In 1982, author Douglas Niles introduced Dungeons & Dragons® players to a nefarious cult in Dungeon Module N1: Against the Cult of the Reptile God. At the end of this classic adventure, the heroes faced Explictica Defilus, the spirit naga, in her subterranean throne room. This vile creature has lain dormant for almost three decades, plotting and scheming, awaiting the day when she might again plague stalwart adventurers. Finally, her day is at hand. Are your players ready to revisit the Throne Room of Explictica Defilus?

**A Note on Spoilers**

This Dungeons & Dragons encounter recreates the battle with the spirit naga named Explictica Defilus at the end of Against the Cult of the Reptile God. To that end, it references several aspects of the original AD&D® module, including the spirit naga, her lair, and sundry other bits and pieces described in the original module.

**Translating the Classic**

This article seeks to recreate the final encounter of Against the Cult of the Reptile God for the current game audience. In the original module, the heroes come upon the once thriving community of Orlane, which has fallen on hard times. Although the small village once served as a bastion of peace and happiness, recently a dark force visited it and terrified the populace. Trade withered away and several inhabitants of
the village have gone missing. This leads the heroes to delve into the village’s problem, and it can ultimately cause them to confront a dastardly cult and its reptilian matron.

DMs are encouraged to use this encounter independently as a side trek in their current campaign; or, if they are familiar with the original module, allow it to serve as a basis for recreating the spirit and flavor of the original adventure.

**Encounter Setup**

The heroes come upon Orlane, a village beset by a nefarious cult. The village’s population is decreasing due to the cult’s machinations. The citizens of the village are in dire need of heroes to save them. This leads the heroes to determine the cult’s plans and rescue those who have been abducted.

Alternatively, you could choose to set the encounter near a village with which the heroes are already familiar, so that when key villagers (for example, their favorite barkeep, shop owner, or contact) start disappearing or acting strangely, the heroes take immediate notice.

DMs can build up to the fight with Explicitica Defilus in any way they wish. However, to best engender the spirit of the original module, DMs are encouraged to lay out a series of encounters that mimic portions of the original module.

**Encounter Synopsis**

The encounter centers on Explicitica Defilus, the spirit naga. In the original module, the heroes encountered her in her subterranean throne room and she was a significant threat in her own right.

Nagas are typically elite creatures, rather than solo adversaries. This encounter keeps the naga as an elite foe, but also adds some servants and slaves to the mix, creating a more dynamic encounter with the heroes fighting multiple monsters.

This encounter is designed for characters of 10th-12th level. As a result, the encounter provides three different sets of monsters that a DM can use in the encounter to provide a combat challenge of levels 12-14. The variation in monsters for each encounter level is slight, but significant. Assume that the appropriate challenge for a party is two levels higher than the party members’ level, since the encounter is intended to be the one with the “big bad” at the end of an adventure.

Additionally, several encounter variations allow the DM to customize the encounter to his or her liking. These variations are based on specific information presented in the original module. Below is a brief synopsis of these variations. More specific information appears later in this article.

**Spirit Monster Theme:** Originally, Explicitica Defilus was a spirit naga. This encounter defines her as a guardian naga. However, several monster theme powers are provided below for DMs who wish to augment the guardian naga in such a way as to more closely mimic the capabilities of the spirit naga in the original adventure.

**Ramne the Hermit:** In the original module, the heroes encountered a local hermit named Ramne. He was a wizard who accompanied the heroes during the latter part of the adventure. Ramne is described below as a companion character, with complete statistics per the *Dungeon Master’s Guide 2* guidelines for such. Keep in mind that the encounter is designed for five characters. If your party is already five characters strong and you choose to incorporate Ramne, adjust things accordingly.

**Special Player Character Powers:** The original module described some methods by which the heroes might hinder the spirit naga’s attacks. This article describes what actions your heroes might take to confound Explicitica Defilus.
Encounter: The Throne Room of Explictica Defilus

Encounter Level 12 (3,675 XP)

Setup
Explictica Defilus, naga (N)
2 kuo-toa marauders (K)
5 troglodyte warriors (T)

Encounter Level 13 (4,475 XP)

Setup
Explictica Defilus, naga (N)
2 kuo-toa marauders (K)
5 troglodyte warriors (T)
1 water archon shoal reaver (W)

Encounter Level 14 (5,875 XP)

Setup
Explictica Defilus, naga (N)
2 kuo-toa harpooners (K)
5 troglodyte warriors (T)
2 water archon shoal reavers (W)

This encounter takes place in the subterranean lair of Explictica Defilus. When the heroes arrive at her lair (the shaded red area on the map), the naga is resting among the bodies of several dead villagers, admiring her accumulated treasure. Her servants and guardians are scattered about her lair, as shown on the encounter map.

When the characters first arrive in the naga’s lair, read:

You peer into the darkness of a large, subterranean chamber. Just in front of you, a large pool of stagnant water awaits you. In the distance, you hear the sloshing of one or more creatures moving restlessly in the water.

The throne room is completely dark. All the monsters, except for the shoal reavers, have darkvision. This being the case, the heroes likely need to bring light sources into the cavern. If they do so, they have no chance of surprising the monsters.

The kuo-toa and water archon shoal reavers are aquatic creatures and can breathe underwater. When the encounter begins, they are crouched beneath the surface of the water and invisible to the heroes. They can stand up as a free action.

If the heroes sneak quietly into the chamber without light sources, have them make appropriate Stealth checks against the monsters’ passive Perception scores to determine if they gain the advantage of a surprise round.

The encounter map provides starting locations for two water archon shoal reavers (for the level 14 encounter). If you’re using the level 13 version of this encounter, place one shoal reaver at either of these starting locations.

The encounter map can be assembled using tiles from DU3: Caves of Carnage along with any set that includes several generic dungeon floor tiles. The generic dungeon floor tiles on the map are covered in water that is 3 feet deep.
Tactics

Explictica Defilus avoids the party unless forced into melee combat, favoring word of pain to deal with her enemies at range. She uses thunderstrike whenever she can catch two or more foes in the effect. If approached by multiple foes in melee, she uses spit poison and removes herself from melee as soon as possible. She values her servants and slaves and uses them to best possible effect at all times, issuing commands to coordinate their efforts.

The troglodytes are slaves of the naga and fight obediently. When combat begins, they interpose themselves between the heroes and their master, seeking to protect her at the cost of their lives. They stay close to their enemies at all times so as to take advantage of their aura power.

The kuo-toa gang up on the strongest seeming hero, seeking to flank with each other or with the troglodytes. They use sticky shield to deny their foes their weapons and slick maneuver to stay in flank with their allies. Harpooners use reeling harpoon to force their enemies into combat with them, following up with harpoon to lock their foes down.

The water archon shoal reavers use water harpoon to force their foes into combat with them and then lay into them with trident. They use whirlpool of tines to deal with multiple foes in close combat.

The kuo-toa and shoal reavers have swim speeds, so they move normally in the pool in the naga’s lair.

### Features of the Area

**Illumination:** The chamber is completely dark.

**Cavern Ceiling:** The ceiling of the cavern is 4 squares above the cavern floor.

**Cavern Walls:** The walls of the cavern are uneven stone and are slimy in places. Climbing the cavern walls requires a DC 17 Athletics check.

**Cavern Floor:** Areas denoted by cavern floor tiles on the map are dry. The rest of the chamber is filled with water.

**Pool:** Most of the cavern (all squares shown as standard dungeon floor tiles on the map) is filled with 3 feet of murky water. Heroes that drop a weapon must use a move action to retrieve their weapon, rather than a minor action, unless they have darkvision. The entire pool is treated as difficult terrain for creatures that don’t have a swim speed. Creatures with a swim speed can move normally in the pool.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 Troglodyte Warriors (T)</th>
<th>Level 12 Minion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium natural humanoid (reptile)</td>
<td>XP 175 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.</td>
<td>Initiative +6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC 25, Fortitude 25, Reflex 22, Will 21</td>
<td>Perception +6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed 5</td>
<td>Darkvision</td>
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**Traits**

- Troglodyte Stench + Aura 1

Living enemies within the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

**Standard Actions**

- Club (weapon) + At-Will
  - Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. AC
  - Hit: 7 damage.

**Skills**

- Athletics +15, Endurance +14
- Str 18 (+10)  
- Dex 12 (+7)  
- Wis 11 (+6)
- Con 16 (+9)  
- Int 6 (+4)  
- Cha 8 (+5)

**Alignment** chaotic evil  
**Languages** Draconic

**Equipment** club, light shield

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explictica Defilus (N)</th>
<th>Level 12 Elite Artillery</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large immortal magical beast (reptile)</td>
<td>XP 1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP 186; Bloodied 93</td>
<td>Initiative +10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC 25, Fortitude 23, Reflex 24, Will 22</td>
<td>Perception +13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed 6</td>
<td>Darkvision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Saving Throws** +2; **Action Points** 1

**Standard Actions**

- Tail Slap + At-Will
  - Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +15 vs. Will
  - Hit: 3d6 + 10 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

- Word of Pain + At-Will
  - Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +15 vs. Will
  - Hit: 3d6 + 10 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

- Double Attack + At-Will
  - Effect: Explictica Defilus uses word of pain twice, making each attack against a different target.

- Spit Poison (poison) + At-Will, Recharge ⌫
  - Attack: Close blast 3 (creatures in the blast); +15 vs. Fortitude
  - Hit: 2d8 + 8 poison damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage, and a -2 penalty to saving throws (save ends all).

- Thunderstrike (thunder) + At-Will, Recharge ⌫
  - Attack: Area burst 1 within 20 (creatures in the burst); +15 vs. Fortitude
  - Hit: 3d8 + 9 thunder damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).
  - Miss: Half damage.

**Skills**

- Arcana +15, History +15, Insight +13
- Str 16 (+9)  
- Dex 18 (+10)  
- Wis 14 (+8)
- Con 15 (+8)  
- Int 18 (+8)  
- Cha 12 (+7)

**Alignment** evil  
**Languages** Common, Draconic, Supernatural
### 2 Kuo-toa Marauders (K) Level 12 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 700

<table>
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<tr>
<th>HP</th>
<th>119; Bloodied 59</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>25, Fortitude 21, Reflex 22, Will 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>6, swim 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>+11</td>
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</table>

**Perception** +11

**Darkvision**

**Standard Actions**

- *Slavering Spear* (weapon) **At-Will**
  
  **Attack:** Melee 1 (one creature); +17 vs. AC
  
  **Hit:** 1d8 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).

**Move Actions**

- *Slick Maneuver* **At-Will**
  
  Effect: A kuo-toa adjacent to an enemy shifts to any other square adjacent to that enemy.

**Triggered Actions**

- *Sticky Shield* **At-Will**
  
  Trigger: The kuo-toa is missed by a melee attack.
  
  **Attack:** Melee 1 (one creature); +15 vs. Reflex
  
  **Effect (Immediate Reaction):** A weapon wielded by the target drops in the target’s space.

**Alignment** evil

**Languages** Deep Speech

**Equipment** leather armor, slimy light shield, spear

### 2 Kuo-toa Harpooners (K) Level 14 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 1,000

<table>
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<tr>
<th>HP</th>
<th>137; Bloodied 68</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>28, Fortitude 26, Reflex 26, Will 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>6, swim 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>+12</td>
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</table>

**Perception** +13

**Darkvision**

**Standard Actions**

- *Harpoon* (weapon) **At-Will**
  
  **Attack:** Melee 1 (one creature); +20 vs. AC
  
  **Hit:** 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is grabbed and takes ongoing 5 damage (escape DC 21). While the target is grabbed, the kuo-toa harpooner cannot use the harpoon to make attacks.

- *Reeling Harpoon* (weapon) **At-Will**
  
  **Hit:** 1d8 + 3 damage, and the archon makes a secondary attack against the same target.
  
  **Secondary Attack:** +18 vs. Fortitude.
  
  **Hit:** 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is pulled 3 squares.

**Move Actions**

- *Slick Maneuver* **At-Will**
  
  Effect: A kuo-toa adjacent to an enemy shifts to any other square adjacent to that enemy.

**Triggered Actions**

- *Sticky Shield* **At-Will**
  
  Trigger: The kuo-toa is missed by a melee attack.
  
  **Attack:** Melee 1 (one creature); +18 vs. Reflex
  
  **Effect (Immediate Reaction):** A weapon wielded by the target drops in the target’s space.

**Alignment** chaotic evil

**Languages** Primordial

**Equipment** scale armor, trident

### 2 Water Archon Shoal Reavers (K) Level 13 Brute
Medium elemental humanoid (aquatic, water) XP 800

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HP</th>
<th>159; Bloodied 79</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>25, Fortitude 27, Reflex 25, Will 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>6, swim 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>+8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perception** +7

**Immune** disease, forced movement, poison; **Resist** 10 acid; **Vulnerable** cold (an archon that takes cold damage is slowed until the end of its next turn)

**Saving Throws** +2 against immobilized, restrained, slowed

**Standard Actions**

- *Trident* (weapon) **At-Will**
  
  **Attack:** Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
  
  **Hit:** 3d8 + 3 damage, and the target takes a –2 penalty to AC until the end of its next turn.

- *Water Harpoon* (weapon) **Recharge**
  
  **Attack:** Ranged 5 (one creature); +16 vs. AC
  
  **Hit:** 4d8 + 5 damage, and the archon pulls the target adjacent to it.

- *Whirlpool of Tines* **Recharge** when first bloodied
  
  **Attack:** Close burst 1 (enemies in the burst); +16 vs. AC
  
  **Hit:** 2d8 + 5 damage, and the target takes 2 damage for each square it moves on its turn (save ends).
  
  **Miss:** Half damage, and the target takes 1 damage for each square it moves on its turn (save ends).

**Alignment** chaotic evil

**Languages** Primordial

**Equipment** scale armor, trident
Encounter Variations

DMs can use the following variations and additional rules to customize this encounter.

Spirit Monster Theme  In the original module, Explicita Defilus is a spirit naga. The stat block provided above is for a guardian naga. DMs can use the following array of spirit theme powers to augment their personal versions of Explicita Defilus to bring her in line with the monster presented in the original adventure. Feel free to give Explicita Defilus one or more of these powers. The enthralling gaze attack power is particularly important for recreating the feel of the original monster. However, if your heroes are particularly powerful, feel free to give her three or even all four of the powers.

You might also choose to have some of the naga’s allies be spirit-themed creatures. The best choice here is the naga’s kuo-toa allies. The prescient jump utility power is the ideal option for them, since it helps them reposition and better protect their spirit naga matron.

Attack Powers  The souls of spirit-themed monsters are filled with a fiery spark that influences their every action. They seek to spread pain and misery in myriad ways. This spark might manifest as an enthralling gaze or a wrath of the inner spark. The following attack powers are available to spirit-themed monsters.

Utility Powers  Spirit monsters often have means of avoiding direct confrontation, relying on these powers to get out of trouble or otherwise defend themselves. In essence, their spirit selves seek to save their physical selves from harm.

New Cultists of the Reptile God  This original adventure involved villagers being kidnapped and charmed by the naga to join her cult. Those who resisted were killed to feed her guardians, or transformed into mindless zombie slaves.

As an added element of peril (and to add a creepy sense of cultish workings), you might replace the naga’s monstrous guardians with charmed villagers, especially if you are basing the encounter near a village with which the heroes are already familiar. This can serve to create a richer connection with the heroes’ base of operations (assuming it’s the village they’re saving) instead of otherwise less memorable inhabitants.

Treat the villagers the same as the listed monsters (assuming their new strength and powers somehow derive from the naga’s possession over them), but if they are rendered unconscious instead of killed, the heroes can negate the naga’s charm after she is defeated.

The Flooded Throne Pool  This encounter has set the water level at 3 feet deep, so the heroes can cross on their own (albeit with no small difficulty). In the original, the pool was significantly deeper and required the heroes to ferry themselves across to the naga’s alcove.

To add greater danger to the encounter, you can similarly deepen the pool. The heroes will need to find a suitable boat along the way, or else place one at the pool’s edge. During combat, the guardians try to tip the boat or pull heroes out with reeling harpoon, attempting to drown them.

Ramne  If you wish to use Ramne in your encounter, make sure to introduce him a few encounters before the fight with the spirit naga so that the players can familiarize themselves with his capabilities. Ramne can also warn the heroes about the naga’s powers and mentions his own freeing word, asking the heroes to help dictate when he should use it.

The following stat block seeks to recreate Ramne by translating his best spells from the original module.
Ramne  
Level 10 Leader (variant)  
Medium natural humanoid, human  
XP –

HP 71; Bloodied 35; Healing Surges 9  
Initiative +5

AC 25, Fortitude 21, Reflex 23, Will 25  
Perception +7

Speed 6

**Standard Actions**

- **Staff**  
  Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +16 vs. AC  
  Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage.

- **Magic Missile** (force, implement)  
  At-Will
  Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature)  
  Hit: 10 damage.

- **Lightning Bolt** (implement, lightning)  
  Encounter
  Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +14 vs. Reflex  
  Hit: 2d6 + 8 lightning damage, and Ramne makes a secondary attack against two creatures within 10 squares of the target.  
  Secondary Attack: +16 vs. Reflex.

**Minor Actions**

- **Freeing Word**  
  Encounter
  Effect: Choose one ally within 5 squares of Ramne that is dazed, dominated, immobilized, slowed, or stunned. That ally immediately makes a saving throw against one of these conditions. Ramne can use this power twice per encounter, but only once per turn.

**Triggered Actions**

- **Shroud of Invisibility**  
  Encounter
  Effect (Immediate Reaction): Ramne becomes invisible until the end of his next turn. In addition, he shifts up to 3 squares.

**Skills**

- Arcana +16  
- History +16  
- Nature +15

**Abilities**

- Str 8 (+4)  
- Dex 11 (+5)  
- Wis 14 (+7)

- Con 14 (+7)  
- Int 16 (+8)  
- Cha 12 (+6)

**Alignment** good

**Languages** Common

**Equipment** robes, staff

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**Special Hero Powers**

In the original module, the heroes could use *light* spells to subvert the naga’s gaze attack. In the spirit of such resourceful tactics, the heroes can use special powers to protect themselves during this encounter.

Incorporate these special powers only if the players are inventive enough to come up with the idea on their own. These should not be freebies that you hand out to the players, since they can potentially negate the spirit naga’s *enthralling gaze* power. Make the players work for them; that said, you might wish to plant the seed for these ideas with rumors (or Ramne’s warnings) about the naga’s gaze.

**Conclusion**

If the heroes defeat Explicita Defilus, reward them with treasure appropriate to a major villain. If the heroes flee after encountering the spirit naga, they earn the enmity of a very powerful foe. Explicita Defilus redoubles her efforts in the village and forges alliances with other fell creatures in the area. If the heroes attempt to confront her again, she is surrounded by more powerful allies and servants. If the heroes abandon the village, Explicita Defilus leaves a trusted ally in charge of her dealings in the village and pursues the heroes personally, intent upon wreaking her own personal vengeance against those who so brazenly assaulted her in her throne room. If this happens, she plagues the heroes throughout their future endeavors until she finally confronts them on her own terms.

**About the Author**

Craig Campbell was suckered into playing D&D in 1990 when some of his college friends told him he needed to get out less. In the time since, he’s devoured many sourcebooks, transforming himself into a zombie-like creature that constantly seeks to tell amazing stories and eat the brains of his players. Hailing from northeastern Wisconsin (go Packers!), he currently lives in Marietta, Georgia with his all-consuming love of bad movies.