



XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS

Noble Savages **Covenant of Light Faction Scenario #8** **An Adventure for 8th Level Characters** **(Scaled for 7th to 10th Levels of Play)**

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Adventure Background

Noble Savages is an adventure three years in the making. When Lord Xandrin Corvalis, the Lord of Radiant Hold and the military leader of the Covenant of Light, arrived in Stormreach, he had his wife and son with him. Along with them, a small group of Lady Corvalis' Eldeen shifter family came along to settle in the "new world" of Xen'drik. For a time, life was peaceful and both the Covenant side of the Corvalis household and its more savage half lived in harmony.

During this period, roughly a year, the shifters founded one druid's grove right outside Radiant Hold and reconsecrated another deeper in the jungle. From this more remote circle, a site called Drakewing Hallow, the shifter rangers and druids intended to explore and learn about the natural wonders of their new jungle home. Unfortunately, events in the Hold were soon to interrupt their plans.

Mianaara, Lord Corvalis' wife, was abducted by a creature called the Nightmare Lord and taken from this plane of existence to parts unknown. Xandrin, knowing all too well how dangerous the Nightmare Lord was and how it would similarly take or kill anyone who learned of its existence, was unable to explain her disappearance to her tribal family. In disgust and distrust, their elder declared Xen'drik a cursed place for his tribe and left to return home with all his kin. Their groves abandoned, the shifters left without a word to anyone save the ancient treant that still guards Drakewing Hallow to this day.

Since that day, the wilds of Xen'drik have been considered anathema to many of the tribes of the Eldeen. Stories of Mianaara's "death" have taken on several different forms in their oral lore, becoming more sinister with each retelling. Though only two years have passed since that fateful night, the Covenant of Light and its military lord have been thoroughly castigated in the shifter-controlled parts of the ancient Eldeen Wastes.

That changed very recently with the emergence of the truth behind Mianaara's disappearance. Though Lord Corvalis has tried to protect others by swearing the few who learned of the Nightmare Lord to secrecy, that vow proved insufficient to some and word has gotten out of Radiant Hold. The truth reached Mianaara's kin quickly, borne to them by a Covenant shifter with stronger ties to Eldeen than to his allegiance in the Light. Though the shifter paid for his breach of honor by vanishing into the night, he was able to get a cryptic message to his tribal elder – Wildfather Oraan.

"The Kestrel lives. The Raven is no killer. Return to the Light and rescue the lost."

Kestrel was the childhood name Mianaara went by when she was growing up among her druidic family and Raven was the moniker given to Lord Corvalis when he visited the Eldeen and met his future wife. Seeing this message as a chance to save his adopted daughter, Oraan gathered his most trusted tribesmen and began the long journey back to Xen'drik.

Through the use of his considerable druidic might, Oraan was able to make the cross continental trek very quickly. Within a week, his group reached Sharn and booked passage on the Sureflight, a sky galleon willing to cross the dangerous waters between the City of Spires and the port of Stormreach. The ship had a good crew and all the support a gathering of druids can provide.

It was not enough and more than a hundred miles from their destination, the ship ran aground and many aboard, including most of the ship's crew, were lost to the violent storms of Shargon and the rocky hazards of Xen'drik's coast. Thanking the powers of Life that most of his band survived the wreck, Oraan, the surviving crew of the skyship and his remaining Eldeen made their way to dry land and continued their journey on foot. Weary and battered, they were determined to complete their arduous trek.

As fate would have it, their path led them to a place of natural power in the dense jungle, a site Oraan had once thought to reclaim as a druid's grove once their work near Stormreach was complete. Upon seeing the elder treant from Drakewing Hallow wandering the ruins, the Wildfather assumed it would be safe enough to use for a night's camp. Oraan led his shifter brethren into the ruins to greet the gnarled oaken protector, grateful for the chance to be reunited with an old friend.

It was not a pleasant reunion. The treant had come here following Veshh'ohb'sidhar, the black dragon that left its grove in pursuit of a terrible extra-planar creature set free during the events surrounding the demise of Flame Father Garris (this scene played out during [CVN-2 Crisis of Faith](#)). The dragon, also known as Obsidian, chased the insanity-wreathed chaotic entity across the jungle and disappeared for months thereafter. Once the treant Keeper of the Grove recovered from its wounds, it gathered what strength it could from the abandoned site and set off in slow but steady pursuit.

The treant's journey ended here in the ruins of Kalak'karan, an ancient temple erected around a deep craterous pit of primal energy by the giants during the height of their empire here. Drawn there by that same emanation of power, the chaotic nightmarish creature set free by Garris shattered the roof of the temple and descended into the well, followed closely by Obsidian. Neither emerged from it again but manifestations of the epic battle that waged between them came pouring out shortly afterwards. Vile creatures, awakened from their long sleep by the two great creatures and their struggle, clawed their way out of the pit and have come to the surface.

The treant slew many of them before finally falling victim to their madness itself. Oraan and the others, caught unaware, were quickly scattered and defeated by the insane Keeper and the foul creatures that poured out of the ruins to assail them. Only one of the Eldeen escaped, Oraan's youngest son Karro. Fleeing only because his father commanded it, Karro escaped the battle and did as he was ordered to do – get to Radiant Hold.

It is with Karro arriving at the stronghold of the Light that the adventure begins.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs are gathered at Radiant Hold for a long overdue award ceremony held in front of hundreds of their fellow Scions. For services above and beyond the call of duty in the past, they are being honored with one of the Covenant's highest awards – The Brilliant Star, a crystal medal in the shape of a seven pointed star on a band of color-shifting glameweave.

Just as the medals are being placed around the PCs' necks, a disturbance at the front gate of the fortress interrupts the ceremony. Guards and spectators are rallying to the portcullis where a man in ragged clothing has just collapsed into unconsciousness. The moment Lord Corvalis sees him, he immediately orders the gate opened and the man brought inside. He then has the man taken to a private room in the infirmary and goes with him personally, cloistering alone with the mysterious gatecrasher.

The PCs are left to their own devices for a short time before they are called for by Lord Corvalis, asking them to come to the infirmary for a private meeting. Once they arrive, he apologizes to the PCs for his brusque exit and explains his actions to them quickly.

After telling the PCs that the unconscious man is Karro, his estranged brother in law, he explains that his Eldeen family has returned and wishes to reconcile. As wonderful as this news is for him, it is tempered by the sorrow that aside from Karro, the rest may already be lost again. He asks the PCs as a personal favor if they will go attempt to rescue Oraan and the others from whatever fate has befallen them in Kalak'karan.

Assuming they agree, he sends them to the basement of the fortress to meet with Glitch, the gnome artificer many of them already know. (Glitch appeared in [CVN-4 Brave Soldiers](#)) With no time to lose and a clear idea of where they must go because of a druid's map possessed by Corvalis, the PCs will have to travel with Glitch in the Covenant's most unorthodox possession – Lady Cannonball, an elemental powered burrowing vehicle.

Glitch gets them where they need to go with only a slight detour in the form of an underground magma flow. Lady Cannonball gets stuck in a pool of lava and it is up to the PCs to figure out how to move her back onto solid land before she melts. Once this danger is overcome and the two disgruntled salamanders from the lava pool defeated, the PCs get underway once more.

Arriving at Kalak'karan, the PCs encounter the Keeper of the Grove while it is clearing away rubble from the ruined temple, opening up the huge crater at its heart. Maddened and completely beyond reason, the corrupted treant must be put down in some way before the PCs can continue with their rescue mission. Near the end of the combat, the earth shakes beneath the PCs and an unholy sight erupts from the massive well of power.

The source of the potent energy in the pit is revealed as a flying vessel in the shape of a nautilus shell with tendrils erupting from the front. Rebuilt using slave labor and parts from the wreckage of the Sureflight, the illithid nautiloid emerges from the dark earth below and rockets past the PCs, an all-too familiar creature of pure madness and terror spiraling in an elemental ring around its hull.

The PCs can do nothing to stop the ship from escaping but all hope for their mission is not lost. The fallen treant, freed from its madness by the departure of the foul entity, implores them to hurry below. "They will kill the prisoners now. Save who you can." Then, before their eyes, corruption claims the great Keeper, rotting it away into mold and brackish slime. The treant is beyond their aid but they still have a chance to rescue Oraan and the others if they move quickly.

Descending into the pit, the PCs are exposed to the horrors of Thoon, an enigmatic power from the madness of Xoriat. Brought to Eberron by the crash landing of a mind flayer vessel, the result of an impossible crossing between this world and theirs, the energies of Thoon have been contained in this ruined temple for more than a thousand years. Unsealed by the creature of chaos summoned by Garriss, the crater is now home to several abominations left behind by the nautiloid's escape.

The PCs battle through the slave encampment controlled by these vile creatures, rescuing survivors on their way to the leader of the villainous Thoon devotees, an illithid slavemaster with a terrible surprise of his own – Thoon thralls created from the surviving human crew men of the Sureflight. Their grotesque self-immolations set the tone for a disturbing battle beneath the cursed earth of Kalak'karan.

With the mind flayer's slaves freed, the PCs can return to Radiant Hold with both dire news and desperate hope. If allowed to spread, the disciples of Thoon could potentially open a new portal using the power of the captive chaos-creature they now possess, ushering in a new Age of Madness.

Oraan, however, has learned a great of Thoon during his captivity and can aid the Covenant in tracking down the foul cult. As much as he wishes to rescue his daughter, this terrible blight upon the world must be dealt with first. Pledging himself and his people to the Covenant of Light for however long it takes to destroy these minions of corruption, the druid elder joins forces with his grateful son-in-law to that end.

In saving the noble savages from the Eldeen Wastes, the PCs may have also saved the world...

Troubleshooting

The primary issue to keep in mind when running this adventure is that it is, first and foremost, a rescue mission. Timing will be key and proper pacing is a must. Be sure to keep the players aware from the very start of the action (defined as the moment when Lord Corvalis gives them their mission) they understand that every wasted moment could be another life lost. This adventure actually tracks the time the PCs take from the moment they see the nautiloid flee until they reach the Slavemaster's Cavern. If they take too long to reach the slaves, they will find fewer of them to free.

There is also the matter of in-game perceptions to consider. This scenario is founded on the concept that the PCs have become recognizable heroes in the Covenant of Light. They are of the same level of experience as many of their well-known peers and they have many adventures to their credit. Be certain to reflect this notoriety in the NPCs at Radiant Hold during the Introduction of this scenario. NPCs may react with admiration, camaraderie or even jealousy but they *will* react.

Lastly, ensure that once the PCs reach the Thoonach Crater, they experience the rest of the adventure with a sense of alien **wrongness** to everything they see. The dark presence of Xoriat has lingered in that pit for more than a thousand years, physically and spiritually warping everything it touches. Pay close attention to the descriptive text of the Crater and be sure to emphasize how befouled everything around the PCs has become. By the time they escape Kalak'karan, they should all feel at least a little disturbed.

Adventure Start

As the GM, your job at the beginning of this adventure will require a bit more homework than normal where the PCs are concerned. Take a moment to talk with each player, asking them in person or requesting that they write down any outstanding heroic moments their PCs may have experienced during their time with the Covenant. Use these answers to help shape the introductory scene. The more personalized you can make the award ceremony detailed below, the more your Players will enjoy the scene.

A Day of Celebration

The sun is shining high overhead, bathing all of Radiant Hold in warm, golden sunlight. Hundreds have amassed for a special ceremony honoring a small group of their peers and comrades – heroes that exemplify what it means to be a Scion of the Light.

They are here to celebrate you.

Let that sink in for a moment. When it is apparent that the Players understand this celebration is about them, continue with the text (or paraphrase the text) below.

A stand of local timbers has been erected around one end of the massive dragonshard that gives Radiant Hold its name. On this newly built stage, you are standing on small platforms, raised slightly and presented for the rest of the Covenant to see. More than a hundred people have arrived already and, though many more may come for the celebration to follow, the time has come for the main ceremony.

Tall and as imposing as he is charismatic, Lord Xandrin Corvalis climbs the stairs beside you and turns to address the gathering. "Friends and fellows," he says to them, his polished but battle worn plate armor catching the golden light of the crystal behind you. "There are those who say virtue is its own reward."

He gestures to you as a group and smiles, his dark eyes brighter than they have been in many months. "There is wisdom in this but, perhaps just for today, let us extend a reward of another kind. A very deserved reward to a very deserving group of people. These few before you have done great things in the name of the Light we all serve."

He turns and walks to the first of you in line. Opening a long box of pale wood, he removes a beautiful medallion of cut crystal in the shape of a seven pointed star. He holds it before you, letting its shimmering glamerweave cord hang free, suspending the weight of the award. "Each of these heroes has a story to tell. Allow me to share a few words of these tales with you now."

As he raises the medal over your shoulders, several of the raptorans allied with the Covenant take to the air, dropping handfuls of white rose petals over the stage to the sound of heartfelt applause!

Take time now to run the award ceremony in your own words, telling the story of the PCs' heroics as they have described them earlier. Feel free to embellish if you know the Players in question and let them help you if they wish. Making this introduction a special event, a look back on all the great work they may have done as Scions of the Covenant of Light, will be both a treat the Players have certainly earned and sets the stage for a serious change in tone when the next section begins.

The following are a few suggestions for running the ceremony in a memorable and fun way:

- **Emphasis the Familiar:** If the PCs have people whose lives they have touched in Stormreach, have them present in the audience. By touching on past adventures, you will make the game experience all the more vibrant.
- **Don't be Afraid to Stray from the Script:** If you know the Players and think a different format for the ceremony would make them happier, restructure things as you desire. As with the rest of the scenario, the important thing about this scene is that you and your Players enjoy the game.
- **Use the Past:** Certain adventures lend themselves to having trophies representing them. If the PCs slew a terrible evil, perhaps a skull or weapon was left behind. Have these trophies on display on stage or around the celebrants in the audiences. Tangible memories will lend even more realism to the scene.
- **Let the PCs Steal the Scene:** This introduction is all about the PCs – their exploits, their heroism, their valor. Lord Corvalis is an ancillary character at best here, shown only to give some structure to the ceremony. Do not let anyone you choose to bring into the scene be more impressive or important than the PCs themselves.

Once you have gone through each of the PCs and awarded them their medal (and provided them the artwork found in PC Handout One), Xandrin Corvalis returns to his corner of the stage and addresses the audience once again.

"As we have endured many difficulties in the past year, we are sure to face many other struggles in the long days ahead. Let us all take heart from the examples set by these heroes before us now. Greet them one last time as Scions, greet them now for the first time as Paragons!"

And with that, the Lord of the fortress is the first to applaud you. The gathering in front of the stage quickly drowns him out, shouts and cheers heralding your achievement.

Paragons? Huh?

The Covenant of Light, while an influential organization, is only three years old. Formed for the specific purpose of combating the rising forces of evil in Eberron, the Covenant has never needed a very complicated internal structure. That has slowly been changing, especially with the recent arrest of Lord Corvalis and the loss of several key figures among its founders.

Xandrin has suggested to Lady Lirashana, the Archon behind the Covenant's creation, that the faction needs more of a ranking structure. With her approval, he has implemented the first step in that plan- the creation of Paragons.

This makes the PCs the first and only members of the Covenant of Light to hold this rank at the present time. The duties of the new rank have not been finalized but Xandrin wishes to make sure Paragons are easily recognized by the rest of the faction so that when he does determine their status in the faction, they can easily slip into their increased responsibilities.

Before Xandrin can explain the new term, Paragons, to the expectant audience and the PCs themselves, an unscheduled interruption occurs. Move directing into the next scene, Gatecrasher, without delay. The timing of this scene requires that the PCs have no time to plan their reactions. One moment they are the center of attention; the next moment their adoring audience is running across the courtyard

Gatecrasher

A cry of alarm from the front gate across the courtyard brings a sudden halt to the proceedings. "There be a wounded man at the portcullis!" Every head in the audience turns, many of the people gathered before you breaking into a run to head that direction.

Lord Corvalis leaps down quickly, nodding in quiet apology to you all as he races to join them.

The PCs are of course free to do as they wish, but most will probably head to the front gate as well. Be sure to allow them any reaction they desire, adjudicating anything special they wish to do (*clairvoyance*, *teleport*, etc.), paraphrasing the next section for them if need be.

Past the silvered bars of the portcullis, a single figure can be seen lying on the cobbles of the fortress' main path. The guards look at the man with suspicion, dozens of members of the Covenant crowding the gate to get a look at the tattooed newcomer.

Wearing ragged leathers tinged in blood around several deep slashes through both garment and flesh, the man's face is impossible to see beneath the mat of mud-caked hair covering his features. Clawed fingertips stained dark red at their base clutch at the ground as he tries in vain to stand. Even as he struggles to move, a wracking cough sends a trickle of blood from his mouth to pool on the stones below.

This is Karro, the only shifter to escape the ambush at Kalak'karan. He has exhausted every spell at his disposal and every last ounce of physical strength getting here. He is *exhausted* and has only 5 hit points currently due to non-lethal damage from fatigue and privation. Lanky and thickly maned with matted auburn hair, Karro would be a savagely handsome man if he wasn't so badly wounded and near death.

Karro, Shifter Druid: male shifter (Longstride) druid 7: hp 42 (currently 5)

If the PCs order the gates open, the guards will comply. Normally a guard captain or the Lord of the fortress would have to give such an order but after the ceremony, the servants and guardians of Radiant Hold regard the PCs in higher esteem and ascribe greater authority to them. They snap to attention and obey instantly.

If the PCs do not make any more to get to the fallen man, Lord Corvalis will certainly do so. Even without seeing the wounded figure's face, he instantly recognizes the shifter's tattoos. Read or paraphrase the following after giving the PCs a chance to attend to Karro themselves.

Dropping to his knees beside the fallen man, Lord Corvalis takes him into his arms with a look of deep shock and concern in his eyes. "Karro!" As the man falls unconscious, Xandrin lifts him into the air and turns back to the Hold.

"Clear the way! I want the infirmary readied and our best priest on staff now! Now!" He storms through the crown of confused Scions, carrying his sprawled bundle with no apparent strain despite the man's muscular frame and impressive height. Guards move people out of their lord's path, letting him cross the courtyard quickly.

Of course, the PCs may require you to paraphrase this scene, especially if they insist on healing Karro themselves. Allow them to take any part in Karro's recovery they wish, though Xandrin insists that they move the fallen shifter inside immediately. He will want privacy with his brother in law (a fact about Karro the PCs do not yet know) but he will not refuse the PCs' aid.

If the PCs are content to let the Lord handle this newcomer, they will be left with the others out in the courtyard while Corvalis moves indoors. In this case, let them converse among themselves and interact with other bewildered faction members. Certain key figures among the fortress' inhabitants and their reactions are given below for your use.

- **Mallikos, Trumpet Archon:** As the announcer and master of ceremonies for Radiant Hold, this celestial being is present because of his part in the PCs award presentation. He has no useful information for the PCs but will accompany them if they choose to question others, lending his impressive aura of authority to their own.
- **Korvin, Raptoran Scout:** Korvin knows who the fallen man is but will not reveal this information without a Diplomacy check (DC 20) out of loyalty to his master. Even if the PCs are successful in this check, he will only tell them that Xandrin's reaction makes sense. "Family is family, my friends. Best to let him handle this."
- **Brigitte, Squire-to-be:** Brigitte is a young girl on the verge of becoming a young woman, fifteen years old and fiercely devoted to Lord Corvalis. She has heard mention of Karro before but has never seen him. She can tell the PCs that if she's correct (and she is), Karro was the former Lady of the Castle's brother. She has no idea what he is doing here but she's worried for what it might mean to them all. (A Sense Motive (DC 20) will reveal that Brigitte is also upset to see Karro; she is deeply in puppy love with Lord Corvalis and doesn't like anything that reminds her of his wife.)
- **Tempest, Warforged Warrior:** This lightning-eyed warforged moves to block the door to the infirmary as soon as Xandrin and Karro go inside. He will not willingly move for anyone, regardless of Intimidate or Diplomacy checks. If the PCs interact with him sufficiently, he will tell them to "trust the Master. When he is ready for you to know, you'll know."

Getting Involved

The PCs will not have to wait long, assuming they are waiting at all. If they have stayed with Karro this whole time, be sure to paraphrase the following text. Run the rest of the Introduction as appropriate to their

actions. Do not force them to stay outside the infirmary if they have taken steps to be involved. In any case, eventually Xandrin will want to speak with the PCs directly.

Bring them to him whoever you wish. Have Korvin contact them in the crowd and take them inside, let Brigitte squirm her way through the audience to sneak them into the main hall, or just have guards approach them and ask the PCs to accompany them to their Lord's office. The text below assumes that they have been escorted in some way as opposed to finding their own way.

The guards stand outside after rapping on the oaken door of Lord Corvalis' office. "Come in."

Inside, Xandrin looks considerably less stately than he did on stage. His almost mirrored chestplate and pauldrons are gone, replaced with a heavy linen shirt. His hair, previously tied back, is now loose and spills over his shoulders, limp with sweat.

"Forgive my appearance. There is no time for formalities now."

He will emphasize this point by getting directly to the point.

"The man at the gate is Karro, my brother-in-law. I don't have time to explain much about that but please understand that it is a shock to see him here. My Eldeen family has been estranged for... some time."

He looks down at the desk, hands at his temples as he continues. "And now they are back. What should be a joyful reunion may become another page in what is already far too long a tragedy." With a sigh, he looks back up at you all. "Forgive me. There is no time for me to be so maudlin."

"Karro escaped some kind of attack in an ancient ruin deep in the jungle. His father and the others from his kin tribe were making their way here when they were beset by... something lurking near a large temple."

"I know where they were but even he has no idea what attacked them. He mentioned a 'mad tree' but beyond that, his words were disjointed and made little sense. Regardless, there is a chance my family is still alive and if any still live..." His words trail off.

He pauses here long enough for what he hopes will be the PCs volunteering to help. He has come to admire them in the time they have been with the Covenant and knows they are all good souls (even if some act a little roguish from time to time). If they do not offer to help, he is not above asking.

"Please, I had intended to give you a few days of rest. It is the least you've earned but there is pressing need now. This isn't for the Covenant, mind you. It is purely for me."

Lord Corvalis is a very responsible leader and knows that sending heroes to rescue his estranged family is not something he can claim in the name of the Light. If the PCs will not do this, he will not hold their refusal against them. Denying his request will, however, end the adventure.

Assuming they are willing to aid him, Xandrin gives them a heartfelt smile. This is a personal favor and he will never forget it. Even if they fail to save his father in law and the others, their willingness to try will forever endear them to him. He thanks them personally by name and explains the plan. Haste is the order of the day and he knows exactly how to speed them on their way...

Continue to Part One: Cannonball Run Redux when ready.

Part One: Cannonball Run Redux

The following text is taken from CVN 4: Brave Soldiers and is included if you wish to roleplay the PCs actually getting into the secret vault beneath Radiant Hold. If the PCs have already played that scenario, it is recommended that you just skip ahead to meeting with Glitch, stepping into the adventure and getting the action underway quickly.

Otherwise, use this section to set the stage for the PCs so they understand the strange laboratory that exists under the surface of the Covenant's shining fortress.

The Buried Basement

Your long trek through the confusing innards of the Radiant cathedral ends at a tumbled wall of stone blocking the hallway beyond. Your escort, Xandrin Corvalis, raises one hand and asks you to step back. He clenches his upturned fist and points his gauntlet at the rocky obstruction.

A pulse of pale light leaps from his metal-clad hand and suffuses the stones. A heartbeat later, the collapsed masonry is reforming into a massive, humanoid creature. Made of broken rock with pits of ghostly, glowing light for eyes, it moves to the side and bows to you all as it makes way for you to pass. The chamber behind it is well lit and appears to be a basement workshop with vaulted ceilings and a chaotic mix of strange smells and sounds.

"Right this way," says the Lord of this keep as he steps past the huge stony guardian and walks into the room beyond.

Creatures: The final barrier to anyone finding this hidden room is Cretaceous, an elder earth elemental that normally rests dormant in the passage and blocks it with his seemingly inert body. Xandrin's gauntlet is able to awaken the great creature and command it to a certain extent. Cretaceous has been with the Covenant of Light for so long, it has a good tendency to its Neutral alignment and no longer truly needs magical coercion to serve the keep's master. Still, the gauntlet's enchantment is a welcome nudge to the elemental; it spends so much time asleep that a magical jolt from Xandrin from time to time helps it return to its duties.

Cretaceous, elder earth elemental: hp 250; *Monster Manual* 79.

Once the PCs enter the room, read or paraphrase the following description to them:

The basement room has been completely taken over by shelves and work tables. Supplies of a hundred different varieties cover the walls and much of the large chamber's floor space is occupied with alchemical experiments, engineering gear, an odd blacksmithing forge that does not seem to produce any smoke from its blazing hearth, and other production and experimentation facilities too strange to easily identify.

In the middle of the room, surrounded by a circular barrier four feet high, is a gigantic metal sphere with a dozen or more thick spikes protruding from its surface. On one side of the sphere, the seam of what might be some kind of doorway can be spotted and light appears to be emanating from within.

On top of the sphere, a small shape is jumping up and down, waving a polishing cloth covered in the dark stains of tarnish. "Hello there!" shouts the figure in an unmistakably gnomish voice.

The room was, until Glitch showed up a few months ago, used purely for emergency stores and as a fall back point for the Hold's personnel. Xandrin made the mistake of agreeing to let the gnome "use a bit of the place for some crafting" and this is the result. As annoyed as Lord Corvalis is with Glitch for turning the whole chamber into a huge crafting nightmare, he appreciates the value of what Glitch has brought to the faction even more. Until something explodes in here (and Xandrin is certain *something* will eventually), the little Zilargo menace gets to keep puttering to his heart's content.

Once Glitch sees that the PCs see him, he leaps off the tumbler (the giant metal sphere) and *feather falls* to the ground thanks to a magical ring. Toddling up to the PCs as quickly as he can, Glitch extends a grimy hand and smiles up at them.

"Pleased to meet you! Say, isn't Lady Cannonball a beauty! She sure is, true enough. Are you the people I'll be taking in her to wherever it is you need to go? I assume so since I really don't get many visitors down here. Well, none really except Mister Xandrin here and he only comes down to scowl at me and ask me not to blow up the Keep! As if I'd do that, since the basic laws of compression clearly show that any explosion here so far underground would squash me into a pulp long before the blast could endanger the keep. Still, I just think he likes yelling at me. How about you all? You seem nice, so no yelling at me, okay? Okay!

"So I'm Glitch! Who are you all? Don't say much, do you?"

If the PCs have already met Glitch in a previous adventure, use the following text instead. If the PCs have the story object *"With a Friend Like this"*, be sure to have Glitch treat them with a certain amount of (possibly disturbing) fondness.

"Hey! I know you! How have you been? Good? Good! So, you back to take another ride in my beauty? She's better than ever, I tell you. I have managed to align her elemental matrix with the specific life energies of Xen'drik, resulting in an unspecified but surely impressive increase in... well, something!"

He grins wide, his small face lighting up as he chatters. "So, we going or what? Huh? Huh?"

If at all possible, try to read that entire passage in as few breaths as possible and with absolutely no chance for the PCs to get a word in edgewise barring physical impairment of the gnome. This is one of the very few times you should purposefully talk over or around the PCs; it's necessary to help establish Glitch's character (which is annoying enough to be infuriating and friendly enough to keep himself alive).

Creatures: Glitch is the only living creature down here- a half insane Zilargo elemental binder with a penchant for science and a special ability to weave sentences together into masses of raw confusion. He is actually a kind soul and very generous; his mind is just so active and his intellect so vast that between a low

boredom threshold, a constant desire to work, and a total lack of social skills, he comes across as a scatter-brained twit who's almost more annoying than he's worth. Almost.

Glitch: male gnome wizard 12/elemental savant 3/elemental scion of Zilargo 1: hp 60: *Player's Handbook, Complete Arcane, Magic of Eberron*

Glitch would be happy to chatter at the PCs for quite some time but Xandrin Corvalis cuts him off quickly. Let the PCs talk to Glitch for no more than a minute or two before Xandrin interrupts.

"This massive orb of steel before you is called a tumbler. Glitch here brought it to the Covenant a month ago from our friends in Zilargo. He is fully qualified as a pilot for this vehicle, which may not look like much but possesses the ability to travel under the ground.

"With time running short, this tumbler may be our only chance of getting you to the ruins of Kalak'karan and back again before it's too late."

Handing over a ragged map drawn on worn leather, he explains how you will get where you are going. "This is a druid's map of the jungle. Glitch can use its natural magical patterns to find his way through the earth to get you right where you need to go. He's... insane... but he is dependable."

"Please hurry, my friends, and Light's Speed to you all."

The Tumbler: Lady Cannonball

Lady Cannonball is almost exactly as described in the entry on the tumbler in *Magic of Eberron*, page 121. Her only difference is an enhanced underground speed (5 miles per hour as opposed to 2) at the expense of her surface speed (also 5 miles per hour, a serious reduction from a normal tumbler's 10 mph).

Glitch's expertise with Lady Cannonball comes from his in-depth knowledge of her workings, as he is her creator and constantly tinkers with her design. He has a +2 competence bonus when piloting her and does not suffer the normal DC increase from 20 to 25 when piloting her underground. This *ad hoc* change in the standard operation of a tumbler comes from Glitch's status as an elemental savant of the earth subtype and his improved tremor graft.

"No worries, big guy! Lady Cannonball and I will get you there in a shot! Get it? Shot? Cannonball? It's a pun, you seem, because she's sorta shaped like a cannonball and when those are fired they move really fast! Which is exactly what you all need to, right? Right? Am I right?"

Xandrin turns his back on the babbling gnome and addresses the PCs directly.

"I cannot thank you enough for doing this. Please rescue who you can but also be sure to discover whatever threat might be in Kalak'karan. If evil lurks in those ruins, we must ensure it is dealt with."

With that said, he will leave the PCs in Glitch's surprisingly capable hands. The gnome can use the druid's map without difficulty and as soon as the PCs feel ready to travel, he will welcome them aboard Lady Cannonball and begin the journey earthward!

Proceed to the next section, A Bath Too Hot, whenever you and the Players are ready.

A Bath Too Hot

This scene literally puts the PCs in a heated situation with time working against them in several different ways. Be sure to keep the Players aware of the ticking clock, using Glitch in annoying ways if you wish. A few comments like, "I might have been wrong but didn't the big guy say we were on a time limit?" or "You all taking a nap out there?" should drive the point home.

No sooner does the massive hatch of the tumbler close than Glitch is at the controls, forcing the vehicle into a steep dive. Though you cannot see outside right now because of front windows of the tumbler are covered with thick iron blinds, you can practically feel the speed at which you are moving. The tumbler is chewing through rock and soil at incredible speed, hurtling beneath the surface of the jungle above at an impressive, almost frightening rate.

"Isn't this great?!?"

If the PCs want to interact while they are in the tumbler, feel free to give the Players some time to roleplay. It is roughly an hour of travel from the vault beneath Radiant Hold to the lave flow where this scene takes

place, more than enough time for people to plan and get to know each other. When you are ready to step into the action, run the following.

Suddenly the sensation of motion becomes a rough, brutal drop straight down. The first indication you have that this is unfortunate is Glitch's voice.

"This... could be bad."

Just as quickly, the falling stops, a loud splashing sound erupting all around the tumbler outside. You seem to sink for a moment and then buoy back upwards, rising to the surface of some kind of body of water.

"Hey! I wonder if we've found that pond again!"

Glitch is referring to an encounter in Brave Soldiers, one in which the PCs had to deal with prehistoric creatures in order to free Lady Cannonball from a small underground lake before the vehicle sank.

No sooner has Glitch spoken then he tilts his head and narrows his eyes curiously.

"Ummm... is it getting hot in here?"

In fact, it **is** getting hot. The surface of the tumbler is resistant to the lava pool outside but its magical defense will not last forever. From the moment of Glitch's question, the PCs have 30 rounds before the tumbler becomes so hot that everyone within starts to suffer the effects of a *heat metal* spell. Unfortunately, the heat effect will not cool down; its most damaging effect will continue round after round until the PCs are very cooked and very dead.

To escape the pool, the craft will have to be towed or paddled to the edge of the lava pool so its enchantments can move through the rock again. Glitch can offer the paddling idea if the PCs are at a loss, providing the steel paddles with a broad smile. Opening the canopy will take one round by itself.

Rowing will provide a movement of 5 feet per round but only if two PCs do so. One PC can accomplish nothing, spinning the tumbler in place but providing no forward movement. The PCs are of course welcome to use their own ideas for how to move a massive sphere of metal 30 feet through molten lava; let their creativity guide them and reward feasible ideas. This encounter is intended to test ingenuity, not leave the PCs in a secluded, ashen grave.

Lava Effects

Lava or magma deals 2d6 points of damage per round of exposure, except in the case of total immersion (such as when a character falls into the crater of an active volcano), which deals 20d6 points of damage per round. Damage from magma continues for 1d3 rounds after exposure ceases, but this additional damage is only half of that dealt during actual contact (that is, 1d6 or 10d6 points per round).

An immunity or resistance to fire serves as immunity to lava or magma. However, a creature immune to fire might still drown if completely immersed in lava.

Unfortunately, they will have to deal with one small problem in their quest to escape the fiery pool – its current occupants. Salamanders have been using this lava well as a lair for some time and are none too pleased to see the PCs or their home wrecking iron ball from the earth above.

One round after the PCs emerge to try and move Lady Cannonball, these creatures rise up out of the lava and attack!

Foes: Angry and antisocial, these salamanders are not subject to diplomacy and will strike to kill as soon as they appear. They want the PCs dead, furious at their intrusion and simply malicious in any case. They will not surrender or show any mercy at all.

Shhhhzak and Sarrko, Salamanders (2): male and female average salamanders: hp 60, 61; *Monster Manual* 219.

Tactics: These two have no great tactical ability but they are used to hunting together and will always seek to flank whenever possible. They are also very defensive of each other, focusing on any foe that harms the other even in preference to their current target as long as they can do so without suffering attacks of opportunity for changing opponents.

Development: This is a simple fight to the death; these creatures will not retreat and the PCs are not likely to be able to do so. If you wish to reward PCs for trying to resolve things peacefully and they possess the ability to do so (perhaps with magic or some ability to communicate with fiery creatures), you can allow

the PCs to parley but otherwise just adjudicate this as a straight-forward fight and let the PCs enjoy a battle without moral implications or complications.

Scaling the Encounter

For PC groups greater than the minimum for this scenario, the pair of salamanders listed above will not pose much of a challenge. Use the changes below to tailor this encounter to something more suitable. Keep in mind that this scene is supposed to be a minor one; do not overtax the PCs here. There will be plenty of chances to do that once they reach the Thoonach Crater.

7th-Level Characters: No change; the salamanders as is will be sufficient.

9th-Level Characters: Add a trio of flamebrother salamanders (hp 28 each) as children to the mated pair already listed. These will always attack their parent's target and also offer no mercy or retreat.

10th-Level Characters: Instead of the salamanders as listed above, the PCs encounter Sezzagath, a noble salamander (hp 110, *Monster Manual* 219) and a flamebrother salamander servant (hp 25).

Once the PCs have defeated the salamanders and freed their vessel by getting it to the edge of the lava pool, they can proceed out of the cavern and onward to the rest of the scenario.

"Good work! That was getting a little too hot for comfort, you know!" Glitch closes the canopy and eases the tumbler forward into the rocky earth once more.

"Now let's hope we don't actually find that pool of water. The Lady's so hot right now, she'd explode and kill us all!" With a giggle, he sets a course through the dark subterranean world outside. "I really don't think I'd like that. Would you?"

Move to Part Two, The Madness of Kalak'karan, when ready.

Part Two: The Madness of Kalak'karan

When you are ready to proceed to this section of the adventure, use or paraphrase the following text:

"Hold on to something! We're going up!"

The tumbler lurches and begins to rise, a strange feeling of pressure bearing down on you as the magical vessel seems to build up speed.

"Hmmm... we sure are going awfully fast." For a moment, worry creases the wizened gnome's face, his visible eye narrowing as the crystal monocle covering his other glimmers with several arcane symbols in rapid succession.

Then he shrugs. "Must be part of all those improvements I made! Neat!"

Despite the concern this might cause the PCs, there is no cause for alarm. Occasionally, keeping Players on the edge of their seats and *not* having anything be wrong is enough to make them pay more attention when something actually does endanger them.

The huge metal sphere suddenly comes to an abrupt halt. A field of magical energy flickers around you, somehow absorbing the force that should have sent you smashing into the roof of the tumbler. As the silvery aura fades from around each of you, Glitch cheers.

"All right! I knew that spell would work eventually! Hey everyone! We aren't the fine wet consistency of jungle tomato stew!"

He smiles widely, looking for the hatch controls. "Isn't that great?"

Before the PCs can throttle the annoying little man, the hatch opens and they find themselves at the next step in their mission. With time running out, they will have to make haste if they are to rescue anyone from the horrors lurking beneath Kalak'karan.

Under no circumstances will Glitch leave Lady Cannonball. Though a power wizard in his own right, Glitch doesn't like to be away from here for very long and if something happens to him, no one else can pilot his seriously-modified tumbler. For the PCs to have a ride home, he will have to remain out of the action. Besides, the PCs are the heroes of this story; no one else should steal their spotlight.

Kalak'karan

Past the small thicket created by Lady Cannonball's emergence, a thin strand of trees separates you from a much larger open area in the midst of the dense Xen'drik jungle. Though the canopy is thick and the hour late, several spires of ancient stone can be seen rising out of the immense clearing ahead.

Once the PCs take a closer look:

Many long-ruined buildings are arranged along three walls emanating from what used to be a fortified bulwark on one side of the aged city. Kalak'karan was once very sizable, lost now to the depredations of the jungle and the ravages of time. The years and the unchecked growth of yellow-black ivy have brought down most of the city, laying waste to what must have been an imposing fortification.

Only one place seems to have been spared by the voracious vines. Halfway along the central wall, a wide circular building remains mostly intact save for its shattered roof. This building, engraved in old symbols from an all-but-forgotten language, stand unique in that it stands at all.

This building, the Temple-Vault of Vrai'sakat, is described below. The rest of the city is utterly ruined; exploring the area would be a long endeavor with little reward but if the PCs insist on doing so, you can use the following chart to provide challenges for them. Treat these combats as very basic ones with rough, broken terrain and very simple kill or be killed tactics.

In any case, after each battle, try to guide the PCs back to Kalak'karan. Reminding them that there may be little time left to rescue survivors and that their information mentioned a 'large temple' should steer them to where they need to be.

The map of Kalak'karan is mostly included here in case you wish to expand this location for future use (such as using it as the base location for the DM's Mark adventure associated with this scenario). For the purposes of Noble Savages, you should only need the maps of Vrai'sakat and the Thoonach Crater. If the PCs wander too far from the temple, they will probably eat up what little time they have left to save Oraan and the others.

Kalak'karan Encounters

(10 minutes, 25%)

d%	Encounter	Average EL
01-14	1d3 ankhegs (<i>Monster Manual</i> 14)	5
15-22	1 dire lion (<i>Monster Manual</i> 63)	5
23-40	1 tendriculos (<i>Monster Manual</i> 241)	6
41-50	1 athach (<i>Monster Manual</i> 21)	8
51-62	1 chaos beast (<i>Monster Manual</i> 33)	7
62-80	1 black pudding (<i>Monster Manual</i> 201)	7
81-94	1 shambling mound (<i>Monster Manual</i> 222)	6
95-100	3-6 (1d4+2) phase spiders (<i>Monster Manual</i> 207)	8

The History of Kalak'karan

Many of the Giant ruins of Xen'drik got that way because of the war between their builders and their elven slaves-turned-rebels. Kalak'karan is an exception to this rule. When the war between the Giants and the elves broke out, neither side fought here. Kalak'karan was already an abandoned place, a corner of the jungle that no elf or giant wished to enter for fear of what might still be lurking there.

At the height of the Xen'drik Giants' power, Kalak'karan was a center of great power and learning. Many of its buildings were home to some of the finest scholars on the continent. Lore from every corner of the empire was kept here, poured over by the finest giant minds and debated in a grand hall at the center of the city. Debates on every subject from theology to the innermost secrets of magic took place in the Auditorus, Kalak'karan's largest building.

One blisteringly hot summer day, a cloud giant mystic named Vrai'sakat came to the Auditorus and interrupted the diatribes to scream warnings of a terrible darkness about to befall the city. "The wrath of the ocean, falling like fire from the sky!" he proclaimed. Most of the giants present scoffed at his rantings, several of them leaving the Auditorus in disgust.

They were the only intellectuals of the city to survive what came next. Vrai's predictions were not of some distant day in the indeterminate future. An hour after being marched off the stage, his vision occurred in the form of an illithid nautiloid ship crashing down into the Auditorus and leveling the entire structure. Where there had been a great hall of learning and debate, there remained only rubble, death and a huge otherworldly shell at the bottom of a deep crater.

Vrai'sakat was credited with the survival of the few that left the hall prematurely and elevated to a high position in the city because of his gift of vision. Unfortunately for the giants of Kalak'karan, his visions of the illithid did not end with the ship's crash.

Insane from the alien truths shown to him in his nightmares from that day on, he directed the other giants to erect a huge temple without doors or windows around the crash site, a monument to the 'glory from the stars' that now resided in the heart of the city. Around the outside of the temple-vault, he had engravers work for months etching his rambling prophecies of the future over every last foot of its granite wall.

During the next decade, Vrai's madness became worse even as his personal power grew in proportion. His twisted divinations became a religion practiced mostly out of fear, a perversion of faith in the form of strange bloodletting and sacrificial rituals to an obscure entity known only as Thoon. Hundreds died and when there was no one left to die in the name of Thoon, Vrai'sakat climbed to the center of the temple's dome roof and ended his existence in a powerful ritual intended to preserve the secrets and glory of Thoon for all time.

His spell, bought at the cost of his own life, succeeded in sealing the temple-vault and driving everything living inside it into a deep stasis, one that would last more than a thousand years...

The Temple-Vault of Vrai'sakat (EL 8)

More than forty feet tall and easily five times that wide, this huge building is decorated in weather-worn bas reliefs of giants and smooth pillars that resemble triple braided stone. Etchings over the entire outer surface of the wall are almost completely destroyed by erosion but enough remain to show that once, this building had much to say.

PCs with the ability to read Giant can make out only a few passages and phrases on the worn stone walls of the temple. Most of these make no sense; they are just fragments of longer sentences such as "and in that time" or "with a heavy". PCs that spend a few minutes examining the temple walls will be able to discover a few things, depending on their skills.

- **Search (DC 10):** There are no doors or windows to the entire structure. The pillars have enough texture to them that climbing to the broken roof might be an option.
- **Search (DC 15):** There is a single glyph that repeats itself several times over the outer surface of the temple. It does not look like the same language as the rest of the writing, however.
 - **Speak Language (Undercommon):** The word is Thoon.
 - **Knowledge (dungeoneering, DC 20):** There are dark places in the world of Eberron that whisper the word Thoon. It is associated with the madness of Xoriat and no one seems to know precisely what it means.
 - **Knowledge (dungeoneering, DC 30):** Thoon is a word most often spoken by the Illithid, though some do so with revilement and others with reverence. It seems to be some kind of religious concept.
- **Investigate feat:** The statues of giants all around the outside wall of the temple seem to all be of the same individual in different positions.

- **Perform (dance, DC 10):** The positions of the statue are all reminiscent of an exotic dance whose origins have been lost. This may be the earliest known evidence of the dancing style.

The statues actually hold a secret – Vrai'sakat had an elemental spell worked into the wall of the temple so he could come and go as he pleased. By performing the dance shown in the statues in a circular walk around the building, he could open a *passwall* straight through to the crater inside.

This spell still exists and the PCs can take advantage of it as noted below in Getting Inside.

Company!

As the PCs examine the building and consider their options, they discover what was meant by Karro's mention of a "mad tree". The Keeper of the Grove has been hard at work, commanded by the madness emanating from the crater to clear away the rubble from around the temple. When it returns and sees the PCs, it attacks in a terrible rage!

The earth shudders beneath your feet as a large shape lumbers out of the ruins directly towards you! Broad and tall, its bark covered limbs are lashing wildly as it charges, its oaken face twisted in an enraged roar of sylvan fury!

Give PCs that have played CVN-2: Crisis of Faith a DC 10 spot check to recognize this as the Keeper of the Grove from Drakewing Hallow. The treant has a very distinctive pattern to its bark, a brand of sorts in the shape of a dragon's wing and neck – something the PCs might use to identify the marauding treant even as it rushes them.

Foe: The Keeper of the Grove is completely insane now, only barely able to distinguish reality from the twisted images thrust into its mind constantly by the minions of Thoon below. It cannot cope with the utter unnaturalness of what lairs in the earth beneath it, tainting the land with its foul presence. As such, it has gone completely feral and is not at all likely to see the PCs as anything but something it can break.

Keeper of the Grove (1); treant; hp 70; *Monster Manual* 244.

Tactics: The Keeper of the Grove is incapable of doing anything complex in battle. It will simply fixate on a single PC, preferably one that seems visually imposing or distinctive, and pummel him or her incessantly. It will coup de grace, mostly because it can no longer determine the line between life and death and will just beat the same target until it is obviously, messily dead before moving to the next one.

Development: There is one saving grace for the PCs here; the Keeper might actually recognize them if they take the time to try and reason with it. If any of the visible PCs have the story object Gratitude of the Trees, the treant must make a Will saving throw (DC 15). Success allows it to cease attacking for a single round, which it will do even if it is still being attacked in return.

During this round, it will howl at the PCs, begging it in a tortured voice:

"My friends! Destroy me for I have become corrupt, rotten to the root by the poison below! There are others, fleshlings like you that were taken into the earth to be tainted like me! Hurry! They might yet be saved if you hurry!"

When the treant is brought to 0 or fewer hit points, it falls to the earth. Immediately proceed to Frenzied Flight below.

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level Characters: The Keeper has not yet fully recovered from wounds sustained against Oraan and the other shifters. Reduce its hit points to 50.

9th-Level Characters: The madness of Thoon has driven the Keeper into a permanent berserk rage. It begins combat with 14 additional hit points (hp 84) and its slam attacks are at +14 to hit and inflict 2d6+11 damage because of its increased strength. The madness negates the bonus to Will saves it would normally gain from the rage but does not prevent it from making the Gratitude of the Trees save noted above.

10th-Level Characters: In addition to the change for 9th level, the Keeper of the Grove has also regained a blessing it used to possess when it was still part of a functioning grove. Though the source of this boon is now a dark and terrible power, the Keeper does not suffer from the Vulnerability to Fire special quality and it gains DR 5/-.

Frenzied Flight

The Elder Brain of Thoon in the crater below has sensed the battle between the PCs and the Keeper of the Grove. Its insane insight has shown it an image of a possible future in which the PCs are the cause of its own destruction. Rather than face them, it chooses to flee.

The nautiloid that brought the Brain and its minions here is still only partially repaired but it is functional enough to evacuate the crater that has been its home for more than a thousand years. Leaving behind a force it feels sufficient to destroy the intruders (the PCs) and, regrettably, all of its slaves because there is no time to herd them aboard, the Elder Brain awakens the chaos entity it has been keeping dormant and forces it to break the nautiloid free of its earthen confines.

Just as the treant falls in battle, read the following:

As the battered tree finally crashes to the ground, there is a piercing screech that rises out of the ruined temple before you. The walls crack and the earth shakes, a roar of thunder echoing up from the lost temple's shadowy depths.

The scream grows in painful pitch until, a few moments later, it heralds the emergence of a gargantuan shape hurtling skyward from out of the temple ruins!

What flies free and pitches skyward at incredible speed is something from a nightmare. The bulk of the object is a nautilus shell with a broken stained glass window in the shape of a sinister eye on its side. From the front of the shell, several tendrils form a cracked forward pointing spar like the keel of an impossibly alien sailing ship.

Orbiting the ship, caught in the twisted remains of what appear to be bronze elemental containment arms, is a ring of raw madness, its searching eyes and wailing maws slashing in vain against its captivity!

PCs that have been through CVN 2: Crisis of Faith should be informed that while it was not in that shape, the chaotic mass powering the ship does look hauntingly familiar. A Spot (DC 10) will identify it if any of the Players are having trouble remembering or do not get the hint from what has already been said.

As the ship roars out of sight into the night sky, moving far too fast to be caught and too large to be brought down by any firepower the PCs might possess at this level, the Keeper of the Grove has one last thing to say to them.

The treant shudders, its wooded eyes clearing even as its limbs go slack and begin to wither. "A foulness has left the earth... but I feel more below." Brackish sap trickles from the rents in its bark, leaking into the ground beneath its dying trunk.

"Go, fleshlings. There are untainted below as well. Save them from... from my fate."

The treant trembles once and goes still, a sudden mass of rot and mold spreading over its body to consume it from within.

The Ticking Clock

From this point on, start keeping track of how long it takes for the PCs to proceed. Determine how much longer remains in the time slot allotted to this scenario and divide that by twelve. The result is the number of minutes the Slavemaster takes to kill each of the remaining slaves. Oraan is the last to be slain.

This may seem a little harsh, especially since it makes it almost impossible for the PCs to rescue all of the captives. Unfortunately, in an Eberron game, especially one based in the rough setting of Xen'drik, life is seldom fair and often very bloody. The goal of this scenario is not to rescue all of the prisoners, just to do save as many as possible and stop the evil dwelling in this place.

As long as the PCs do everything in their power to accomplish those aims, they can and should be satisfied with a job well done.

Getting Inside

The PCs will have to find a way past the walls of the Temple-Vault if they want to rescue the surviving slaves in the Thoonach Crater. Direct force will not work; the now-cracked walls of the temple are still protected by the blood rite performed by Vrai'sakat. No spell or physical force can damage or bypass the walls of the Temple-Vault. This includes adamantite weapons, normal stonecutting, *teleport*, *passwall* (expect for his special spell effect) or *ethereal* jaunt.

The PCs can still get into the building in many ways; a few suggestions can be found below.

- *Fly* spells and the like will allow them to simply go over the walls.
- Climbing (DC 10 because of the textured pillars and the now cracked outer surface) is an option.

- The spell *spider climb* will work; it does not directly affect the walls.
- Vrai'sakat's *passwall* effect is still functional. A single PC must think to try this and succeed at a Perform skill check (DC 15); the *passwall* will last 10 minutes and can be opened in the same way from within if need be.

Once the PCs get over the wall, regardless of how they do so, proceed to Part Three, The Thoonach Crater.

Part Three: The Thoonach Crater

Past the shattered crown of the immense temple-vault, a dark and ragged hole leading into the ground can be seen within. The earth around the crater is pitched and broken, suggesting a massive impact tore open this spot long ago, piercing straight through into the darkness below.

Investigation will reveal that while there are hundreds of sets of tracks all around the crater, there is no sign of life there now. Use of the following skills around the outside of the crater and the ground inside the vault walls will reveal some useful information:

- **The Track feat:** A Survival check (DC 15) will reveal these kinds of tracks but can only show what almost appears to be random motion. No discernable patterns are detectable. (This is because when the creatures loyal to Thoon were not being directly commanded by the Elder Brain, they milled about aimlessly.) A second check with the same DC will reveal that none of the tracks are more than six months old.
 - Several different creatures, bipedal, with two front toes and one back toe all ending in talons of some kind. (Knowledge (dungeoneering, DC 20) to identify as mind flayers)
 - One bipedal creature with three toes, all clawed. (Thoon soldiers. No check allowed to identify as these creatures have never been seen on Eberron before.)
 - Two different creatures with strange three lobed hooves for feet. (Thoon scythers. No check allowed to identify.)
 - Dozens of trails caused by dragging cords or tentacles. (Stormclouds of Thoon. No check allowed to identify.)
- **Knowledge (engineering, DC 15) or Stonecunning:** The crater is an impact point from something roughly forty feet wide traveling at incredible speed. There is no sign of cooled slag or heated earth, suggesting that this is not a meteor crater.
- **Search (DC 20):** In the cracks between a pair of broken stones at the edge of the crater's northern rim, PCs can find a one foot wide piece of black enamel, roughly circular except for a ragged edge on one side.
 - **Knowledge (nature, DC 15):** This is a black dragon scale, likely from a very large specimen, pulled out when it passed into the crater some time ago.

There are two slopes that will allow the PCs to move relatively safely and quickly into the crater. These do not require climbing checks but a Balance check (DC 10) will enable PCs to move at up to twice normal speed down them. Failure at this skill check limits the PC in question to normal walking speed but this method of travel is still faster than climbing.

Climbing down the other sides of the crater requires a DC 20 (uneven rocky surface).

Descending into the crater in any fashion takes the PCs into the heart of the madness in these ruins. Proceed to the area descriptions below.

The Thoonach Crater

From the moment the PCs enter the crater, they have stepped over the edge into a place tainted by insanity and long corrupted by the presence of the otherworldly creatures that dwelt here. Be sure to take cues from the descriptive text given for each section. Even if you choose to paraphrase or use your own words, try to convey the sheer alien-ness of the setting.

As a note, the spell that placed everything in the Thoonach crater under magical stasis does have one lingering effect – none of the creatures within its confines can use *plane shift* in any way. This does not significantly affect the Thoon followers but it does limit the mobility of the creatures in the crater.

1: Perilous Passing (EL 7)

The rocky slope here is at a steep but passable incline. The earth around you is gouged out, a stark and violent expression of the huge impact that formed this terrible wound in the land long ago. The deeper you travel in to the crater, the more muted every sound seems, the darker everything appears and the colder the air around you becomes.

When the telepathic order came for the creatures of Thoon to evacuate the crater and board the nautiloid, a few were specifically left behind to deal with any intruders from the surface. Others were simply too far from the ship to reach it in time and were simply abandoned. The creatures in this encounter are both; they were too far behind to get to the vessel and were also given the task of slaughtering anyone entering the crater after the nautiloid departed.

Each slope has a pair of Thoon scythers hidden in its many crags and shadows. They remain motionless and difficult to detect until the PCs either move between them or detect them and make it apparent that the time for stealth is done. In either case, they attack!

Foes: These constructs are deadly creatures armed with alien scything blades. They can show no pity or mercy, begin the encounter as Hostile and are not subject to diplomacy or intimidation. Their sole task is to kill anything they come in contact with, including escaping slaves.

Thoon Scythers (2): hp 69, 69; See Appendix Three for combat details.

Tactics: If possible, one scyther will remain at a distance and use *searing light* while the other attacks the largest visible PCs. They are not being directed by intelligent creatures and as such their combat choices will be simple ones. Beyond flanking and using their *dispelling touch* on PCs with obvious active spell effects, they will not fight in any elegant way.

Development: Place the Thoon scythers roughly thirty feet apart and allow the PCs spot checks (DC 20) when they get within visual distance of them. Set up your combat map (if you use one during play) depending on whether the PCs get the jump on the scythers and can attack them at range. The broken ledge nature of the slope makes normal charging impossible and counts as difficult terrain for all concerned.

The Thoon scythers can get a surprise round on the PCs if they are not detected before combat begins. If they are seen first, the PCs receive a surprise round instead.

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level Characters: Do not scale the encounter for 7th level PCs.

9th-Level Characters: There are four Thoon scythers instead and they benefit from enough cover and advanced commands that their hiding places increase the Spot DC needed to detect them to 25. In this configuration, two scythers will hold back and use *searing light* while the other two attack in melee.

10th-Level Characters: As above for 9th level but increase the number of scythers to six. As above, two remain at range and four engage in melee, all flanking one target at a time if possible.

2: Dragon's Demise (EL -)

The bottom of the crater is a foul, wet mire with mud and ichor caking every corner in shallow pools of murky slime. Raised mounds of stone provide enough room to walk but all around the rocky paths, puddles steam into the shadows above.

Against the far west side of the crater, a strange figure looms up out of the cyst's muddy depths, a skeleton of vast size. Stripped bones and an empty-eyed skull are all that remain of a once-massive dragon, its fleshless carcass now moldering in the brackish wastes of this lifeless chamber. From the deep rents in its hardened remains, its demise was quite brutal and inhumanly violent.

On the other side of the pit, strange bands of ropy flesh have formed a wall of some sort covering what appears to be a passage leading off into the earth. Though the passage is dimly visible through small gaps in the motionless tentacles, the way past them is completely blocked.

This chamber is the final resting place of Obsidian, the black dragon protector of Drakewing Hallow. After chasing the insane entity let loose by Garris' possessed actions, it followed the beast into the Thoonach Crater and fought it in an epic struggle that shook the earth for hours. Neither could best the other; both creatures were ravaged by the terrible conflict. In the end, it was not force of arms or will that decided their vicious battle.

The combat between them awakened the mind flayers of Thoon trapped in stasis aboard their nautiloid. Together with their elder brain, they blasted both the extra-planar entity and Obsidian relentlessly. Though powerful, the black dragon could not withstand the mental assault on top of the dire wounds it had already suffered. The insane creature it was grappling with was stunned insensate; Obsidian was slain.

Though Obsidian's skeleton has been stripped for parts and nourishment, there is enough left of it to identify but not enough to be of any use. The bones are brittle and dry-rotting from within and there are no scales or flesh left. The poor noble creature was literally murdered and harvested – a sad end for a creature that spent his entire life protecting Xen'drik.

Of the insane creature that brought it to this horrid fate, there is no sign. The chaos entity was enslaved by the elder brain of Thoon, forced to power the mind flayer's reconstruction efforts on their ship and then bound into the salvaged elemental ring apparatus from the Sureflight. It is long gone, though psionic PCs might be able (at your discretion) to pick up on images of the battle and the beast's enslavement if they linger in this chamber or use their powers here. Use your imagination and make these flashes of imagery both disturbing and visceral; the PCs "seeing" them should be deeply disturbed by what they discover.

In any case, the room holds a great deal to see and nothing to encounter. The creature that was left here to engage the PC intruders was crushed beneath the falling rocks caused by the nautiloid's hastened departure. This will be discovered if any PC chooses to make a Search check in the crater. The DC is 5 since the beast's huge size is hard to miss.

There are several dozen rocks and boulders littering the bottom of the crater, no doubt shaken free by that strange ship as it flew out of here at such an unearthly speed. Some are no larger than a few feet while others are vast, towering twenty or thirty feet in height, sitting in small craters of their own making.

Beneath one of the largest stones, crushed into the murky, misting earth, a huge corpse can be seen. Half submerged in muddy water and its own gore, it has a rubbery violet face and tentacles where its mouth should be. The one thickly muscled arm visible out of the water ends in an axe blade literally fused into its stump of a wrist.

The PCs can examine the Thoon Hulk's corpse but it poses them no threat at all.

3: The Ring of Tendrils (EL 8)

Hundreds of wet, rubbery tendrils form a barrier here, a woven wall of barbed skin that bars the passage behind it. Through the slight gaps between the tentacles, the cave beyond stretches on into darkness but nothing else can be seen because of the obscuring rings of undulating, razor-edged flesh in your way.

The ring of tendrils is an aberration of biological waste left behind from the illithid's nightmarish mating practices. Formed by madcrafters of Thoon into doors and walls wherever a hive complex might need them, this one is a particularly large version and spans more than twenty feet wide and fifteen feet thick.

A ring of tendrils cannot move from where it is grown. It also cannot attack, communicate or take any action other than to constantly use *detect thoughts* and wait for a psionic command to open or close. Any creature capable of sending thoughts, including a kalashtar's *mindlink* ability or the Use Psionic Device skill (DC 15), can control the door automatically. *Charm monster* or other compulsion magic capable of affecting aberrations will also work.

The PCs' only other alternative may be to cut or force their way through. This will prove a daunting, but possible, task. The ring of tendrils is listed below as a trap since in many ways it serves as an obstacle based encounter for this scenario.

CR 8; psionic device; proximity trigger (*detect thoughts*); automatic reset; spell effect (wall of thorns, 13th-level); Search DC 10*; Disable Device n/a**

* The ring of tendrils is extremely easy to see. No Search check is needed.

** This obstacle cannot be disabled but can be dealt with like the physical result of a *wall of thorns* spell. Because of its living, regenerating nature, it regrows any passage hacked through it at a rate of five feet every two rounds. Fire and acid used to clear a path renders the passage permanent.

This barrier is not intended to be a true challenge of the PCs' abilities. It is more designed to help set the alien and deadly tone of the Thoonach crater.

4: Barren Vats (EL -, see text for 10th level PCs)

This chaotic chamber is filled with dozens of large, two foot wide shells, many of which still bear traces of a shimmering, silvery liquid. The shells are scattered around a bizarre track on the ground, an almost perfect circular ring of the same silvery fluid, smudged on one side.

In the back of the chamber, crushed under a fall of broken stone from the unstable ceiling above, a bloated corpse lies on the floor, pieces of glassware and hoses sticking out of its body.

This was the hive's quintessence storage room, a chamber that has seen much activity in the months since the Thoon followers were freed from their stasis. The madcrafter assigned to this room has been working constantly, boiling down exhausted slaves and pieces of wildlife into quintessence. This room was where the flesh and blood of Obsidian, the black dragon from area 2, was converted into power for the nautiloid's repair efforts.

Left behind to continue its work, the madcrafter sent its personal scythers to the vessel with its stockpile of quintessence. Then, before it could do anything else, it was caught under the rockslide triggered by the nautiloid's escape.

Search checks will reveal the following:

- **DC 15:** In among the broken shells are fragments of black dragon scale, fur, animal bones and leaves from several different kinds of trees.
- **DC 20:** There is an elven (Drow) skull under one pile of shattered shells. This is the remnant of a dark elf captive being boiled down for quintessence. The body converted but left the skull behind.
- **DC 10 with the Investigate feat:** The silver streak on the ground indicates that something heavy was lifted and carried out of the room, likely something containing a great deal of this odd liquid.

A Knowledge (nature or engineering) skill check (DC 15) will reveal that the corpse on the ground is not a normal living being but instead some kind of strange aberration and that the alchemical equipment sticking out of its body are actually part of it somehow.

There is nothing else of interest in this chamber but if the PCs are 10th level, a deadly surprise awaits them – the madcrafter of Thoon is not dead!

Foes: Visktakobb is a devout follower of Thoon, existing only to use the wisdom that Thoon grants for the betterment of all illithid enlightened by its teachings. The PCs are responsible for the loss of its servants, its quintessence and its current wounded state. They will have to die, their bodies rendered into silver fuel for further experiments if at all possible!

Visktakobb, Madcrafter of Thoon; hp 125 (currently 90); see Appendix Three: Rules for combat details. Cannot use its *launch spawn* ability to create allies but can still belch acid as normal.

Tactics: Visktakobb will use its *launch spawn* ability to cover anyone close to it with acid and create dangerous pools as a way of discouraging melee attackers. With its *mind blast* power, it will try to take out a single adversary at a time, preferably one injured by acid first.

Development: The madcrafter starts at 90 hit points because of the rock slide that left it unconscious. It awakens when the PCs enter its room but until it moves out from under the crushing earth on top of it, Visktakobb will not start benefiting from its Fast Healing 5.

If the PCs are having too easy a time of this fight, feel free to have the shadow flayer from area 6 come join it, striking an unarmored PC from behind with its Strength-draining poisoned dagger if at all possible.

5: The Flesh Pen (EL -)

Palettes of tattered cloth and rent hides cover the floor here, dirty sleeping mats scattered all over the rocky, uneven ground. There is a stench of sweat and decay that clings to the air, an almost visible fume of suffering that refuses to settle or fade.

Across the walls of the small cavern, writhing tentacles of flesh burrow in and out of the stone, slow moving pustule-covered flesh that oozes as it moves blindly around the room.

This room was where the Thoon followers kept their slaves and, until recently, it was where Oraan and the other shifters were being held along with the few survivors of the Sureflight and other unfortunates from the nearby jungle. The room is abandoned now and while the room is equipped with a ring of tendrils, the sickly aberrant construct is too ill to close properly and is left in this disgusting open state.

The ring of tendrils is ill because it has contracted slimy doom from coming into contact with an enslaved dark elf with the same disease. As such, the PCs can catch the terrible infection if they are not extremely

careful. PCs spending more than three rounds in this room must make the Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) required of the foul illness or contract slimy doom themselves.

Slimy Doom, Contact, DC 14, 1 day incubation, 1d4 Con. Victim turns into infectious goo from the inside out. Slimy doom's Constitution damage is particularly nasty; each time a victim suffers Constitution loss from this disease, he or she must make the DC 14 saving throw again or 1 point of the damage is permanent.

6: Ambush! (EL 8)

The walls here are wet and steaming, the stone warped in strange patterns that almost look like an alien script or symbols too insane for the mortal mind to comprehend. There are deep shadows clinging everywhere, places where light itself seems to be rotting away.

Lurking here is an assassin of the Thoon fellowship, a shadow slayer waiting in ambush to strike with the lethal precision it was bred to possess. Set up your battle map as a featureless turn in the corridor and position Ill'tess on the inside edge of the curve. Invisible and hidden (Spot DC 30 to detect even before *invisibility* is considered), he will likely claim a surprise attack against the PCs.

Foes: Ill'tess is a deadly killer with all the skills and training of a stalker and the tools to bring down even the toughest of foes. If it is able to strike from surprise, it is often assured of a single shot victory. The PCs are its sworn enemies right now, more than enough incentive for it to show them no mercy and accept only their deaths as surrender.

Ill'tess, Shadow Slayer (1); hp 50; see Appendix Three: Rules for combat details, begins the battle *invisible* from a consumed potion.

Tactics: The Slavemaster in area 7 has demanded that the heads of the PCs remain intact so that it can feast on their brains itself. Thus, Ill'tess will not use its extract special ability. All of its other tricks are fair game, however, and it will use its abilities to the fullest. It is especially fond of its daggers, favoring them against lightly armored opponents because they likely have very low Strength scores and a lucky round of poison can render them completely helpless.

If Ill'tess is unable to make a surprise attack, he will still fight the PCs to the best of his ability. The shadow slayer has a great deal of pride and he will not return to the Slavemaster in area 7 without at least one head to show for himself.

Treasure: Ill'tess is wearing a small brooch shaped like a set of tendrils around an eye. This is a psionic device with only one purpose. It emanates the word "Open" telepathically in front of the wearer to a distance of ten feet and "Close" behind the wearer out to five feet. This device allows the psychically challenged Ill'tess to use the rings of tendrils (and will do the same for the PCs). An hour after being removed from Ill'tess, the necklace dissolves into a vaporizing pool of quintessence and vanishes.

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level Characters: Ill'tess was also hurt in the collapse following the exodus of the Thoon nautiloid. Reduce his hit points to 40 and give PCs a Search check (DC 20) to notice lavender blood where he is standing in ambush.

9th-Level Characters: Ill'tess is armed with adamantite daggers, giving him the ability to pierce most kinds of damage reduction. In addition, his personal poison is very potent, inflicting +1 point of Strength damage when it activates.

10th-Level Characters: The slavemaster has insisted that Ill'tess have back up against the PCs. If the combat lasts more than four rounds, a Thoon Soldier emerges on round 5 from the corridor leading to area 7. Four rounds after this (on round 9), if the shadow slayer is still alive, a second soldier arrives. Use the Thoon soldier statistics from Appendix Three: Rules.

7: Slavemaster's Stand (EL 8)

The corridor ends in another thick wall of barbed tentacles, surging and writhing around each other to bar your passage beyond.

This ring of tendrils is identical to the one at area 3 and can be circumvented, controlled or passed through in the same manner.

CR 8; psionic device; proximity trigger (*detect thoughts*); automatic reset; spell effect (wall of thorns, 13th-level); Search DC 10*; Disable Device n/a**

* The ring of tendrils is extremely easy to see. No Search check is needed.

** This obstacle cannot be disabled but can be dealt with like the physical result of a *wall of thorns* spell. Because of its living, regenerating nature, it regrows any passage hacked through it at a rate of five feet every two rounds. Fire and acid used to clear a path renders the passage permanent.

Once past the ring, the PCs see the end of their mission, for good or ill. As with all descriptive text, especially long passages like this, do not feel constrained to using it verbatim. Paraphrase if you like and allow the PCs to interrupt the action as soon as the area description is done.

A large chamber stretches out beyond the ring of lashing tendrils, a gallery of alien stone ending in a dais of carved granite set into the dark stone of the uneven ground thrumming beneath your feet. On either side of the dais, a pile of bodies lie silhouetted in the odd violent glow of a dozen crystals imbedded in the walls. Several figures are bound and kneeling around the outer edge of the dais, crouched between you and the terrifying figure standing atop it.

Pale purple in hue and armored in a macabre mix of black scales and humanoid flesh, the tentacle faced creature gazes at you imperiously as you enter.

This figure is Oolaraush, the slavemaster of the hive and a disciple of Thoon. His armor is what it appears to be, a suit of protective scales and leather culled from the bodies of Obsidian and the many slaves he has personally consumed during his last few active months.

"This night sees the return of the word of Thoon to this world, just as it sees your demise. From your dying thoughts, I will take bloody vengeance for the damage you have done to us!"

One hand spreads forward and at this silent command, four of the prisoners stand up weakly and turn to face you. Their eyes vacant, their skin tormented, they gasp as blood vessels start to distend and rise to the surface of their withered flesh. Behind them, standing between them and the dais, a dark eyed elf in rich but tattered clothing, regards you with vacant hatred.

"Now witness the power of Thoon!"

Oolaraush is furious with the PCs for their interference and the destruction wreaked by them forcing the elder brain to flee as it did. All that it can think of now is revenge against them, a vendetta that begins by showing them the horrors that can be inflicted up them by the corrupting power of Thoon.

This is a climactic battle in two parts.

Endgame, Part One

The first part is a battle that's more gruesome and disturbing than directly challenging. Describe the hopeless looks on the thralls faces as they attack the PCs against their wills, knowing they are about to die no matter how the combat fares.

Foes: Oolaraush's initial wave is a show of his power, directing his infiltrator pawn, the hapless Captain Haelaroth of the ill-fated Sureflight, to send his own crew against the PCs. Oolaraush takes great delight in feeling the anguish in his infiltrator's mind at the thought of forcing his men into overdrive healing (which is how the combat begins).

As with the rest of the Thoon-oriented combats in this adventure, there is no room for diplomacy here. The PCs' enemies literally have no choice but fight and cannot be saved even if the PCs try to spare them. It is a very hard lesson in the utter horror that is Thoon.

Enslaved Crewmates (4); mixed male and female Thoon thralls; hp 14, 14, 14, 14; see Appendix Three: Rules for combat statistics.

Fallen Captain Haelaroth d'Lyrandar (1); male elven Thoon infiltrator; hp 37; see Appendix Three: Rules of combat statistics.

Tactics: The hapless thralls have to fight but they do not have to fight smart. They all know they have been doomed by the manipulations of Oolaraush and are eager to end their pain. They will not flank, they will not fight defensively and they do not use any advanced tactics.

As soon as one or more of the thralls reaches the point where they can explode from overdrive healing, Oolaraush makes Haelaroth command him or her to do so. This accompanied by Oolaraush saying, *"Feel Thoon's wrath!"* Oolaraush is not particularly interested in maximizing the effects of the first detonation but he will try to position the others more tactically. He just wants to horrify the PCs by forcing them to witness an innocent being detonate from within.

Haelaroth is an honorable man and hates the vile commands of his "master" but is powerless to resist them. He openly weeps during battle, unable to even speak on his own. He will be forced to fight intelligently but PCs may notice (Sense Motive, DC 15) a look of gratitude in his eyes when he is struck down in combat.

Scaling the Encounter

Do not scale this encounter at all. It is only Oolaraush's opening gambit. It is meant to be a show of power over the weak flesh of the unenlightened, not a serious trial or test of the PCs' mettle.

Endgame, Part Two

Once the last of his pawns are dispensed with, Oolaraush enters the fray himself. Armed and girded for battle, he is an imposing figure capable of striking fear into the hearts of lesser men just by his sinister appearance alone.

With a blast of power, the slavemaster sends a surge of energy through his captives, sending all those kneeling in front of him flying to either side of the room with bone jarring force.

"Come, flat toothed fools! Come to your doom! I will send your brains to Thoon myself!"

Foe: Oolaraush fights alone, arrogant and utterly convinced of his eventual ascension as a god in the eyes of Thoon. He is a powerful, even terrifying opponent and, given that he comes on the heels of another combatant, he might easily overwhelm the PCs. Pay very close attention to the Development and Scaling sections below for instructions on how to properly tailor this battle to the experience level of the PCs and their abilities.

Oolaraush, Slavemaster Lord (1); male disciple of Thoon (mind flayer cleric 4); hp 90; see Appendix Three: Rules for combat statistics

Tactics: Arrogant to a fault, Oolaraush has not taken advantage of the delay from his dying pawns to gird himself with spells. He instead wades into battle with his heavy flail and clerical combat magic. He prefers using spells to psionics but is more than willing to unleash his mind powers on anyone unfortunate enough to face him in combat.

Oolaraush fights to the death. He knows the nautiloid is not coming back or, if it does, it will be a long time coming. He thus has nothing to lose. If he can kill the PCs, he can found a temple to Thoon in this crater and start rebuilding what has been lost. Thus, the PCs must die for any of his ambitions to be realized. That being the case, he will show no mercy and will not allow himself to be routed.

Development: You can choose to aid the PCs in this battle, especially if they are having a hard time of things, by allowing the captives to help. Do this abstractly by letting them inflict their number in damage each round against the slavemaster. Describe this as follows (or paraphrase as you wish):

Behind the mind flayer, a muscular older man with a veritable mane of graying hair and sharp teeth rises to his feet. As his urging, others manage to stand and, with a determined look of inner rage, they throw themselves against their former master.

As they attack, their skin becomes heavily furred, their hands twist into feral claws and their lips curl back to reveal growing fangs!

Using this method of aid, if Oraan and five slaves still remain to be rescued, they collectively do six points of damage each round to Oolaraush in addition to the PCs efforts. This will add up quickly, giving the PCs the small amount of help they might need to be victorious.

In addition, if a PC is about to be slain by Oolaraush, let an Eldeen shifter interpose him or herself and take the lethal blow instead. Only make this sacrifice once; its dramatic effect is lost if done more often.

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level Characters: Unbeknownst to the PCs, Oolaraush has had to deal with an uprising among the Eldeen slaves and still bears the scars of their near-escape. Reduce his starting hit points to 60 and consider all of his healing clerical spells already cast.

9th-Level Characters: Oolaraush is not only overconfident, he is also arrogant enough to have already expended his clerical spells for the pure joy of executing slaves with *inflict* attacks. He only retains his *cure moderate wounds* spell and a single *shield of faith*.

10th-Level Characters: In addition to his full powers (though he still has not increased his abilities beforehand), he possesses a special *bracelet of friends* with two charms that allows him to summon Thoon soldiers – one per charm. These charms are the origin of the soldiers mentioned in the 10th level Scaling entry for area 6. If one or both soldiers were encountered in area 6, the charms are expended and cannot be used here.

Ending the Adventure

Once Oolaraush falls, the power of Thoon in the crater is forever broken. The PCs are free to lead the surviving slaves out of the pit and back to the surface. From them, especially Oraan the Eldeen Wildfather, they can learn what happened to the shifters once they were ambushed by the Keeper of the Grove outside the temple. On his way out, Oraan retrieves a small cluster of wooden vines from the site of the PCs' battle with the Keeper of the Grove.

Their ride awaits in the form of Glitch and Lady Cannonball. Even if it is a tight fit, Glitch can figure out how to pack everyone inside his tumbler and gets them all back to Radiant Hold without delay. No further misadventures await the PCs during the return voyage. Oraan is reunited with his son Karro and his son-in-law Xandrin. They all have a great deal to discuss but before the serious business of their return is dealt with, the heroes of the day must be thanked.

When you and the PCs are ready to conclude the scenario, read or paraphrase the following:

As opposed to the grand, formal ceremony that began this entire ordeal, you find yourselves now in a private room in Radiant Hold, accompanied by other two others. Lord Corvalis is here, a fully healed and more dignified looking Elder Oraan standing beside him.

Your leader speaks, quiet and proud. "Once again, you have proven your worth, both to me and to the Covenant. You have triumphed over terrible odds and brought back to me a past I thought forever lost."

Oraan, Wildfather of the Eldeen shifters you rescued, steps forward and bows to each of you in turn. "You have saved my life and for that, I am in your debt. You have also struck a deep wound against an evil darker than any I have ever seen."

Reaching out with one aged but still virile hand, he touches each of you on the chest in turn, his head bowed in respect. In his other hand, Oraan is holding a woven sphere of oaken branches. "I fear we have not seen the last of the evil force. You defeated a handful of vile creatures but I witnessed many, many others in that vessel of theirs."

When his fingers have pressed against you, a soft warmth begins to build. "Please accept this gift, a small token of my gratitude and an onus of what is to come."

As the old shifter druid speaks, Lord Corvalis salutes you. "Come what may, we will face it together. You have more than earned a few days of rest, my friends. Let us schedule the apocalypse for another night, shall we?"

"Today we feast!"

Here ends Noble Savages.

Adventure Questions

1. Did the PCs take the time to roleplay through their award ceremony, treating it like the honor it was?
 - a) Yes; they set a good, cordial example for members of the Covenant of Light. (500 xp / 1000 gp)
 - b) Somewhat; they were either flippant or disinterested, acting like it did not matter. (50 xp / 500 gp)
2. Which best describes the apparent attitude of the PCs toward their mission during the scenario?
 - a) Very professional and concerned, acting as if lives were at stake. (1000 xp / 0 gp)
 - b) Mixed reactions; some PCs were focused and controlled while others were less so. (500 xp / 0 gp)
 - c) Poor reactions; the PCs did not seem to care about the mission or their objective. (400 xp / 0 gp)
 - d) Appalling. There was no apparent personal motivation aside from their membership in the Covenant of Light for them to even go on this mission. (300 xp / 0 gp)
3. How did the PCs handle their encounter in the Lava Pool?
 - a) The salamanders were handily slain and Lady Cannonball freed quickly. (500 xp / 1000 gp)
 - b) Some heat damage and injuries were sustained but they ultimately triumphed. (350 xp / 500 gp)
 - c) The PCs did not defeat the salamanders. (150 xp / 0 gp)
4. Did the PCs defeat the Keeper of the Grove?
 - a) Completely, the treant was put down without significantly harming the PCs. (500 xp / 1000 gp)
 - b) The treant was defeated but not before taking down one or more of the PCs. (300 xp / 500 gp)
 - c) The PCs were defeated or had to flee in some way from the rampaging sylvan terror. (0 xp / 0 gp)
5. How did the PCs fare against the followers and minions of Thoon on their way to face Oolaraush in the depths of the Thoonach crater?
 - a) They were able to overcome every challenge without losing anyone. (500 xp / 2000 gp)
 - b) The party met every challenge but was badly depleted before reaching area 7. (300 xp / 1000 gp)
 - c) Only luck and sheer force of arms saved them; there were no tactics. (100 xp / 500 gp)
 - d) The Thoon servitors mangled the PCs; they were all defeated. (0 xp / 0 gp)
6. How did the PCs fare when it came to rescuing the prisoners from Oolaraush?
 - a) Oraan and at least three other slaves were liberated from their illithid captor. (500 xp / 1000 gp)
 - b) Only Oraan and one or two others were saved; the rest perished because the PCs took too long to reach them. (250 xp / 500 gp)
 - c) None of the prisoners survived; the PCs ran out of time and they were all consumed. (0 xp / 0 gp)
7. What best describes the PCs' performance against Oolaraush, the Slavemaster of Thoon?
 - a) The illithid slavemonger was defeated soundly by the righteous PCs, going down like the foul spawn of evil he was. (1000 xp / 3000 gp)
 - b) They had a rough time of things but managed to slay Oolaraush. (550 xp / 2000 gp)
 - c) Had it not been for the captives getting involved and helping, the PCs would have been slain and the battle lost. (250 xp / 1000 gp)
 - d) The PCs did not defeat Oolaraush. They were defeated by his wicked convictions and potent abilities. (0 xp / 0 gp)
8. How would you rate the group's roleplaying?
 - a) Fantastic. Everyone had interesting and engaging characters that interacted with the adventure in very fun ways. (500 xp / 0 gp)
 - b) Good. Most everyone had interesting and engaging characters that interacted with the adventure in very fun ways. (150 xp / 0 gp)
 - c) Okay. There was some roleplaying. (100 xp / 0 gp)
 - d) None. They treated the adventure as a set of objectives. There was no roleplaying. (50 xp / 0 gp)

Story Objects:

"Star of Brilliance"

Story Object Code: EXCL23

You have served the Covenant of Light very well and the Lord of Radiant Hold has rewarded you for your efforts. You have been gifted with a medallion called the Star of Brilliance. This crystal necklace glows softly and, while it has no innate power of its own, it provides you one extra use of Blessing of the Light each day.

"Touch of the Wild"

Story Object Code: EXCL24

The gift of a grateful Eldeen druid elder has left a small invisible mark at the base of your throat. This symbol attunes you to the energies of life itself, allowing you the spell-like ability to cast deathwatch (CL 1st) at will as a standard action.

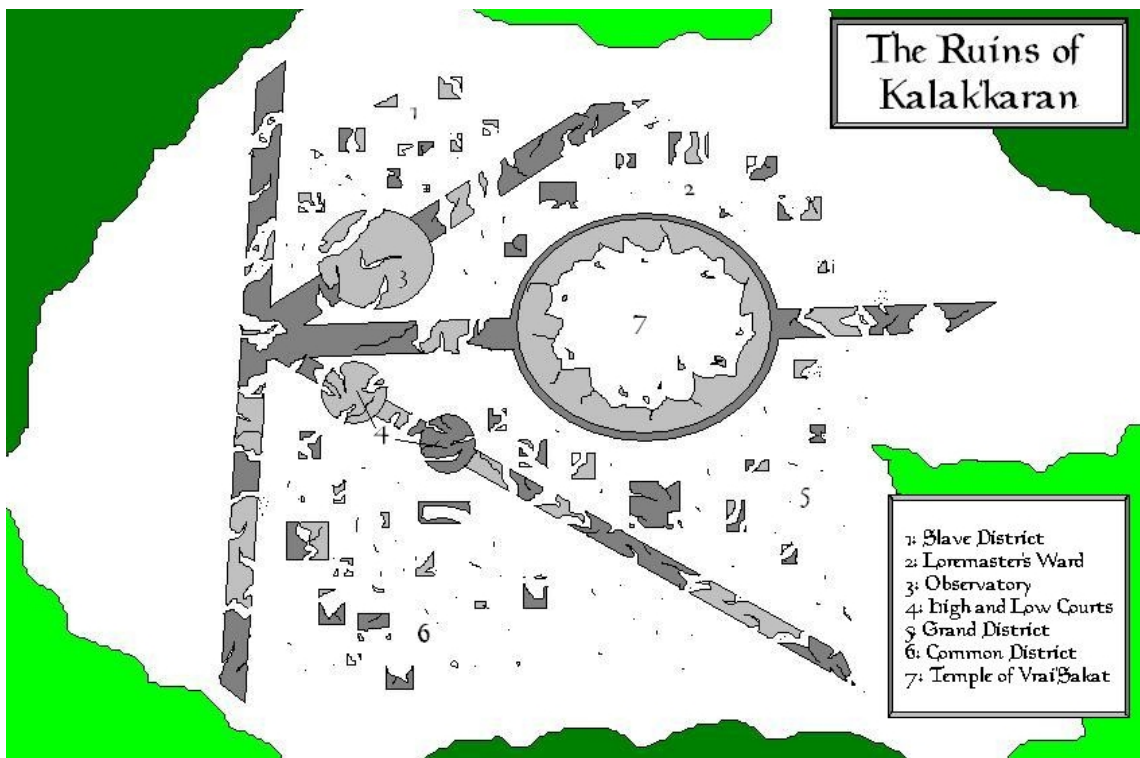
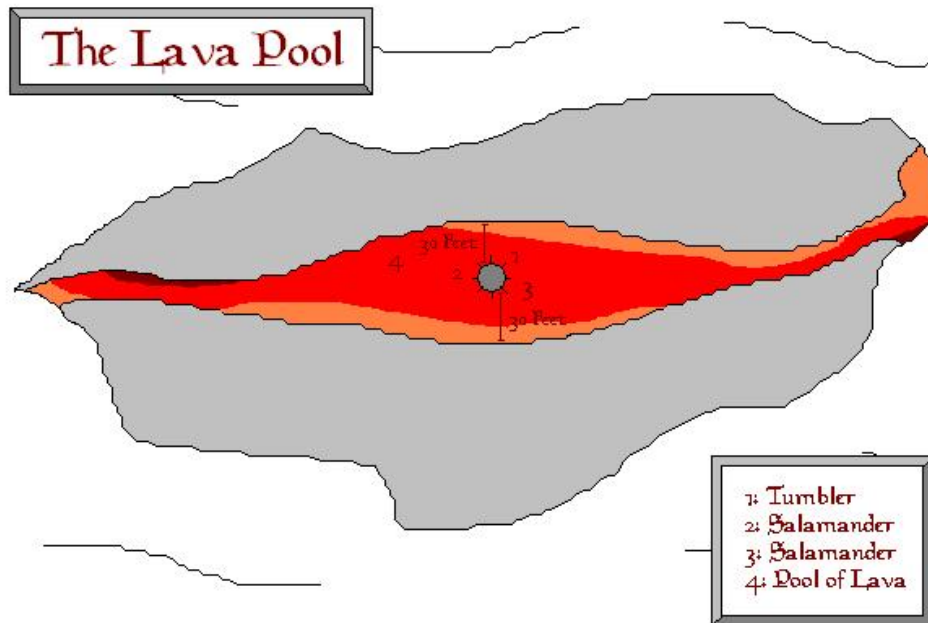
When the Wildfather gave you this gift, he also suggested that it would have greater uses in the future. Just what those might be remains a mystery for now.

Appendix One: Player Handout

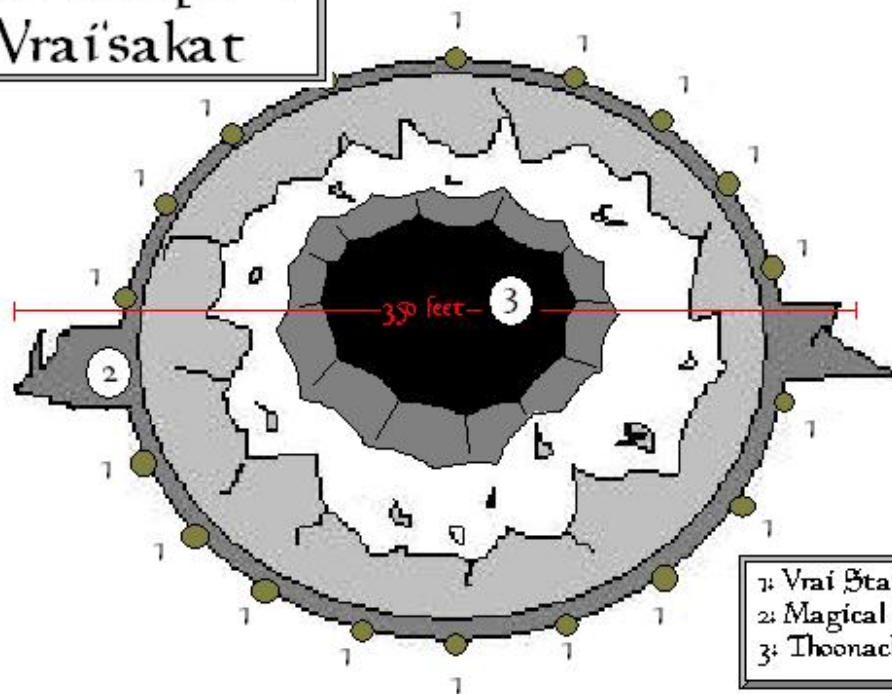
The Star of Brilliance



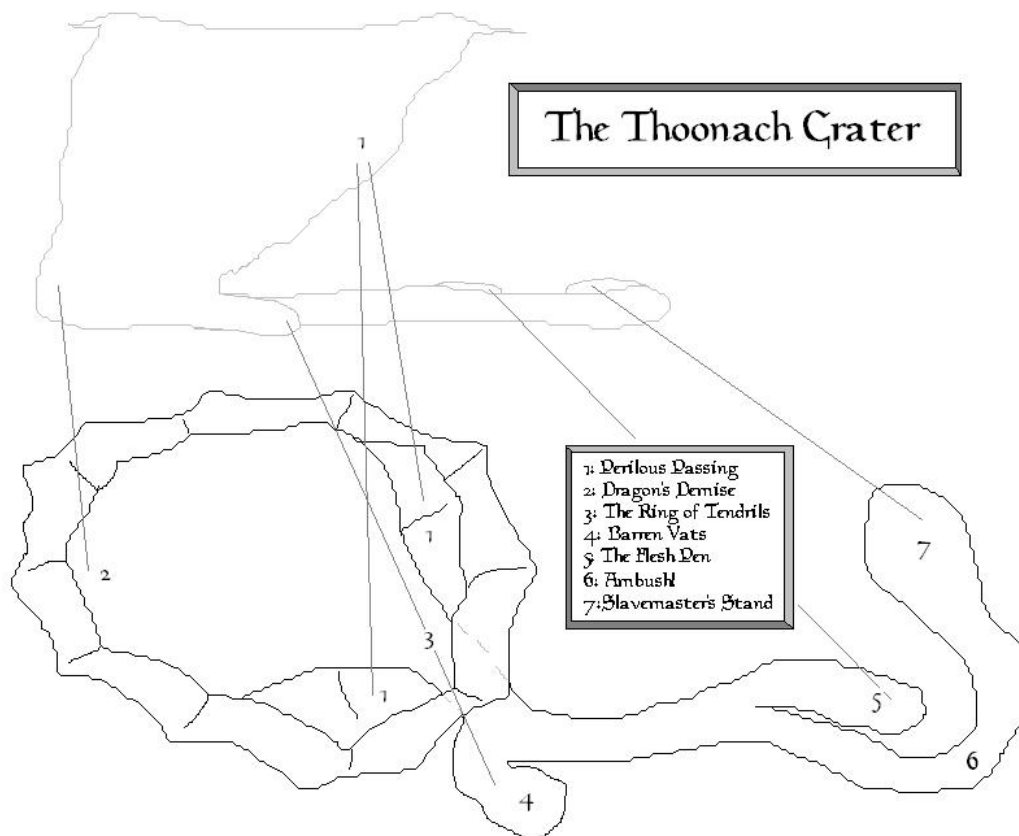
Appendix Two: Maps



The Temple of Vrai'sakat



The Thoonach Crater



Appendix Three: Rules (Flayers of Thoon)

MIND FLAYERS OF THOON

Mind flayers have long explored the cosmos beyond their underground lairs, traveling the Inner Planes and Outer Planes aboard vessels they call nautiloids. One such vessel, on a mission of exploration over a century ago, traveled farther than others. Setting a course for the uncharted reaches of the Astral Plane, the mind flayers crossed over into the Far Realm, a place of madness and disorder.

They returned or, perhaps, were sent back dramatically changed, capable of great feats of construct crafting and selective breeding. Though the physical changes were dramatic, the more profound change was to the very consciousness of those illithids. They now speak reverently of a being/god/philosophy known to them as Thoon. The mind flayers of Thoon claim to be able to commune with this presence from the Far Realm, as well as receive instructions from it.

So far those "instructions" haven't demonstrated any long-term purpose. The mind flayers of Thoon have traversed the planes, moving from place to out-of-the-way place and gathering a mysterious substance they call "quintessence." After collecting this substance from captured creatures and rare materials, the mind flayers of Thoon either store it in glowing ovoid structures called matrices or use it to power their constructs and bizarre creatures.

Most mind flayers of Thoon are identical to the mind flayers described in the *Monster Manual*, but others have been twisted by their time in the Far Realm or through experimentation with quintessence. This entry describes the altered illithids, along with their humanoid spies, construct servitors, and the Thoon elder brain.

Because of their strong connection to mind flayers, the non-illithid creatures described in this section require Knowledge (dungeoneering) for their lore checks instead of the typical skill. Because of the secrecy and obscurity of this cult, many lore DCs are also higher than normal. To even know the word "Thoon" requires a DC 20 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check, which is assumed in the lore entries.

WHAT IS THOON?

Thoon could be anything from an epic-level outsider to a demigod to a full-fledged deity.

Thoon might also be nothing more than a guiding philosophy—the illithids' term for the collection of quintessence and the strange experiments that they conduct.

In fact, you don't necessarily need to decide what Thoon is. Thoon itself is likely to remain beyond the characters' direct knowledge—unless the PCs go into the Far Realm or Thoon somehow emerges into the rest of the D&D cosmology.

One of the reasons the PCs might find it difficult to learn about Thoon is that the mind flayers themselves are incapable of describing Thoon in detail, even under magical compulsion. They genuinely seem unable to understand questions such as "Is Thoon a god?" The mind flayers answer, "Thoon is Thoon, and Thoon is all!" Almost any question about Thoon's nature gets the same response.

THOON DISCIPLE

This human-shaped creature has an octopuslike head with four lashing tentacles. It is clad in ornate, heavy armor and wields a flail.

THOON DISCIPLE

CR 10

Mind flayer cleric 4

NE Medium aberration

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +13, Spot +13

Languages Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22

(+1 Dex, +9 armor, +3 natural)

hp 90 (12 HD)

SR 25

Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +15

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares) in full plate, base speed 30 ft.

Melee 4 tentacles +11 each (1d4+1) or

Melee heavy flail +12/+7 (1d10+2/19–20)

Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Base Atk +9; Grp +10

Atk Options Improved Disarm, improved grab

Special Actions extract, *mind blast*, rebuke undead 7/day (+6, 2d6+8, 4th)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 4th):

2nd—*cure moderate wounds*, *hold person* (2) (DC 17), *spiritual weapon*^D

1st—*cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *protection from good*^D, *shield of faith* (2)

0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic* (3), *light*

D: Domain spell. Deity: Thoon. Domains: Evil, War.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th):

At will—*charm monster* (DC 18), *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *levitate*, *plane shift*, *suggestion* (DC 17)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 20, Wis 21, Cha 19

SA extract, improved grab, *mind blast*, spell-like abilities, spells

Feats Ability Focus (*mind blast*), Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Martial Weapon Proficiency (heavy flail), Weapon Focus (heavy flail)

Skills Bluff +14, Concentration +19, Diplomacy +15, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Hide +4, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (religion) +15, Knowledge (the planes) +13, Listen +13, Move Silently +4, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +20, Spot +13

Possessions +1 full plate, +1 heavy flail

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a Thoon disciple must hit a creature of up to Large size with a tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity.

If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and attaches a tentacle to the opponent's head. A Thoon disciple can grab a Huge or larger creature, but only if it can somehow reach the foe's head. If a Thoon disciple begins its turn with at least one tentacle attached, it can try to attach its remaining tentacles with a single grapple check. The opponent can escape with a single successful grapple check or an Escape Artist check, but the Thoon disciple gets a +2 circumstance bonus for every tentacle that was attached at the beginning of the opponent's turn.

Extract (Ex) If a Thoon disciple begins its turn with all four tentacles attached to its opponent and makes a successful grapple check, it extracts that opponent's

Shadow flayers have a natural rivalry with Thoon thralls, which are individually much weaker but often make better spies because they're so well disguised. The Thoon elder brain sometimes has to discipline shadow flayers who treat Thoon thralls too cruelly.

Shadow flayers also take pains to distinguish themselves from "ordinary" mind flayers, pointing out their controlled breeding. Each shadow flayer believes that it is the acme of mind flayer evolution, purpose-bred to do the will of Thoon.

THOON INFILTRATOR

Everything about this person seems normal, until you see the cluster of metallic tentacles protruding from the back of the neck.

THOON INFILTRATOR

CR 5

Always CE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Common; telepathy 100 ft. (only with Thoon thrall)

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Dodge (+3 Dex, +3 armor)

hp 37 (5 HD); fast healing 5; eventual comeback

Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +5

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee rapier +8 (1d6+2/18–20)

Ranged throat dart +8 (1d4+2 plus poison)

Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Base Atk +5; Grp +7

Atk Options poison (DC 15, 1d6 Wis/1d6 Wis)

Special Actions spawn thrall, submerge tentacles

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th):

At will—*detect magic*

3/day—*charm person* (DC 14)

1/day—*dimension door*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 17

SA poison, spawn thrall, spell-like abilities, throat dart

Feats Dodge, Sense Quintessence*

* New feat; see sidebar.

Skills Balance +5, Bluff +11, Diplomacy +15, Disguise +11

(+13 acting), Hide +11, Intimidate +5, Jump +4, Listen +1,

Move Silently +11, Sense Motive +9, Spot +1, Tumble +11

Advancement by character class; **Favored Class** rogue

Possessions masterwork studded leather, masterwork rapier

Eventual Comeback (Ex) The Far Realm parasite that powers a Thoon infiltrator can survive the death of its host, then revive that host. When a Thoon infiltrator reaches –10 hit points, it doesn't actually die. All life functions cease, however, and the Thoon infiltrator is functionally a corpse for the purpose of resolving spells that affect dead bodies. It takes a DC 25 Search check to detect a slight vibration in the neck-tentacles that indicates that the creature is not fully dead. Removing the tentacles from the neck (a bloody process that requires a full-round action) kills a Thoon infiltrator for good.

If the tentacles aren't removed, a Thoon infiltrator can effectively resurrect itself. After it has spent a month in the near-death state, a Thoon infiltrator returns to consciousness at full normal hit points. It then frees itself from burial with *dimension door* and tries to reestablish contact with its mind flayer masters.

Throat Dart (Su) The tentacles that represent a Thoon infiltrator's parasite aspect can extend themselves up the infiltrator's throat and out its mouth, from where they can shoot a poison dart at a nearby target. The dart functions as a thrown weapon with a range increment of 10 feet.

Spawn Thrall (Su) If a Thoon infiltrator can spend an uninterrupted minute with a helpless humanoid, the infiltrator can turn it into a Thoon thrall by snaking its thin neck-tentacles into the victim's mouth. Sleeping creatures automatically awaken when a Thoon infiltrator attempts this, so it works only on creatures that are bound, magically held, or truly unconscious. A Thoon infiltrator can create one Thoon thrall per week in this manner.

Submerge Tentacles (Ex) A Thoon infiltrator usually hides its neck-tentacles with a cloak, high collar, or scarf. But if it expects close scrutiny, it can submerge the tentacles beneath the flesh, leaving only a rough patch of skin behind. Doing so takes a full-round action.

While its tentacles are submerged, a Thoon infiltrator can't use its spell-like abilities, throat dart, telepathy, or spawn thrall. If a Thoon infiltrator dies with its tentacles submerged, no search short of dismemberment can reveal the tentacles' presence, and the Thoon infiltrator's eventual comeback ability functions normally.

Skills The facial features of a Thoon infiltrator are as malleable as clay, granting the creature a +8 racial bonus on Disguise checks.

The parasitic Thoon infiltrator is an undercover spy for the mind flayers of Thoon, able to build secret networks of Thoon thralls while appearing as innocuous as an ordinary human.

Strategies and Tactics

A Thoon infiltrator is a good recurring villain for low-level PCs. In time, it can lead them into contact with the more powerful mind flayers of Thoon. It functions particularly well in the company of several Thoon thralls it has created.

In battle, a Thoon infiltrator is a capable sword-wielder, and it can surprise an unsuspecting PC with its throat darts. Perhaps more important is its ability to direct the actions of any Thoon thrall it is with. The mere presence of a Thoon infiltrator makes each Thoon thrall more effective.

Because the mind flayers of Thoon have only so many Far Realm parasites, each Thoon infiltrator is a precious resource. Fortunately for the illithids, a Thoon infiltrator can escape death at the hands of the PCs, either in the short term (by

of heritage. Unlike the other followers of Thoon, each Thoon infiltrator began life in the Far Realm and remembers something of its existence there.

Because the Far Realm is beyond the rest of the universe—and beyond reason itself—Thoon infiltrators remember their time there imperfectly, and those memories are almost impossible to convey to others. Each Thoon infiltrator has an aching desire to return to the madness of the Far Realm, and most believe that the ultimate goal of Thoon is a return to the Far Realm or an intrusion of the Far Realm into the rest of the universe.

THOON THRALL

Purple veins pop out from the person's skin as he—or perhaps it—gazes at you, wild-eyed.

THOON THRALL, HUMAN COMMONER

CR 3

Male Thoon thrall human commoner 1

LE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +7

Languages Common; telepathy 100 ft. (only with Thoon infiltrator); thrall to Thoon infiltrator

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13

(+1 Dex, +2 armor, +1 natural)

hp 14 (3 HD); dormancy; overdrive healing 5; immolate Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +2

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares); 30 ft. when dormant

Melee spear +6 (1d8+4)

Ranged spear +4 (1d8+4)

Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Base Atk +2; Grp +5

Abilities Str 16, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 7

SA immolate

Feats Alertness, Great Fortitude, Weapon Focus (spear)

Skills Craft (any) +4, Listen +7, Spot +7

Possessions leather armor, 2 spears

Dormancy (Ex) A Thoon thrall spends most of its time in a dormant state. When it is dormant, a Thoon thrall's overdrive healing doesn't function, and the thrall doesn't move at full speed. It appears exactly as it did before a Thoon infiltrator turned it into a Thoon thrall.

As a full-round action, a Thoon thrall can end its dormancy. Throbbing, veinlike growths emerge from its skin, and the thrall's true nature becomes apparent. If a Thoon infiltrator is within 100 feet, a Thoon thrall can end its dormancy as a swift action.

Once a Thoon thrall ends its dormancy, it can't return to a dormant state. Due to overdrive healing, a Thoon thrall cannot survive out of dormancy for long.

Thrall to Thoon Infiltrator (Ex) A Thoon thrall responds to the commands of the nearest Thoon infiltrator as if dominated, with no save allowed.

Overdrive Healing (Su) This ability works like fast healing 5, but a thrall can gain hit points beyond its full normal hit points as temporary hit points. A thrall's skin begins to blister and swell when this happens, and the thrall grows visibly larger. Once its temporary hit points equal or exceed its full normal hit points, a Thoon thrall must make a save every round or explode (see below).

Immolate (Su) When a Thoon thrall is fully healed and has temporary hit points equal to or greater than its full normal hit points, it might explode, its body unable to contain the energy within. At the end of its turn, if a Thoon thrall's temporary hit points equal or exceed

its full normal hit points, it must succeed on a DC 11 Fortitude save. If it fails, it explodes, dealing 3d6 points of fire damage to all creatures within a 10-foot-radius burst, plus an extra 1d6 points of fire damage for each Thoon infiltrator and additional Thoon thrall within 30 feet (Reflex DC 11 half). The explosion kills the Thoon thrall.

A Thoon thrall can voluntarily fail this save, but it does so only on a direct order from a Thoon infiltrator.

Thoon thralls are the foot soldiers of the secret cabals that the Thoon infiltrators direct. They remain in their humanoid guise until discovered or ordered into battle, then they undergo a final transformation and go out in a blaze of glory.

The Thoon thrall presented here uses a 1st-level human commoner as the base creature. It had the following ability scores before racial modifications: Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Strategies and Tactics

Thoon thralls work well in the company of other Thoon thralls and a Thoon infiltrator to direct them. Beyond that, they're straightforward grunts that can take a lot of punishment—especially if they get a round or two of overdrive healing before the battle begins.

The most important strategic element to remember about Thoon thralls is that the Thoon infiltrator that created the thrall needs to carefully consider whether it's worth throwing away a thrall in a particular battle. A Thoon thrall can take its true form only once. After it leaves dormancy, overdrive healing forces it to immolate before long. So, an awakened thrall is always a dead thrall—an expended resource to the Thoon infiltrator.

Ecology

Unlike the transformation into a Thoon infiltrator, which completely remakes the creature, the transformation into a Thoon thrall leaves the creature largely intact. The creature looks the same, behaves the same, and retains its own free will—unless a Thoon infiltrator is around. A Thoon thrall must eat, sleep, and breathe as it did before becoming a Thoon

THOON THRALL LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering) can learn more about Thoon thralls. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs. A character who has ranks in Knowledge (nature) can attempt this check, but the DCs increase by 10.

Knowledge (Dungeoneering)

DC Result

- | | |
|----|--|
| 20 | This is a Thoon thrall, a member of a secret cabal that reveres mind flayers. When it comes out of dormancy, it grows freakishly large, then explodes. |
| 25 | The mind flayers of Thoon control Thoon thralls through human-looking intermediaries called Thoon infiltrators. |

Special Qualities: A Thoon thrall retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains the following special quality.

Dormancy (Ex): A Thoon thrall spends most of its time in a dormant state. When it is dormant, a Thoon thrall's overdrive healing doesn't function, and the thrall doesn't move at full speed. It appears exactly as it did before a Thoon infiltrator turned it into a Thoon thrall.

As a full-round action, a Thoon thrall can end its dormancy. Throbbing, veinlike growths emerge from its skin, and the thrall's true nature becomes apparent. If a Thoon infiltrator is within 100 feet, then a Thoon thrall can end its dormancy as a swift action.

Once a Thoon thrall ends its dormancy, it can't return to a dormant state. Due to overdrive healing, a Thoon thrall cannot survive out of dormancy for long.

Level Adjustment: —. Because of the total vulnerability to Thoon infiltrator domination and the nature of overdrive healing, Thoon thralls are unsuitable as PCs.

THOON SOLDIER

This biped is covered with armor plates, yet it moves with a sinuous quality. With a liquid, bubbling sound, it extrudes claws and axe-blades from its arms.

THOON SOLDIER

CR 8

Always N Medium construct

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Listen** +1, **Spot** +1

Languages speaks specific Undercommon phrases; understands telepathic commands

AC 20, **touch** 13, **flat-footed** 17

(+3 **Dex**, +7 **natural**)

hp 75 (10 **HD**)

Immune construct immunities

Resist fire 10

Fort +3, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee 2 arm-axes +14 each (1d8+7/x3)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +14

Atk Options depends on aspect (see below)

Special Actions aspect of bloody slaughter, aspect of the fiery sun, aspect of the impervious tower, aspect of the ravenous horde, aspect of the death blossom

Abilities **Str** 25, **Dex** 16, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 5

SA aspect of bloody slaughter, aspect of the impervious tower, aspect of the ravenous horde, aspect of the fiery sun, aspect of the death blossom

SQ construct traits

Feats —

Skills **Listen** +1, **Spot** +1

Advancement 14 **HD** (Large); see text

Aspect of Bloody Slaughter (Ex) By expending a swift action and taking 5 points of damage, a Thoon soldier can reconfigure its limbs to deal damage to multiple adjacent foes. When in this aspect, a Thoon soldier can make a Whirlwind Attack (as the feat) with its arm-blades as a full-round action, and it can make attacks of opportunity as if it had the Combat Reflexes feat. A Thoon soldier can have only one aspect active at a time. When adopting

this aspect, a Thoon soldier says in Undercommon, "Slaughter for Thoon!"

Aspect of the Fiery Sun (Ex) By expending a swift action and taking 5 points of damage, a Thoon soldier can channel quintessence from its body, creating heat. The Thoon soldier's melee attacks deal an extra 2d6 points of fire damage, and creatures that hit it with a natural weapon or a nonreach melee weapon take 1d6 points of fire damage. A Thoon soldier can have only one aspect active at a time. When adopting this aspect, a Thoon soldier says in Undercommon, "All will burn for Thoon!"

Aspect of the Impervious Tower (Ex) By expending a swift action and taking 5 points of damage, a Thoon soldier can extrude extra armor plates and bolster its magical defenses. When using this aspect, a Thoon soldier gains a +4 resistance bonus on saving throws and a +4 deflection bonus to AC. A Thoon soldier can have only one aspect active at a time. When adopting this aspect, a Thoon soldier says in Undercommon, "Stand and fight! Thoon is Thoon!"

Aspect of the Ravenous Horde (Ex) By expending a swift action and taking 5 points of damage, a Thoon soldier can reconfigure its lower limbs for greater speed and maneuverability. When in this aspect, a Thoon soldier's speed increases to 40 feet, and it can make a melee attack in the middle of its move as if it had the Spring Attack feat. A Thoon soldier can have only one aspect active at a time. When adopting this aspect, a Thoon soldier says in Undercommon, "Walk with Thoon!"

Aspect of the Death Blossom (Ex) A Thoon soldier has one final mode it enters if it starts its turn with between 5 and 20 hit points left. By expending a swift action and taking 5 points of damage, a Thoon soldier can reconfigure its body to explode when destroyed. If destroyed when in the aspect of the death blossom, a Thoon soldier deals 8d6 points of fire damage to all creatures within a 40-foot-radius burst (Reflex DC 15 half). A Thoon soldier can have only one aspect active at any time. When adopting this aspect, a Thoon soldier says in Undercommon, "Death blooms in the name of Thoon! Thoon! Thoon!" A Thoon soldier doesn't change out of the aspect of the death blossom until it's fully healed. The save DC is Constitution-based.

THOON SOLDIER LORE

Characters who have ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering) can learn more about Thoon soldiers. When a character makes a successful skill check, the following lore is revealed, including the information from lower DCs. A character who has ranks in Knowledge (arcana) can attempt this check, but the DCs increase by 10.

Knowledge (Dungeoneering)

DC Result

- | | |
|----|--|
| 23 | This is a Thoon soldier, a construct built by mind flayers of Thoon to act as an infantry soldier. |
| 28 | A Thoon soldier can change between a number of aspects that enhance its body, changing speed, defense, or combat prowess. |
| 33 | When badly damaged, a Thoon soldier will enter an "aspect of the death blossom" and will explode if destroyed. It remains in that mode until the mind flayers repair it. |

SHADOW FLAYER

In the shadows, you see a creature with jet-black skin. Four tentacles extend from its face, and two milky white eyes stare forth from the darkness of its form.

SHADOW FLAYER

CR 8

Usually NE Medium aberration

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +10, Spot +10

Languages Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13

(+3 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 52 (8 HD)

SR 25

Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee 4 tentacles +9 each (1d4+1) or

Melee mwk spear +10 (1d8+1/x3)

Ranged mwk dagger +10 (1d4+1/19–20 plus poison)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +7

Atk Options Quick Draw, improved grab, poison (DC 17, 1 Str drain/2d6 Str)

Special Actions extract, *mind blast*, shadowcloak

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th):

At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 14), *plane shift*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 19, Wis 15, Cha 15

SA extract, *mind blast*, shadowcloak, spell-like abilities

SQ poison use

Feats Improved Initiative, Quick Draw, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +10, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +7,

Disguise +2 (+4 acting), Hide +13, Intimidate +4,

Knowledge (the planes) +10, Listen +10, Move

Silently +13, Sense Motive +7, Spot +10, Survival +2 (+4

on other planes)

Advancement by character class; **Favored class** rogue

Possessions masterwork spear, 4 masterwork daggers (each poisoned with shadow essence)

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a shadow flayer must hit a creature of up to Large size with a tentacle attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking attacks of opportunity.

If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and attaches a tentacle to the opponent's head. A shadow flayer can grab a Huge or larger creature, but only if it can somehow reach the foe's head. If a shadow flayer begins its turn with at least one tentacle attached, it can try to attach its remaining tentacles with a single grapple check. The opponent can escape with a single successful grapple check or an Escape Artist check, but the shadow flayer gets a +2 circumstance bonus for every tentacle that was attached at the beginning of the opponent's turn.

Extract (Ex) If a shadow flayer begins its turn with all four tentacles attached to its opponent and makes a successful grapple check, it extracts that opponent's brain, instantly killing that creature. Constructs, elementals, oozes, plants, and undead are immune.

Mind Blast (Sp) 60-foot cone, stun for 3d4 rounds, Will DC 16 negates.

Shadowcloak (Su) A shadow flayer can draw on its own inner stores of quintessence to briefly become invisible. By expending a swift action and taking 5 points of damage, a shadow flayer becomes invisible for 1 round. Unlike with the *invisibility* spell, shadowcloak doesn't end when a shadow flayer attacks.

Poison Use (Ex) A shadow flayer is skilled in the use of poison and never risks accidentally poisoning itself when applying poison to a weapon.

Though the followers of Thoon have many normal mind flayers among them, they also have shadow flayers, part of a breeding program that emphasizes stealth over psionic ability.

Strategies and Tactics

A shadow flayer is a monster that thrives on surprise. It's a good candidate for an ambush encounter, or it can appear

MADCRAFTER OF THOON

This immense, sluglike creature has a mane of canisters, each containing a glowing, green fluid. The front of its body seems like it is all mouth—a maw dripping with spittle.

MADCRAFTER OF THOON

CR 10

Usually NE Huge aberration

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +17, Spot +17

Languages Undercommon; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 20, touch 8, flat-footed 20

(–2 size, +12 natural)

hp 125 (10 HD); fast healing 5

Immune acid

Fort +11, **Ref** +3, **Will** +9

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee bite +16 (2d8+15 plus 4d6 acid)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +25

Special Actions launch spawn, *mind blast*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th):

At will—*detect magic*

Abilities Str 30, Dex 10, Con 26, Int 19, Wis 15, Cha 13

SA launch spawn, *mind blast*, spell-like abilities

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Sense Quintessence*, Weapon Focus (bite)

* New feat; see sidebar, page 110.

Skills Concentration +21, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +17, Listen +17,

Spot +17, Survival +2 (+4 on other planes)

Advancement unknown; see Advanced Madcrafters of Thoon

Launch Spawn (Su) A madcrafter of Thoon usually takes a full day to give birth to a stormcloud of Thoon or a scyther of Thoon. When threatened, however, it can create constructs far more rapidly, then expel them in globules of caustic spittle. Once per round, as a swift action, a madcrafter of Thoon can spit a stormcloud of Thoon or a scyther of Thoon into any unoccupied square within 60 feet.

The caustic birthing fluid that surrounds the new construct covers the square the construct lands in and all adjacent squares. Creatures in those squares take 6d6 points of acid damage (Reflex DC 23 half). For 1 minute afterward, any creature that steps in a square covered by acid takes 3d6 points of acid damage.

A typical madcrafter of Thoon has enough stored quintessence to safely use its launch spawn ability twice per day. If it uses launch spawn a third time, it loses its fast healing ability for the rest of the day. The fourth and subsequent times it uses launch spawn, it takes 20 points of damage.

Mind Blast (Sp) 60-foot cone, stuns for 3d4 rounds (Will DC 15 negates). Unlike its mind flayer cousins, a madcrafter of Thoon can use *mind blast* only three times per day.



SCYTHYER OF THOON

Before you is a silvery automaton with four arms, perfectly constructed to wield the two wicked-looking scythes it carries. Its eyes glow as they cast forth beams of illumination. It crouches as if preparing to attack.

SCYTHYER OF THOON

CR 6

Always N Medium construct

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., illumination, low-light vision; **Listen** +1, **Spot** +1

Languages understands telepathic commands

AC 18, **touch** 12, **flat-footed** 16

(+2 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 69 (9 HD); **natural healing**

Immune acid, construct immunities

Resist electricity 10

Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee 2 mwk scythes +11 each (2d4+6/x4)

Ranged *searing light* +8 touch (damage varies; see below)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

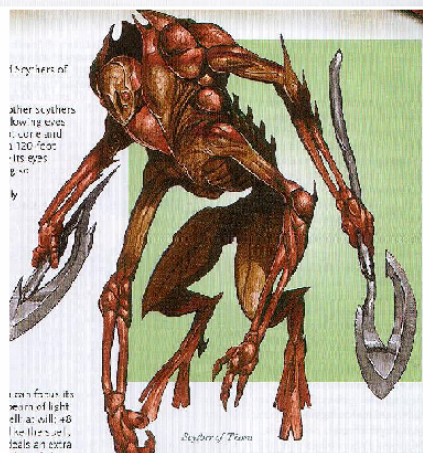
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +10

Special Actions dispelling touch

Abilities Str 18, Dex 14, Con —, Int —, Wis 13, Cha 5

SA dispelling touch, *searing light*

SQ construct traits



Feats —

Skills **Listen** +1, **Spot** +1

Advancement unknown; see Advanced Scythers of Thoon

Possessions 2 masterwork scythes

Illumination As long as at least two other scythers of Thoon are within 30 feet, the glowing eyes of a scythyer shed light in a 60-foot cone and provide shadowy illumination in a 120-foot cone. A scythyer of Thoon can close its eyes to douse the illumination, but doing so leaves it blind.

A scythyer of Thoon that has only one other scythyer within range still has glowing eyes, but those eyes provide only a 20-foot radius of bright illumination and a 40-foot radius of shadowy illumination.

A scythyer of Thoon by itself has faintly glowing eyes that provide shadowy illumination in a 5-foot radius.

Natural Healing (Ex) A scythyer of Thoon is capable of natural healing, albeit very slowly.

A scythyer of Thoon heals 1 hit point for every 8 hours it remains motionless.

Searing Light (Sp) A scythyer of Thoon can focus its glowing eyes to emit a damaging beam of light that functions as a *searing light* spell; at will; +8 ranged touch; caster level 6th. Unlike the spell, a scythyer of Thoon's *searing light* deals an extra 1d8 points of damage for each scythyer of Thoon within 30 feet (maximum 5d8), including the scythyer emitting the *searing light*.

After one scythyer of Thoon has used *searing light*, the glowing eyes of any others within 30 feet dim briefly, and none of those creatures can use *searing light* during the same round.

Dispelling Touch (Su) With a successful melee touch attack, a scythyer of Thoon can wipe away spells and magical effects. This ability functions as a targeted *dispel magic* spell (caster level 6th). Against each ongoing spell currently in effect on the object or creature touched, a scythyer makes a dispel check at +6 against a DC of 11 + the spell's caster level.

Each time a scythyer of Thoon uses dispelling touch, it takes 10 points of damage.