

Focus on Freeport #7: The Jade Serpent of Yig

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Welcome to another exciting **Focus on Freeport**. This month's installment explores the history and powers of the Jade Serpent of Yig, a powerful artifact introduced in *Madness in Freeport* that many believed was lost forever with the collapse of the Valossan civilization. Lost, until a brave band of heroes emerged from a forgotten temple, and armed with the serpent, saved all of Freeport from the insanity of the Unspeakable One. Read on to learn more about this ancient symbol of Yig's power.

The Legend of Niaggo

Within the halls of the great temple of Yig, N'Gar gathered the young hatchlings and led them into the chamber of the great serpent. It was his duty to educate and nurture the young ones and make certain that they followed the path of Yig. In truth, N'Gar had never really thought of it as a duty. For him it was a joy, and the reason for his existence.

"Settle down hatchlings!" he began. "Rest on your cushions now and be still, for I am about to tell you of the great hero Niaggo and his quest that saved our people and brought us the Jade Serpent." The young serpent people hushed for the priest. They were ready for a story about a hero.

"Hundreds of years ago," N'Gar began, "before the birth of your fathers' fathers, our people were faced with near extinction! A terrible famine gripped the land and the dead and dying choked the streets. Many believed that Yig, our protector, had abandoned us. Not even the wisest of priests could advise our blessed Emperor on how to end the suffering of his people.

"Niaggo, our hero, was a young serpentman at the time. The smallest of his brood, he had always been picked on by his brothers and sisters and teased by the other hatchlings at school. He had the courage to fight his tormentors, but still he returned to his parent's den bruised and bloodied more often than not. Niaggo cursed his weakness and the shame he brought his family.

"As Niaggo was preparing for the coming of age ritual, when he would shed his skin for the final time, he prayed in the temple. He was unsure of his future. Still smaller than the other young warriors, he lacked confidence in himself. The famine was at its height and many of his schoolmates had already set out in search of food. Niaggo made a decision that night to entrust his life to Yig. As he knelt before the image of our god, he offered his soul to Yig.

"The next day during the ritual Niaggo was struck senseless as Yig sent him an incredible vision. He saw before him a serpent idol carved entirely out of jade that pulsed with a dark green light. As he watched, the light spread from the heart of the idol and washed over the land, returning life to all that it touched. Suddenly, a gigantic, ebon snake appeared from nowhere and

swallowed the idol whole. The green light quickly faded and only darkness and death remained. In that instant, Niaggo knew that he must find this ebon snake and retrieve the idol at all costs to save the Valossan people.

"When he told the priests about the vision they mocked him. No one could believe that Niaggo had been chosen to end the famine. It was silly they all said. Niaggo was simply trying to get attention. Even his own parents thought he had made up the story. But, the hatchling that had once doubted himself was now filled with confidence and strength. Niaggo left Valossa, in search of the Jade Serpent, on his own, as an outcast.

"Niaggo traveled the land seeking the ebon snake he had seen in his vision. Everywhere he went he saw death and more death. He passed through countless villages filled with the emaciated bodies of his starved brethren, and was forced to fight off hunger-crazed cannibals after his flesh. His spirit began to waver and doubt slowly crept into his mind.

"At long last he came to a huge mountain shrouded in a cloud of black vapor. He knew that this must be the lair of the ebon snake. Without hesitation, he entered through a large cave. Inside he found a winding path leading deep into the earth and he followed it for what seemed like days. When he reached the bottom he found himself in a huge cavern. A gaping chasm pierced the floor of the chamber from end to end.

"A loud rumbling noise erupted from the depths of the chasm as he approached. The noise reverberated throughout the cavern as a huge, ebon, snake reared up right before him. Niaggo took a step back and then held firm.

"The snake had a single green eye in the center of its head. It gazed menacingly down at Niaggo and spoke to him, 'Why do you come here, son of Yig? Your people have abandoned their god and now pay the price for it. Everyday, more of your brethren die from starvation. What have you come here for? Can you help?'

"Niaggo said boldly, 'I am here to take back the Jade Serpent as Yig has chosen me to do so. With it my people will be saved from the famine and life will return to Valossa. Give me the serpent now!!!'

"The snake rose as if to strike, baring its fangs. 'Hssss! SSSo bold you are little one! I could kill you easily, swallow you whole if I wanted to. But if you are the chosen of Yig you should know that I do not need to give you the serpent. The power of the serpent lies within all of the children of Yig. You only need to have faith and his power will wash over you and protect you.'

"Do you have faith little one?"

"Yes!" responded Niaggo loudly. 'Yig is my protector and I do his bidding always.'

“We shall see, little one. We shall see”, responded the ebon snake.

Then, with alarming speed, the snake lunged forward, and opening his jaws, swallowed Niaggo whole! Niaggo despaired at first, thinking that he was dead. Then something stirred within him. He remembered the words of the ebon snake, ‘...have faith...have faith...have faith...’ As he felt himself slipping into the darkness of death he placed his soul completely in Yig’s hands.

“When he awoke, Niaggo was lying on the floor of the chamber alongside the brink of the great chasm. The ebon snake was nowhere to be seen. As his head cleared, he could not believe that he had survived the bite of that horrible snake. Then he saw it. On the ground, not far away, was a large piece of jade that must have been the eye of the ebon snake. It was the only proof that the snake had existed at all.

“As Niaggo stared at the formless piece of precious rock before him, he knew what he had to do. With his own hands, he would shape the jade into a likeness of his beloved god. Imbued with the power of his own faith, the Jade Serpent would be used to save the Valossan people.

“When Niaggo returned to his home, he bore with him the Jade Serpent of Yig. All those who had doubted him before now understood their folly. The famine was lifted and the people began to prosper. Niaggo became emperor and had many adventures, but none as incredible as his battle with the ebon serpent.

“What does this teach us hatchlings? Can anyone tell me?” After a few moments, one of the young ones stood up.

“Yes, Sseth”, said N’gar.

With his tail twitching behind him, Sseth stood up to speak, ‘Well sir, I think that I have learned that we must all remember to have faith. Even when times are tough, we need to trust in Yig and have faith that he will protect us.’”

“Very good, Sseth. Faith is our strongest weapon against our enemies.”

“Now you also know why so many of us have names that start with N’. We are named with an ‘N’ to honor the memory of Niaggo, who saved Valossa from extinction. Now, come with me and I will show you the Jade Serpent.”

The Serpent in Ancient Valossa

When Niaggo returned to Valossa with the Jade Serpent, it did more than just lift the famine. The Serpent came to represent not only the earthly manifestation of Yig but also a tangible symbol of the power and glory of the Valossan people. The Serpent became a reminder to all Yig’s children of their link to the divine and the necessity to have faith in Him.

Over the years, the symbol of the Jade Serpent was adopted by almost all the institutions of Valossan government. The military carried the Serpent before it to ensure victory in important battles. Priests of Yig had to prove they could control the power of the Serpent to become the high priest of the temple. The emperor sat on the Jade Throne and his standard bore the image of the Serpent carved by Niaggo. Almost every home proudly

displayed a replica of the Serpent to bring blessings to those who lived there and to ward off evil.

Sadly, when some Valossans turned to the Unspeakable One they forgot the lesson that Niaggo had taught them. They lost their faith in Yig and he would not protect them from the great evil that destroyed their civilization. But Yig’s power resided within the Jade Serpent for centuries, waiting, hidden within a sunken temple, for the chance to destroy the worshipers of the Unspeakable One.

Appearance

The Jade Serpent weighs ten pounds and is carved from a single block of unblemished jade in the shape of a coiled snake. It is two feet tall and one foot wide at the base. The sculpturing is exquisite with finely detailed scales and life-like features. Its head is poised to strike with bared fangs and a forked tongue. When the powers of the snake are evoked the serpent glows from within with a dark green light.

Powers of the Serpent

The Jade Serpent has many useful powers. In order to control them, it is necessary to become attuned to the magic imbued within the Serpent. Once attuned, there are no activation words or somatic components that need to be used to invoke the powers. The wielder simply concentrates on what she wants the Serpent to do and it happens.

Attuning the Jade Serpent

Initial attunement to the Jade Serpent requires a Spellcraft check with a DC of 25. The following modifiers apply to the check:

Attunement Modifiers

Modifier	Condition
+5	for a civilized serpent person of Yig
+3	for anyone who sacrificed his or her blood in the sunken temple as described in <i>Madness in Freeport</i>
+2	for a cleric of Yig
+2	for each level of attunement reached (maximum +4)

Rogues with the Use Magic Device skill treat the Jade Serpent as an item they need to *activate blindly* as described in the PH.

Level 1 Attunement

Once attuned, the player will have access to the following minor powers of the Serpent:

Cure light wounds: 3x per day at caster level 5.

Summon Viper: 2x per day summons a small Viper under the caster’s control.

Immunity to Poison: This power is conferred continually upon the user.

Level 2 Attunement

If the player spends at least one month meditating at least four hours a day, over the Jade Serpent, she can make another attempt to become further attuned to the idol. The materials required for proper mediation will cost the player 1,000 GP. These include items such as incense and magical herbs. A successful Spellcraft check with a DC of 30 will grant the player access to the following major powers of the idol:

Cure Moderate Wounds: 3x per day at caster level 5.

Neutralize Poison: 3x per day.

Summon Viper: 2x per day summons a large viper under the caster's control.

Create Food and Water: 5x per day.

Remove Fear: 2x per day. This power affects all allies of the user that can see the Serpent.

Level 3 Attunement

The next level of attunement to the Jade Serpent requires the player to spend at least 5,000 GP of supplies and two months of daily meditation. No other strenuous activities can be performed while the player is meditating on the Serpent. At the end of the two months of preparation a successful Spellcraft check with a DC of 35 will give the player full access to all the powers of the Jade Serpent. The greatest powers of the idol are listed below:

Horrid Wilting: Once per day at caster level 15. When used on worshipers of the Unspeakable One, treat the caster level as 25!

Greater Restoration: Once per day at caster level 13.

The Consequences of Power

The great powers of the Jade Serpent do not come without a price. Anyone who becomes attuned to the Serpent will begin to transform, over time, into a serpent person (see *Death in Freeport* for info on serpent people)!

The danger is minimal at first, but gradually increases with the level of attunement that the player has attained. Once each month, a player who is using the Jade Serpent must make a Will save. The DC is based on the level of attunement the player has attained:

Transformation Resistance

Attunement Level	DC
Level 1:	DC 20
Level 2:	DC 25
Level 3:	DC 30

If she fails, a transformation process lasting a full month begins. A tail sprouts out of her back, her teeth grow into fangs and finally her skin becomes scaly as she is transformed into a serpent person. If the player stops using the Jade Serpent immediately upon failing a Will save the transformation reverses but she can never use the Jade Serpent again. Once the transformation is completed it can only be reversed with the destruction of the Jade Serpent or by a *Wish* spell.

Destroying the Jade Serpent

In your campaign, it may become necessary to destroy the Jade Serpent of Yig.

The artifact cannot be unmade by normal means. It is impervious to all physical and magical harm. The Jade Serpent is considered a *major artifact* as described in the DMG.

To destroy the Jade Serpent it must be subjected to the acid breath of the great green wyrm Azial. Azial was a mighty dragon that was old even before the Valossan civilization was destroyed. It is said that his lair was buried during the great cataclysm that engulfed Valossa centuries ago. It may be that his caves are located somewhere under the waves similar to the sunken temple of Yig. The lair might also be buried deep within a mountain on the mainland. In either case, a journey to find Azial will be an epic undertaking indeed.

Adventure Hooks

Here are some ideas for adventures using the Jade Serpent you can use in your campaign.

Hatching the Egg

If your players have recovered the egg from the hatchery within the sunken temple of Yig (as described in *Madness in Freeport*) they are in for a surprise. After being subjected to the power of the Jade Serpent, the egg will begin to mature and hatch into an infant serpent person! As new foster-parents, the players must decide what to do with their young charge. Should they hand him over to Thuron to be raised by his own people? Will the followers of the Unspeakable One kidnap him for their own purposes? Will he be bred to good or evil? Or is he destined to revive the dead Valossan civilization at the cost of all others? Raising a child is never easy.

Destroy the Jade Serpent?!

The players must destroy the Jade Serpent! Perhaps one of them has used it too often and has been transformed into a serpent person and destroying the Serpent is the only way to regain their true form. Maybe Thuron has taken the Serpent and is using it to revive Valossa and subjugate all other races. To end his reign of terror the Serpent must be unmade. Whatever the reason, the destruction of the Jade Serpent can make for a great epic adventure.

Revenge of the Unspeakable One

By thwarting the plans of the Cult of the Unspeakable One in Freeport the players have made powerful enemies. The cultists not only want their death but they want the Jade Serpent as well. After seeing what happened to Drac and his companions at the lighthouse it is easy to understand why. What the heroes do not know is that the cultists have plans for the great artifact. They believe that it can be corrupted by the Unspeakable One to serve their evil purposes. Can the heroes thwart the cult a second time?

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