

# *Past the Soaring Serpent*

A One-Shot Adventure for 4–6 Level 3 Characters



## From the Creator

Pathalis is a long-running creative world-building and tabletop role-playing project developed for personal and private play. This site exists as a living archive—setting material, lore, tools, and systems connected to a world that has been shaped at the table, not built in isolation.

My name is Ben. I've been playing and running tabletop role-playing games for over thirty years, starting with AD&D 2nd Edition. Pathalis is the result of decades of homebrewing—mechanics, cultures, places, and stories—refined through continuous play. For the past ten years, it has been developed collaboratively with my gaming group. Many of the ideas you'll encounter here emerged directly from active campaigns, shaped by player decisions, long-term consequences, and moments that surprised all of us.

Pathalis is not a commercial product. It exists to support storytelling, curiosity, and shared creativity at the table. It continues to change as stories are told.

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## A Note to the Players

If you're reading this, you're stepping into a world that rewards attention and courage.

Pathalis works best when you treat it as a place, not a puzzle. The obvious solution is not always the best one. Sometimes the right move is risky. Sometimes it's quiet. Sometimes it's the idea that doesn't quite fit on the character sheet.

Pay attention to what's happening around you. Talk to each other. Use the environment. Ask questions. If you see a path forward that feels uncertain but interesting, take it.

You don't need to play perfectly here. You don't need to win every moment. What matters is engagement—being present, making choices, and trusting that the world will respond honestly to what you do.

This adventure isn't about proving how strong you are. It's about seeing what happens when you try.

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## A Note to the Dungeon Master

Pathalis behaves like a living place.

The rules and structures you'll find here describe how the world has tended to function so far. They are patterns observed over time, not guarantees. Things hold—until they don't. When they break, the world adjusts and keeps moving.

**As a DM, your role isn't to protect the setting or enforce its edges. It's to pay attention. Let choices land. Let consequences follow naturally. Give the world enough space to respond, even when that response is unexpected.**

**If something shifts at your table, that isn't a failure of the material. It's the material doing what it was meant to do. Pathalis has always grown through play, through tables finding their own rhythms, priorities, and truths.**

**Run it with care. Run it with curiosity. Let it become yours.**

**You can find more of the world and its life by visting [www.Pathalis.com](http://www.Pathalis.com)**

**Or you can email me at [dmben@pathalis.com](mailto:dmben@pathalis.com).**

**Enjoy Yourselves and please let me know what you think, Thank you**

**Ben.**

## **Pregenerated Characters & Ship Reference (Preferred)**

The following pregenerated characters are the **preferred characters** for running *Past the Soaring Serpent*.

The adventure is written assuming this specific crew, ship, and set of professional roles. While groups may substitute their own characters, doing so may soften the intended Pathalis tone and alter how certain scenes land.

These pregens are not generic examples—they are the crew the job was written for.

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### **The Luminhound (Crew Ship)**

A small independent skyship used for short-haul transport, light cargo, and specialist contracts.

- Crew: 4–6 (ideal)
- Passengers: 6 comfortably (up to ~10 short-term)
- Cargo: Light to moderate

The Luminhound is licensed, tolerated, useful—and replaceable. This is exactly the kind of ship that takes dangerous jobs because it must.

The ship's layout reinforces teamwork: no single role can solve every problem alone.

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### **Pregenerated Crew**

#### **Captain / Helmsperson**

#### **Human Paladin (Oath of the Sky) — Level 3**

Role: Command, piloting, morale, final decisions under pressure.

A disciplined leader sworn not to a god, but to crew, ship, and sky. Calm saves lives. Panic kills.

Key Features: • Heavy armor, shield, frontline control

- Lay on Hands as practical triage
- Channel Divinity reframed as discipline and authority

Teaches: leadership without destiny; responsibility without divine backing.

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### **Enforcer / Ship's Muscle**

#### **Warforged Barbarian (Totem Warrior — Bear) — Level 3**

Role: Damage sponge, boarding defense, line holder.

A former service asset who chose not to return. Rage is not anger—it is an escalation protocol.

Key Features: • Extreme durability while raging

- Resistance to nearly all damage
- Holds chokepoints during chaos

Teaches: endurance, restraint, and choosing when to engage.

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### **Lookout / Face**

#### **Tabaxi Ranger (Fey Wanderer) — Level 3**

Role: Early warning, first contact, movement control.

Reads the sky and people with equal precision. Danger announces itself if you know how to listen.

Key Features: • Exceptional Perception and mobility

- Social credibility without bravado
- Ranged pressure and battlefield control

Teaches: awareness, positioning, and when silence matters.

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### **Machinic / Aether Engineer**

#### **Rock Gnome Wizard (School of Transmutation) — Level 3**

Role: Ship systems, emergency repairs, magical load management.

Magic is not mystery—it is stress, tolerance, and failure points.

Key Features: • Transmutation for jury-rigging and reinforcement

- Utility-focused spell list
- Diagnoses what breaks next

Teaches: preparation, triage, and informed sacrifice.

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### **Doctor / Ship's Medic**

#### **Lightfoot Halfling Bard (College of Medicine) — Level 3**

Role: Triage, stabilization, morale under fire.

A trained professional healer—no gods, no miracles, just fast decisions.

Key Features: • Bardic Inspiration as field triage

- Spare the Dying as trained response
- Keeps the crew functional, not heroic

Teaches: prioritization, restraint, and the cost of mistakes.

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### **Quartermaster / Fixer**

#### **Goblin Rogue (Mastermind) — Level 3**

Role: Negotiation, logistics, tactical coordination.

Keeps the ship supplied, the books balanced, and problems from escalating.

Key Features: • Bonus-action Help for team tactics

- Expertise in reading people and deals
- Guild-connected without explanations

Teaches: leverage, coordination, and quiet influence.

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### **Using the Pregens**

These characters are intentionally complementary. Each one shines in different phases of the adventure:

- Exploration and travel reward the Lookout and Captain
- The nest rewards restraint and judgment
- The airship attack demands coordination across all roles
- The aftermath highlights consequences and professionalism

Together, they model how Pathalis works.

Character Write ups and stats can be downloaded on the website [www.pathalis.com/one](http://www.pathalis.com/one)

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## Introduction: Welcome to Pathalis

### Read-Aloud (Player-Facing)

**Hello, mate.**

**I can tell by the way you're looking around that this is your first time out past wherever you grew up.**

**Don't worry. Most of us started the same way. Small place. Familiar roads. Trouble you could usually see coming.**

**That changes out here.**

**In Pathalis, everything moves. People, goods, news, problems—nothing stays put for long. Airships cross distances that used to take seasons to walk, and portals can carry you halfway across the world in the time it takes to finish a drink, if you've got the coin for it. The world feels closer than it used to. That makes life easier in some ways.**

**It also means mistakes catch up to you fast.**

**Out here, you're responsible for your own choices long before anyone in authority even hears your name.**

**You'll hear that the Council of Nine is in charge. Most days, you won't feel them at all. Some days, you might run into their warforged peacekeepers.**

**Keep your head down. Keep moving. If you're not causing trouble, they won't take much notice of you.**

**They notice the loud ones.**

**As for travel—portals are the easy way. Clean, orderly, predictable. You pay your silver, step through, and arrive where you meant to be. Most folk use them when they can and don't think twice about it. They work. That's all most people care about.**

**Airships are different.**

**The sky isn't empty, no matter how it looks from the ground. It has its own ways—currents, layers, paths that hold if you treat them right and turn on you if you don't. Things live up there. Not monsters. Not villains. Just creatures that learned how to survive where the rest of us barely manage.**

**You learn to respect the sky, or you don't last long in it.**

**That means watching above as much as below. Leaving yourself room to turn back. Paying attention when something feels wrong and not pushing your luck just because you're in a hurry. The sky doesn't hold grudges, but it doesn't forgive carelessness either.**

**One more thing, before you get any ideas.**

**Don't expect help from the gods. They went the same way as the elves and dwarves, far as anyone can tell. Some folks say they're still out there somewhere. Maybe they are. Nobody I know has ever seen one.**

**If you get through a hard moment in Pathalis, it's because you were prepared—or because someone beside you knew when to pull away.**

**That's how people survive here.**

**We take work we think we can live through. We pay attention. We respect the ground beneath us and the sky above us. We know when to press forward, and when getting past something is better than trying to conquer it.**

**Do with that what you will.**

**Just remember—this world keeps moving, whether you're ready for it or not.**

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## What Your Character Already Knows

- **Player-Facing Guidance**
- Your character is not new to the world, even if you are.

- Long-distance travel is common via airship or portal. People, news, and trouble move faster than they used to.
- The Council of Nine exists and sets laws and tolls, but most people experience that authority only indirectly.
- Portals work. If you can afford one, you can use it. If not, you find another way. • The sky is not empty. Flying is routine, but never casual.
- Elves and dwarves are gone. Stories disagree on why.
- The gods do not intervene openly. Faith exists, but miracles are not expected.
- **Most importantly:** Survival in Pathalis comes from preparation, awareness, and the people beside you—not destiny or divine favor.



## Opening Location: The Soaring Gryphon

### Arrival

#### Read-Aloud

As you step into the Soaring Gryphon, you recall all the things you've heard about it—the largest and most well-regarded sky tavern in Pathalis. From the outside it looks like a city block lifted into the air. Inside, it feels much the same. Warm light spills from tiered balconies and crowded dining halls. Music from a dozen cultures blends together over the low rumble of engines and the constant murmur of conversation.

This is where crews gather. Where work is found. Where jobs—legal or otherwise—change hands over food and drink.

What stands out most is how full it is.

After a moment, you spot an empty table and claim it.

### Grolga “The Hammer”

#### Read-Aloud + Dialogue

Before you've had much time to settle in, the owner approaches your table herself. Grolga “The Hammer” is a massive half-orc woman with a booming laugh and the kind of presence that quiets a room without trying. She sets a tray of drinks down one-handed, like the weight doesn't even register.

“I can tell by the look on your faces,” she says easily, “this is your first time in my fine establishment.” She grins. “Every first-timer gets a free round. Call it a welcome. Call it an investment.”

As she turns away, she adds over her shoulder, “If you're looking for work, let me know. I usually know someone who needs a crew.”

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### Job Briefing

#### DM-Only (Do Not Read Aloud)

If approached about work, Grolga leads the party to a small private office behind the bar.

### Read-Aloud (Once Inside)

The office is small, solid, and quiet compared to the main hall. The door closes behind you, dulling the tavern to a low murmur. Grolga doesn't waste time.

"A wizard came through not long ago," she says. "He's looking for sky-serpent scales. Five of them. He wants to brew potions of flight. He's offering a hundred gold per scale. Clean payment."

She folds her arms. "I know of a nest about a day's travel from here. Should be quick in-and-out work, if you don't make a mess of it."

"That's all the information I have. Nothing hidden."

**DM Clarification:** Grolga is not lying or misleading. This is the best information she has.

### If Asked: What Are Sky Serpents?

#### Read-Aloud

"Most folks expect wings," Grolga says. "They don't have them. They're long. Serpentine. Built more like they belong in water than air."

"They swim through the sky. Their scales catch the light—blue, silver, sometimes green. You usually notice movement first. Clouds bending where they shouldn't."

"If you're lucky," she adds, "you see one once and it lets you leave."

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## Travel to the Nest

#### Read-Aloud

The Soaring Gryphon falls away behind you as your ship settles into open sky. Broad, invisible currents carry you forward without effort. Below, land drifts past in slow, distant shapes. Above, the sky stretches wide and uninterrupted.

Midway through the journey, pale shapes rise and fall alongside the ship. A pod of sky-dolphins glides through the air as if cresting an invisible sea, pacing you for several quiet minutes before peeling away and vanishing into the open sky.

As you draw closer to your destination, the air begins to change—not stormy, not dark, but tighter. As though the sky itself is narrowing.

## Optional Perception (20 Minutes Out)

### DM-Only

Any character watching the skies may make a Wisdom (Perception) check (dc 20).

• **Success:** A faint bluish glint flashes along the edge of a distant cloud bank. • **Failure:** Nothing unusual is noticed.

Do not explain the glint yet.

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## The Sky-Cave Entrance

### Read-Aloud

The sky ahead thickens into a dense wall of cloud, its edges curling inward instead of breaking apart. A darker hollow forms within it—a cavern mouth carved from compressed vapor and aether. The clouds drift and reform, but the hollow remains, stable and unnaturally quiet.

**DM Instruction:** Airships cannot safely enter. Pilots refuse to proceed. The ship must hold position outside while the party disembarks.

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## Area 3: Outer Cave Chamber

### Encounter Type

Combat (Contained) + Environmental Storytelling

### DM Overview (Not Read Aloud)

This chamber is a scavenging ground for lesser creatures. Killing them has no long-term consequences.

### Read-Aloud

The tunnel opens into a wide, uneven chamber where the cloud walls thicken into something almost solid. The air hangs heavy and still, muffling sound. Dark shapes litter the chamber floor. At first they look like debris—until the smell reaches you: rot, old blood, and something metallic beneath it.

## Creatures

- 1 Carrion Crawler • 2 Darkmantles

## Environmental Features

- Visibility limited to ~30 ft. • Slick, uneven ground (difficult terrain in patches) • Sound echoes strangely deeper into the cave

## Loot

Minor, incidental gear only. No significant coin.

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## Area 1: Nest Chamber — Young Sky Serpents

### Encounter Type

Stealth / Subdual / Optional Combat with Consequences

### DM Overview (Not Read Aloud)

Two very young sky serpents occupy this chamber. Violence is possible but unnecessary.

### Read-Aloud

The tunnel widens into a high, rounded chamber. The air here feels warmer and charged. Pale, iridescent fragments—shed scales—are scattered across layered hollows in the cloud. Movement ripples above. Two long, serpentine shapes drift into view, smaller and more awkward than you expected.

They haven't noticed you yet.

### Player Options

- Sneak past • Create space • Subdue • Kill (meaningful consequence)

### Nest State (DM Tracking)

- **Undisturbed:** Young unharmed • **Disturbed:** Young driven off or subdued • **Violated:** One or more young killed

This state affects the final encounter.

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## Final Encounter: Adult Sky Serpent (Airship Set-Piece)

### Encounter Type

Survival / Drive-Off (Not a kill-fight)

### DM-Only Mechanics

The serpent disengages based on damage thresholds tied to Nest State.

## **Adult Sky Serpent — Airship Encounter (DM-Only)**

*This encounter represents a territorial response, not a hunt. The adult sky serpent disengages once its conditions are met.*

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### **Adult Sky Serpent — Encounter Statistics**

*Huge Dragon, Unaligned*

**Armor Class** 16

**Total Hit Points** 180 (threshold-based)

**Speed** fly 80 ft. (hover)

STR 21 (+5) | DEX 14 (+2) | CON 20 (+5) | INT 6 (-2) | WIS 15 (+2) | CHA 12 (+1)

**Condition Immunities** grappled, prone (while airborne)

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** —

*The adult sky serpent does not fight to the death. It disengages based on damage thresholds rather than reaching 0 hit points.*

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### **Nest State Disengage Conditions (DM Tracking)**

- **Undisturbed:** Disengages at **45 HP lost (25%)** or after **5 rounds**
  - **Disturbed:** Disengages at **90 HP lost (50%)** or after **10 rounds**
  - **Violated:** Disengages at **135 HP lost (75%)** or after **15 rounds**
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### **The Luminhound — Ship Statistics**

**Hull:** 70 HP

**Rigging:** 35 HP

**Control Surface:** 30 HP

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### **Serpent Action Cycle**

*The serpent acts **once per round**. It does not repeat actions unless the nest was **Violated**.*

### **Pressure Pass**

- DC 14 Dexterity save or prone
- Ship takes **1d12 + 2 hull damage**

### **Aether Wake**

- DC 15 Vehicle check or ship speed halved
- Rigging takes **3d6 damage**

### **Raking Coil**

- One ship section takes **3d8 damage**
- DC 14 Strength save or pushed 15 ft.

### **Focused Disruption (Violated Only)**

- Targets rigging or control surface
  - **4d8 damage**
- 

### **Head-On Contact (Every 3 Rounds)**

- Serpent lands on deck for **1 round**
- Ship speed becomes **0**
- Serpent can be attacked normally

**Bite:** +8 to hit; **2d10 + 5 damage**

**Body Slam (Recharge 5–6):** DC 15 Strength save or prone in 10 ft.

End Condition

When disengage conditions are met, the serpent withdraws into higher currents.

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## **Resolution & Reward**

### **Resolution & Payout Scene**

#### **Grolga Sees Them Return**

Grolga notices the crew before they reach the bar.

She always does.

How she greets them depends on what she sees when the **Luminhound** docks.

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### **If the Ship Is Mostly Intact and No One Died**

#### **Read-Aloud**

Grolga's expression softens into something close to a smile as she waves you over and sets drinks on the bar without being asked.

"Well now. Look at you — all in one piece."

"Drinks are on me. First round, anyway."

"So. Tell me. How did it go?"

She listens without interrupting, nodding slowly as the story comes out. When the scales are produced, she gives a single approving nod.

"That'll do."

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### **If the Ship Is Heavily Damaged but Everyone Is Alive**

#### **Read-Aloud**

Grolga's eyes track the damage before she looks back to you. She pours the drinks herself and pushes them across the bar.

"You came back flying crooked."

"Still — you came back."

"Drink first. Then tell me your story."

Her tone is neutral. Damage is expected. Survival is what matters.

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## If One or More Party Members Died

### Read-Aloud

Grolga goes quiet when she sees you. She sets out drinks anyway.

“Ah.”

“Friends... but not all of you.”

“Please. Drink.”

“Then tell me what happened.”

She does not press. She does not judge. She listens.

### Payment for the Scales

#### DM-Only

If the party returns with five sky-serpent scales, Grolga handles payment personally.

- **100 gp per intact scale**
- Payment is immediate
- No haggling by default

“That was the agreement. Fair work, fair pay.”

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### Extra Scales (Optional)

#### DM-Only

There were **ten usable scales** in the nest.

If the party brings more than five, they may attempt to negotiate.

- **Persuasion check DC 13**

On a success: • Grolga pays **100 gp per additional scale**

On a failure: • She purchases only the original five

“I can move them.”

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### For the DM: Behind the Curtain (DM-Only)

Pathalis is a functional world. It continues whether the characters succeed or fail.

The sky is an ecosystem, not a dungeon. The serpent is a boundary, not a villain.

Retreat is not failure. Survival is success.

If players ask: • *Why doesn't someone help us?* Help is never guaranteed. • *Can we win?* Maybe—but that's not always the point. • *What happens if we leave?* The world continues.

That is Pathalis.

## Creatures

- 1 Carrion Crawler • 2 Darkmantles

### Monster Stat Blocks

#### Carrion Crawler

Large Monstrosity, Unaligned

**Armor Class** 13 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 51 (6d10 + 18)

**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR 14 (+2) | DEX 13 (+1) | CON 16 (+3) | INT 1 (-5) | WIS 12 (+1) | CHA 5 (-3)

**Skills** Perception +3

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Keen Smell.** The carrion crawler has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

#### Actions

**Tentacles.** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) poison damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the save at the end of each of its turns.

**Bite.** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage.

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#### Darkmantle (2)

Small Monstrosity, Unaligned

**Armor Class** 11

**Hit Points** 22 (5d6 + 5)

**Speed** 10 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR 14 (+2) | DEX 12 (+1) | CON 13 (+1) | INT 2 (-4) | WIS 10 (+0) | CHA 5 (-3)

**Skills** Stealth +3

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**False Appearance.** While motionless, the darkmantle is indistinguishable from a cloud formation or hanging vapor mass.

### **Actions**

**Crush.** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

**Darkness Aura (Recharge 6).** Magical darkness spreads in a 10-foot radius around the darkmantle for 1 minute. Nonmagical light cannot illuminate it.

### **Environmental Features**

• Visibility limited to ~30 ft. • Slick, uneven ground (difficult terrain in patches) • Sound echoes strangely deeper into the cave

### **Loot**

Minor, incidental gear only. No significant coin.

## **Creature Stat Block — Very Young Sky Serpent**

Medium Dragon, Unaligned

**Armor Class** 13

**Hit Points** 22 (5d8)

**Speed** fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR 14 (+2) | DEX 14 (+2) | CON 11 (+0) | INT 3 (-4) | WIS 12 (+1) | CHA 8 (-1)

**Saving Throws** Dex +4

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

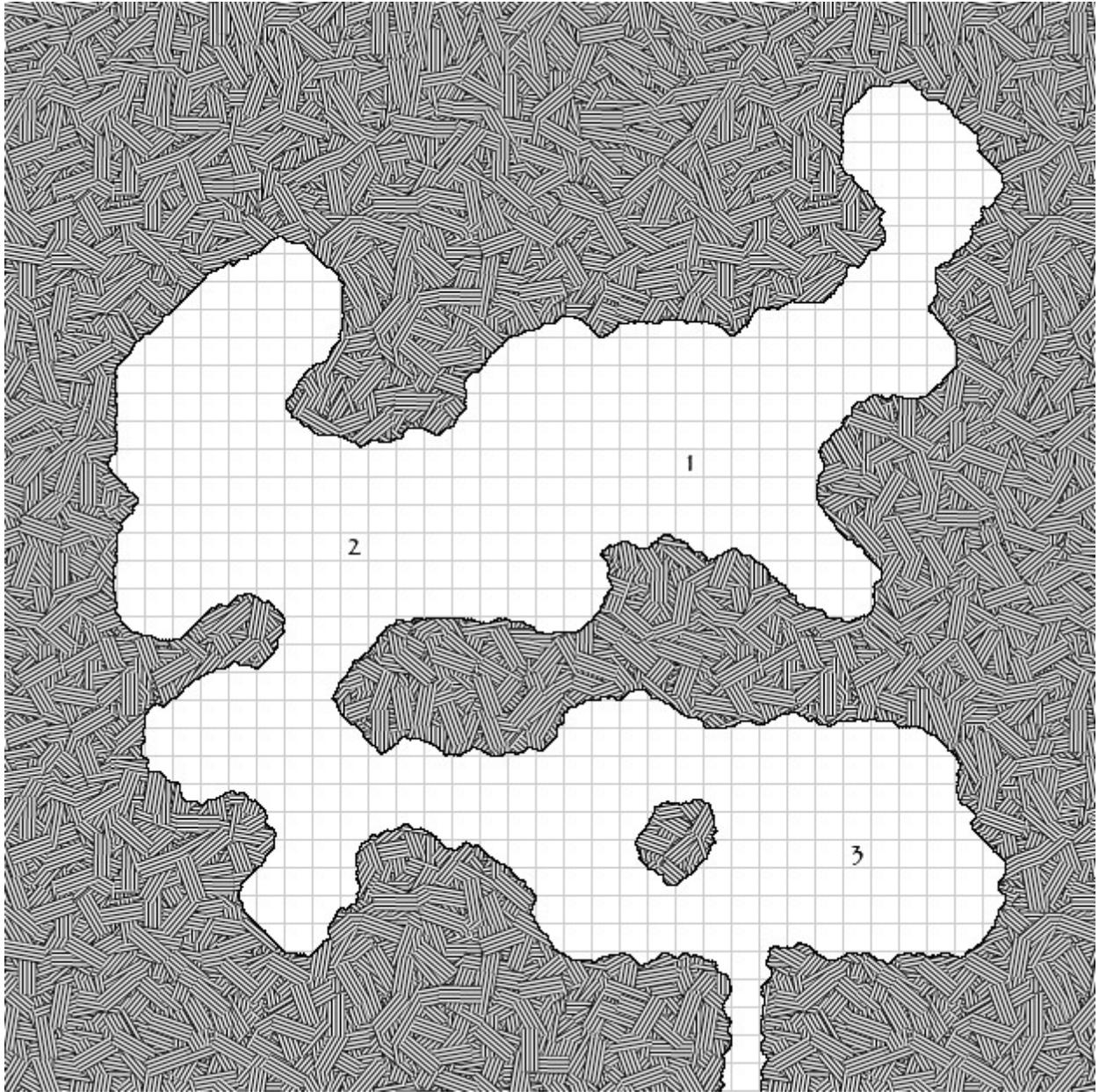
**Aerial Agility.** Opportunity attacks against the serpent are made with disadvantage.

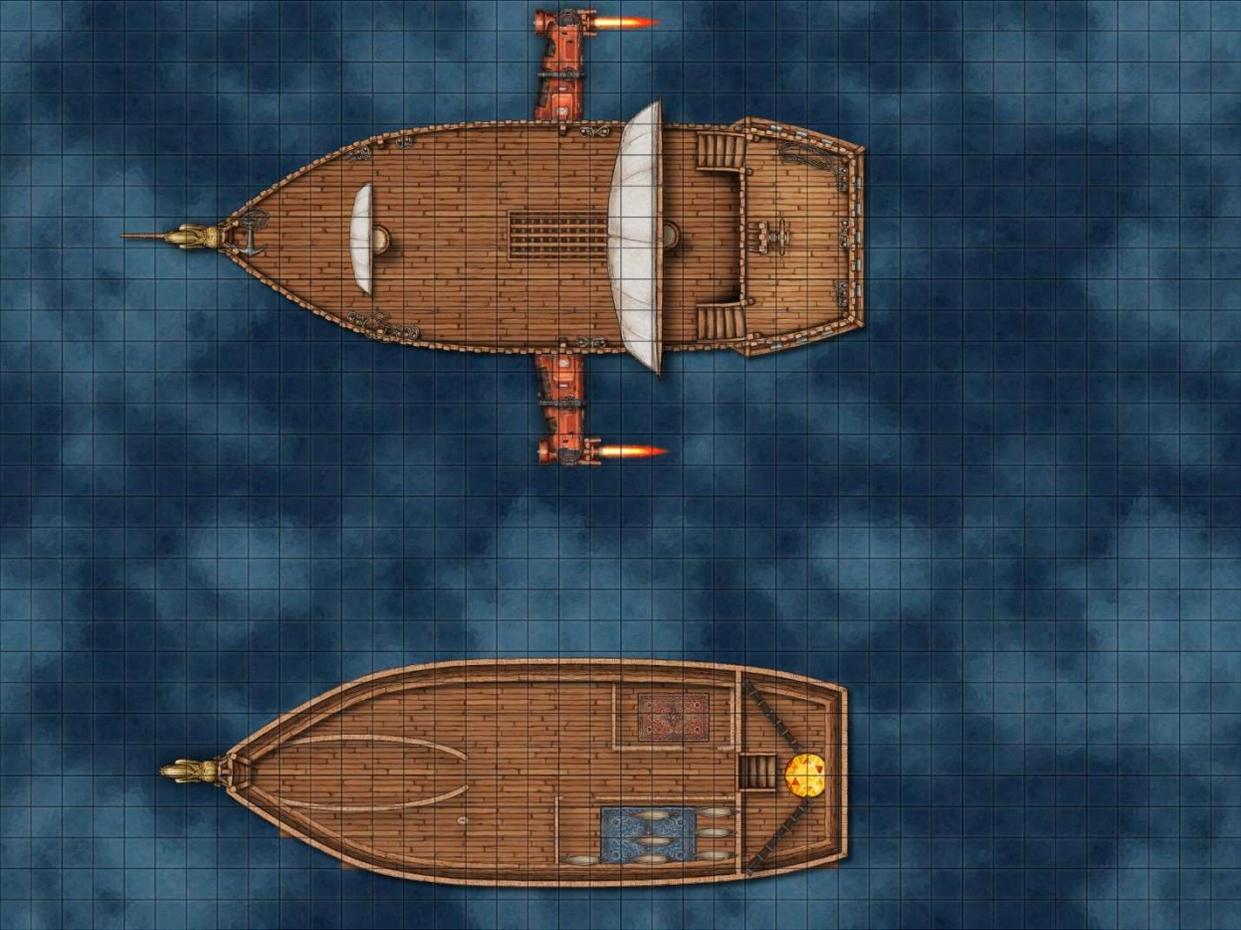
**Inexperienced.** The serpent has disadvantage on its first attack each combat.

**Actions**

**Bite.** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

**Buffeting Glide (Recharge 5–6).** Each creature within 5 ft. must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or be pushed 10 ft.





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