanting, are dozens (if not hundreds) of cultists. Standing nearest the altar and looking outward is an "honor guard" of a half-dozen or more particularly strong- and nasty-looking cultists holding spears.

If the PCs watch the ceremony for a little while, they'll see the head priest get more and more worked up as the ritual proceeds. Then have them make PER Rolls. The one who made it by the most suddenly sees something *moving* up among the remaining bits of roof and lintels near the altar. It's a gigantic red serpent! The sacrifice doesn't involve burning or cutting Amanda Wellingsley to death... she's going to be *eaten alive*! (Use the Giant Snake from pages 116-17 of *The HERO System Bestiary* for the red serpent.)

Time for the heroes to bring this show to a halt. The easiest way to do this is to somehow distract or frighten away most of the cultists so the odds against the PCs drop. Let the heroes plan whatever they want (within reason) — but if they take too long, spur them to action by revealing the giant snake or having a group of late-arriving cultists come walking through the jungle right where they're hiding.

RACE TO THE PLANE

It's possible, if not likely, that the heroes will somehow get close enough to rescue Amanda Wellingsley without having fully routed the cultists and/or slain their leader. In this case, a group of cultists, perhaps led by members of the "honor guard," may pursue the fleeing heroes in an attempt to (a) kill them, and (b) retrieve the sacrifice (in that order of priority). This could lead to a running battle in the jungle, an attempt by the heroes to lure the cultists into an ambush, or the cultists trying to shoot down the PCs' plane with rifle fire. Go with whatever seems most dramatic, and make it exciting and fun!

CONCLUSION

After returning safely to Singapore with the girl in tow and the Cult thoroughly defeated (if not destroyed), it's time to retire to the famous Long Bar in the Raffles Hotel for a well-deserved drink!