



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®] Campaigns[™]

XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS

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

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Adventure Background

The Last War left its scars in every land, on every nation in Eberron. Many wounds still run deep, even after three years of distance and healing. Even on another continent, the people of Stormreach are not beyond the memories of the Last War.

This adventure's background began long before the current day. In the decades prior to Cyre becoming the blasted hell of the Mournlands, there was a thriving industrial and inventive age with engines of war churning out of its dark forges on a daily basis. One of the chief minds behind these creations was Lord-Maker Vastyn d'Cannith, a true genius of his craft and as coldly ruthless as he was efficient.

When doom came to Cyre, Vastyn escaped the devastation by pure fortune. On one of his nation's many battlefronts repairing a self-mobile siege engine too complex for his apprentices to handle, he lived while his peers, friends and loved ones back home died in an instant. Many Cyrans lamented the destruction as some kind of terrible attack in those early days but Vastyn suspected the truth – they had brought this apocalypse upon themselves.

Forced to come to terms with the evil of his past and unable to reconcile why he should live while so many innocents died, the Lord-Maker abandoned the war and fled as far as he could away from civilized lands. Accompanied only by his mechanical creations, Vastyn d'Cannith bartered most of the wealth he carried into materials for a personal vessel. Once it was complete, he ran to the only place he thought he could get away from the ravages of war and guilt alike – Xen'drik.

For years, he has been in the jungles, living his life as a hermit with no contact outside his self-made companions. Unfortunately for him, repentance has not made the world forget him or what he did during the Last War. Assumed to be a deserter by his own people and a war criminal by the Five Nations, Vastyn d'Cannith has had a price on his head and vengeful hunters on his trail since the moment the ink on the Thronehold Accord dried. There are many forces in the world tracking down the Lord-Maker, wishing nothing less than his hopefully painful death.

Some of these hunters have come to Stormreach, intent on following up on old clues and magical leads placing Vastyn somewhere on the dark continent of Xen'drik. By themselves, they would not have any luck finding the man; he might be repentant but he is still a magically-gifted genius intent on not being located. Unfortunately for the former Lord-Maker, his skills at keeping a distance between himself and his past have no effect on the hazards of his present.

Vastyn d'Cannith might have been able to live out the rest of his days examining ancient Quori ruins in peace were it not for the sudden emergence near his hidden home of an ancient treasure of the Xen'drik drow. The Claw of Vulkoor, a massive artifact of ancient jade, occasionally erupts from the undergrowth of the jungle and beckons to the scorpion-god's chosen people. A religious icon and an object of awe to the dark elves of the emerald continent, nothing else around the Claw is sacred or sacrosanct if it has the misfortune of being in their way.

The drow descended on Vastyn's concealed home en masse, overwhelming his defenders and capturing him after a pitched battle. In fact, the "old human" fought so bravely and with such power that the drow have decided his strength will make a potent sacrifice to Vulkoor when the time comes to venerate the Claw properly. Languishing in a cage, awaiting his imminent demise in the green grasp of the huge arachnid monument, Vastyn has done the only thing he could.

He has sent for help. Using a homunculus expeditious messenger named Mote, Vastyn dispatched it with a message and his location to seek out members of the Crimson Codex, hoping to barter his vast knowledge in exchange for rescue. On a rooftop in Stormreach, using its keen eyesight to look for anyone bearing the red book its master told it about, it was captured by a homeless, enterprising lurker looking for a quick bit of coin.

Sold several times in the black markets of the port city, it eventually came into the possession of a beguiler named Seera, someone capable of forcing it to give up its message. Intrigued and instantly aware of how valuable its little possession could be, Seera has contacted several people in Stormreach with an offer to sell them 'the find of a lifetime'.

Among the people contacted was Rennis, an extreme explorer often allied with the Covenant of Light. He made initial contact with Seera, discovered that the information for sale involved a known war criminal, and decided the faction might be interested in hunting down this dark fugitive.

Adventure Synopsis

That is where the PCs come in; acting as couriers of Seera's asking price and contacts for the exchange. They have been contacted through Player Handout One and given a small box containing Seera's asking price (5,000 gold pieces, offered in this case as five matched blood rubies). Taking this with them, they enter the adventure at the Hungry Hearts Hall – a drinking establishment in Stormreach with a very seedy

reputation. For the more pious and chaste of the Covenant PCs, just getting to Seera might be an adventure in and of itself.

Speaking with the beguiler can reveal quite a bit about the initial nature of the mission, including Mote's carried message and the seal at the bottom of the parchment it carried that indicates who the note was from. For an additional fee (a favor that the PCs may or may not wish to perform), she will allow them to take the expeditious messenger and use it to track the message back to its source.

Seera's service is to "lean on" one of her competitors, a rival beguiler working to usurp her network of businesses. She does not necessarily want him hurt or killed, not that she would object to either course of action, but he needs to understand his place on the ladder of Stormreach society, namely *below* her. How the PCs choose to accomplish this is up to them.

If the PCs do not take Seera up on her offer, there are two alternatives that make themselves available to them. First, the next group to speak with Seera will purchase the messenger from her outright and track it themselves. This gives the PCs the chance to follow them to the site of Vastyn's capture. Second, one of the messenger's feathers has stuck to the clothing of a PC; the Covenant's High Priest of the Sovereign Host back at Radiant Hold can use this to cast a special, persistent *find the path* to the location where the expeditious messenger was dispatched.

Alternately, they can simply follow the instructions in the message but as Seera warns them, this would be the "long way" and will take the most time. As there was a sense of urgency to the missive, taking a long time to reach Vastyn might be a poor choice if they have any other options (and they do).

(Instructions are given in the scenario to modify the order of play depending on which method the PCs take. All roads lead to the end scene of the adventure but each road has different or altered encounters.)

Once the PCs have received their instructions and dispatched on their mission to retrieve the war criminal for trial, the adventure really begins. The trail leads through three major areas, culminating with arrival at a drow camp around the object of their obsession – the Claw of Vulkoor. Each area is its own encounter with the PCs having to deal with one or more of them before they reach the camp itself.

The first is an abandoned harbor once used by Vastyn d'Cannith as his private base. The first place he came to when he arrived in Xen'drik, Vastyn used this small cove harbor until his experiments angered the elemental spirits of the place and forced him to retreat inland away from them. His message mentions this harbor and gives directions to find it; this is part of his "bribe". If the PCs find the workbook he left behind, they can use it to trace his dragonmark and find him directly.

The second is a culvert along the straight route between Stormreach and the drow encampment. Because Mote flew over it, the messenger familiar is not aware of the hazard it poses to creatures (or PCs) on foot. Two tendriculos have made a low valley in the jungle their private hunting ground. Observant PCs might notice the leafy trouble before they step in it but they are more likely to just find themselves in a vine-load of pain. (This encounter is also where the PCs may become aware of other hunters on Vastyn's trail. In the bellies of the plant creatures, the corpses of some of the PCs' competition can be uncovered along with an enigmatic message from the slain stalkers' employer.)

The third encounter might be found by the PCs regardless of the route they travel, assuming they notice the brief flashes of fire in the sky that will lead them to it. A Suletar drow is harvesting blood glass from a small fissure in one of the jungle hills and may pose either a dangerous combat hazard or a temporary ally depending on how the PCs approach him.

Once the PCs reach the drow camp around the Claw of Vulkoor, they will have to deal with the situation they find there. Vastyn is literally tied to one half of the giant jade claw, suffering from its slow slaying effect and kept alive by the efforts of the high priest presiding over the sacrifice. There are several dozen drow here, many of whom would be a definite threat to the PCs if attacked directly. How the PCs deal with this encampment is up to them but stealth and subterfuge will significantly reduce their risk of a very brutal and untimely demise.

Rescuing Vastyn is the climax of the adventure but it need not be the end of it. If the PCs have not yet rescued his tome from the harbor, he will offer to help them do so as a reward for his life. He is truly repentant of his past actions, a theme that should resonate with most of the PCs. He will accept any judgment they offer, coming back with them to stand trial or seek absolution depending on how the PCs react to his change of heart.

In any case, the PCs and the dark fugitive will face one final challenge before getting back to Stormreach. A band of Karrnathi soldiers, displaced from their homeland because of their ruler's purge of the Emerald Claw, have tracked down the artificer with the intention of bartering him to the Breland government for sanctuary. They are driven, evil and determined to have the Lord-Maker at any cost. Alive is best but dead is acceptable and the PCs are nothing but obstacles in their way.

Dealing with these foes is the last challenge of the scenario. Once it is over, the PCs can return home with the knowledge of a job well done and one more ghost of the Last War laid to rest.

Troubleshooting

This adventure is a branching one. There are several locales described and pieces of a scenario given but the order of their assembly during play is entirely up to you and the actions of the Players. This non-linear style requires a bit more work on your part as there is no set path through the scenario. Just determine where to go given the material presented here and put together the adventure according to the actions of the PCs during play.

Adventure Secret

Certain PC abilities and items offer a revelation in the form of discovering an “Adventure Secret”. In *Dark Fugitive*, the Adventure Secret that can be revealed is a short article in the Stormrider’s Chapbook about the war criminal Vastyn d’Cannith, written by a sailor on a ship called the Boundless Keel. In the article, the sailor talks about a man with sad eyes, a soft voice and a willingness to help the crew at every turn. The last part of the article discusses how the ship was nearly lost with every hand aboard. The sailor makes the observation that Vastyn could have taken one of the lifeboats but chose to stay behind and help save the crew. When the sailor asked the mysterious man why he had not abandoned ship, Vasytn’s reply was, “I’ve taken too many lives. It’s time I started returning a few.”

Adventure Start

This adventure starts with the PCs arriving at the Hungry Hearts Hall. Before beginning play, distribute Player Handout 1 and give the Players a few moments to read it. They can arrive as a group or singly as they desire. Do not rush this scene; give the PCs a chance to interact with the variety of NPCs present and each other. Be sure to note that enclosed with their letter is a small token in the shape of a heart and a reinforced gemstone pouch with five pockets, each containing a 1,000 gp value blood ruby (a special variety of ruby formed by the same volcanic process that makes the blood glass used by the Suletar of Xen’drik).

Similarly, do not push them too quickly into the adventure; this initial scene is the source of their preliminary information about the scenario and they should be given as much time as they wish to investigate. Letting the PCs proceed with things at their own pace will convey a sense of control and let them feel in control of the adventure. The events of the scenario should occur because of them, not in spite of their actions.

Read or paraphrase the following after making sure the Players have read their handout and understand where they are going. If any of them wish to ask questions about the destination (The Hungry Hearts Hall), answer them using the information given below and their relevant skills. Be sure to let the PCs feel in control during this scene; if they have no wish to “follow the script”, do not force them to do so. The location is theirs to enjoy, after all.

Uncomfortable Silence

Beyond the red painted door of this establishment, revelry and music can be heard. Voices are raised in constant celebration and laughter is as freely flowing as the energetic notes of sitars and silver flutes. Even the sign above the door is openly jubilant – a crimson heart with a bawdy, fanged smile.

All of this merriment stops the moment the door opens. Inside, a grand gallery of rich woods and fine leather holds a host of figures, mostly human but mixed with half-elves, elves, even an orc or a hobgoblin here and there, all staring directly at the front of the Hall. Directly at you. All conversation has ceased and even the music from the room’s wide, candlelit stage has fallen silent.

A massive dwarf nearly as wide as he is tall moves into the entryway between you and the rest of the building. ‘This is a private establishment. Invitation only.’ His voice is gruff, his eyes dark and hands clench into fists as he speaks.

‘And I doubt you’ve got an invitation.’

At this point, the action begins. The PCs can deal with the bouncer in any way they wish, though violence is most definitely not necessary. They *are* invited, after all, and the token provided with their letter provides proof of this fact. Once Hammer sees it, he will let them in, offering no apology, and escort them upstairs to Seera's private booth without another word.

During this escort, the PCs may learn a bit about their surroundings and even get a glimpse of their later competition (not that they will know this until after the fact). Be sure to provide the following to them if they ask or wish to use their relevant skills:

- The main gallery has 30 people in it, 20 of whom are male. There is a sense of wealth and decadence to the establishment, from the exotic imported woods of the furnishings to the coin being spent freely for food and drink.
- The hosts and hostesses are dressed provocatively, ensuring that there is as much to look at as there is to enjoy with other senses. The smell of fresh, indulgent foods and drinks mingle with the smoke of tantalizing incense and the perfumes of many different men and women from a variety of races. Whatever a person's desire, it would seem to be here for the asking.
- The barkeeper constantly shifts forms, revealing him/herself as a changeling and catering to the physical attractions of the person being served.
- Prices here are apparently hidden; there are no menus or cost boards anywhere visible. Members seem to know what to pay and do so without question or concern. The Hungry Hearts Hall appears to be exclusively catering to the rich and decadent members of Stormreach society.
- One area of the gallery set against the left wall is a 'holding area' of sorts. There are seven people there, none of whom appear to be dressed or acting like the rest of the tavern's clientele. These seven are divided among three tables:
 - Table One (Four people)
 - A tall, broad shouldered human male in the dress of an Eldeen barbarian. He is as out of place in Stormreach as he is in this bar. A gigantic axe seemingly larger than even his massive frame could swing is resting against the wall. (Armus Boarsonn)
 - A lithe woman with restless eyes, gazing at the room over the rim of a tall wine glass. She seems uncomfortable being here and eager to disappear into the shadows behind her. (Kaija "Quickstar" Alavast)
 - An anxious Talenta halfling sitting cross-legged in his chair. He has a wild mane of red hair and a furious expression that seems permanently etched into his features. No part of him is very completely still. ("Wildfire", real name unknown, even to him)
 - A jet-black Gnoll with brindled grey along his muzzle and upper arms. He wears military-grade armor and a sheathed greatsword, both well maintained and darkened to prevent any gleam or revealing shine. (Grrvash, "Nightmane")
 - Table Two (Two people)
 - A gunmetal plated warforged with what appears to be a complicated crossbow arrangement built into one arm and a tattered dark grey cloak covering the other. One eye is concealed behind a bolted plate of darkwood. (Ballista)
 - An adamantite warforged, standing instead of sitting, with a reinforced scorpion-like claw locked over his right hand. A reinforced battle helm covers the warforged's head and his other hand is wickedly spiked and bladed, leaving furrows in the wooden table where he is leaning. (Felhand)
 - Table Three (One person)
 - A quiet, unassuming elven male dressed in flowing robes and layered, dark green silks. By the ornate style of the mask over his face and the fiercely intense look in his dark eyes, this is obviously a Valenar elf and does not wish to be disturbed or approached. (Ienahr Tellora, the last remaining heir to the Valenar Tellora bloodline)

History of the Hungry Hearts Hall

Founded only a few short months after Stormreach itself rose from its pirate port beginnings, the tavern was originally called the Hungry Hart's Hall. This name, based around a local legend of a carnivorous stag that roamed the nearby jungle, did not last more than a few years before it was changed to better reflect the lewd nature of its regulars and the business acumen of its newest owner, a changeling named Seera.

Seera saw an opportunity in the ramshackle Hall and poured most of her considerable savings into renovations and consumables. Within a few months, the establishment became both respectable and decadent in ways that appealed to a far different clientele – the wealthy and socially affluent citizens of the city of Stormreach. Catering to more refined tastes while still satisfying her regulars' baser desires, Seera has built the tavern into a place where the amorous and the bored can find anything they wish for a price.

This change also brought with it a change in the name to reflect the true predatory instincts of the people who frequent the establishment. Seera enjoys the company and patronage of at least one Coin Lord and several of the city's more powerful merchants; as long as this status quo is maintained, the future of the place looks to be as bright as its private rooms are kept dark.

Something most people do not know about the Hungry Hearts Hall is that most of the "escorts" and staff employed by the tavern are changelings. One example is Faedin, the changeling bard barkeeper mentioned in the Introduction's descriptive text.

Creatures: Each of the people mentioned above is given a brief description here. Only two of them are of import later in the scenario, the warforged are also given an expanded statistic page in the index. If the others are needed in more than a social capacity because of PC actions, feel free to expound on the information found below. Keep in mind that this scene is an introduction only; the Hungry Heart Hall is not an appropriate place for a bar fight or combat. At least, it is not an appropriate place in *this* scenario.

Armus Boarsonn: male shifter barbarian 6; hp 70; Armus is a strong proud shifter from the Eldeen Wastes, a chaotic soul as temperamental as he is stubborn. While not evil or even overly hostile, he has little patience for civilization or the refinements of society.

Kaija "Quickstar" Alavast: female human duskblade 5; hp 30; Kaija earns her name Quickstar by her honed reflexes and her habit of palming and flashing shuriken as a nervous habit. Swift and capable of both dark magic and skilled swordplay, lovely lethal Kaija is usually sullen and intolerant when she is not on a mission. A bounty hunter born and bred, she is almost completely cold and dispassionate. Very little moves her and even less escapes her once she is on its trail.

"Wildfire": male halfling barbarian 2/sorcerer 4/rage mage 1; hp 35; Wildfire has forgotten virtually everything about his former life; all that matters is rage and fire. He is almost a burning elemental spirit himself – wrathful, burning and never still. Wildfire is as mercurial and violent as his name suggests. He is only happy when he is setting something on fire and unfortunately for the world around him, he is often very, very happy.

Nightmane: male gnoll fighter 6; hp 60; Nightmane is a very unhappy mercenary from the Blackwheel Company. Hired by Kaija to provide extra muscle for her latest bounty hunt, Nightmane is uncomfortable working with this disparate team and they are being accompanied by someone as painfully organized as they are chaotic. Meticulous and careful, Nightmane considers every situation a tactical challenge and analyzes everything and everyone around him constantly.

Ballista: female personality warforged fighter 6/exotic weapon master 2; hp 56; See NPC Appendix; Ballista is a sniper and assassin with years of experience in the field. Once a master killer for the forces of Cyre, she was on assignment with her warforged team when the Day of Mourning happened. Feedback from the destruction of the forge that gave her life killed most of her team and left her mentally and physically scarred. Confident that if she can find the Lord Maker she can get back what she has lost, nothing lives that gets in the way of that goal.

Felhand: male personality warforged fighter 7; hp 75; See NPC Appendix; Felhand was once Ram, a powerfully built warforged siege breaker with a heavily enchanted adamantine ball for a right hand. The Day of Mourning caused his fist to explode, taking the end of his arm with it. Found and repaired by Xen'drik explorers for use as an expendable soldier, Felhand was recruited by Ballista after she slew the "organics" that dared to mistreat him. Felhand is fanatically loyal to Ballista and would face destruction to preserve her and the dream she has given him of a warforged paradise under the banner of the Lord of Blades.

lenahr Tellora: male Valenar elf; ranger 5/revenant blade 3; hp 61; lenahr has nothing to do with this adventure directly. He is a seeker, searching Xen'drik for the lost blade of his family line at the behest of his ancestor spirits. While he has no planned part in this scenario, the PCs can interact with this quiet, intense elf if they wish. All lenahr (*eye-n-arr*) wishes or cares about is finding the Arquis Tellora (Secrets of Xen'drik, page 145) and wielding it with honor.

Depending on your playing style and the desires of the PCs, these NPCs may be nothing more than momentary glimpses on the PCs' way up the Hall's main stairwell. Alternatively, you can have them placed in the holding area with these NPCs if the Players seem interested in getting to know them better. Of them all, only the people at Tables One and Two are likely to appear later in the scenario but interacting with them may make for very interesting roleplaying.

During conversations, keep everyone's personalities in mind. None of the people at Table One are evil but Quickstar is very withdrawn and unfriendly while Nightmane is not likely to talk at all. The warforged at Table Two will not interact and if pressed to do so, they both leave the premises rather than "sully themselves" with the most-likely organic PCs. (Warforged PCs will get nothing but pitying looks from Ballista and Felhand, while a full party of Warforged PCs might actually be approached and offered recruitment. Of course, this might make for a very interesting scene indeed.)

Once you are ready to proceed from the Hall's gallery, move the PCs upstairs by having Hammer (the dwarf at the door) escort them up the stairs as follows:

Crossing the main room of the tavern, the dwarf leads you up a wide flight of steps, taking you to the second floor of the Hungry Hearts Hall. This level of the establishment is sectioned off into several rooms, many of which have only silken curtains for doors. One room in particular, the one the dwarf is headed towards quickly, has a darkwood door with brushed iron and silver fittings.

Taking a ring of keys from his belt, the Dwarven guard taps it against the dusky grain of the wood before unlocking the door. "Your guests from the Covenant have arrived, my lady."

A soft, feminine voice beyond answers as the door opens. "Show them in, Hammer."

(Even if the PCs have not identified themselves as Covenant of Light, the token given to Hammer does so for them. If the PCs have gotten this far without using the token for some reason and Hammer has no other way of determining their allegiance, paraphrase the above to simply read, "Your guests have arrived".)

Within the small but opulently appointed office, several expensive furnishings set a tone of decadent style and expensive tastes. This tone is equally carried by the room's singular occupant, a pale blonde haired human woman with emerald green eyes and a crimson dress that flows over her statuesque figure like a clinging tide.

"Welcome to my establishment, honored guests. Please have a seat and make yourselves comfortable. Would you care for a drink before we discuss business?"

At her behest, chairs begin to walk of their own accord, moving to the middle of the room and arranging themselves for you in front of her desk. As they do, a long, coiling serpent with pearlescent scales slithers up over the back of the woman's chair and rests its head and one bizarre three taloned hand on her scarlet clad shoulder. "I am Seera, good folk, and I do hope we can all be friends."

Even as she speaks, there is a sudden clank from the corner of the room. A large bird cage, covered in a leather cover, trembles as something inside strikes the bars with a metallic clatter!

Creatures: There are five creatures of import in this scene. Seera and her "pet" ravid X'xiquath (she calls it Kiksi (*kick-see*)) are plainly visible, while Hammer steps to one side of the door and remains in the room until Seera feels comfortable enough with the PCs to send him back downstairs. The timing of this is up to you; roleplaying should determine when she dismisses the dwarven guardian.

The fourth creature in the room is hidden beside one of the office's bookcases (requiring a Spot check, DC 26) to see – Pirouette, the lady's warforged bodyguard. Pirouette is a mithril bodied warforged and crafted to resemble a beautiful woman with curved, exotic features and a veiled face hidden behind an intricate veil of fine chain links.

Lastly, there is Mote, Vastyn d'Cannith's expeditious messenger and the catalyst for this scenario.

Seera: female changeling beguiler 8; hp 30.

X'xiquath, Ravid; hp 20; *Monster Manual* 213; Kiksi is in fact the ravid from the Expedition module Mere of Shattered Souls. After its run in with the PCs during that scenario, it managed to get aboard their vessel and come back to Stormreach where an enterprising sailor brought it to the Hungry Heart hoping to sell or trade it as an exotic pet. Seera nursed it back to health and it has remained a loyal pet ever since.

Hammer: male dwarf warrior 1; hp 9; *Monster Manual* 91; Hammer is not a powerful combatant but he has reputation and a tavern full of sympathetic patrons on his side. Seera will not look kindly on anyone harming her favorite door guard and her powerful friends will not look kindly on anyone foolish enough to invoke her displeasure.

Pirouette: female personality warforged swashbuckler 7; hp 45.

Mote, Expeditious Messenger: homunculus; hp 5; *Eberron Campaign Sourcebook* 285

Conversation for this scene is unscripted as the lady Seera is more than happy to let the PCs set the tone for the encounter. She is first and foremost a business woman; the PCs are here to perform a transaction and should be allowed to do as they wish. She is pleasant and polite as long as the PCs act accordingly, though she can become acerbic if treated rudely.

The main point of this conversation is the exchange of the jewels in the possession of the PCs for two items, the message shown in Player Handout 2 and a small golden item (Vastyn's *Siberys compass*). If the PCs make no attempt to be pleasant or friendly, her interaction with them ends after this exchange and they are shown out quickly. The PCs have the opportunity to get more out of this scene if they roleplay accordingly; no skill checks are needed (though as the DM, you are welcome to allow them to make Diplomacy or Charisma checks as desired). The intention of being social and charming is all that Seera requires to offer the PCs something "extra".

This additional offer is the expeditious messenger itself. As amusing as she finds the hyper-active homunculus, it has already wrecked three cages and is rapidly becoming more trouble than it is worth. As such, she is willing to trade it to the PCs in exchange for a favor. You are free to alter this bargain as you wish, even letting the PCs offer an alternative method of payment if it seems reasonable or beneficial to the patroness of the Hungry Hearts Hall. What is suggested below is simply a default; do not feel constrained to use it if something else appeals to you.

A Secondary Deal

Seera smiles, her crimson lips parting in a short, contemplative breath. "You know, good folk... there is something else you might do for me if you were so inclined. I would be very grateful if you could look into a matter of import, grateful enough to offer something of value in return."

If the PCs seem interested, continue or paraphrase below.

"There is an uncouth man named Brash – a very appropriate name I assure you – trying to open a rival business nearby. Normally, I would have no trouble with this, as competition is good for the soul, you know. But this man has vexed me at every turn, trying to pull customers away with rumors and lies and making life hard on my employees.

"This morning, I fear our competition turned uglier than normal. One of my girls, an exotic beauty named Faeara, did not show up to work. Brash showed a great deal of interest in her before and I believe he may have gone so far as to kidnap her."

Seera frowns, looking very concerned. "Please, business aside, I care a great deal about my employees and I want Faeara home safe and sound. If you'll investigate Brash's little operation, I'll provide you with the messenger bird that brought that message you hold as a reward. I am not sure what use it will be to you but you are welcome to it no matter what you find.

"I implore you though, please rescue Faeara if he has her. Brash is not a gentle man and I fear for her safety if she has fallen into his hands."

As untrustworthy as some of the PCs might find Seera to be, she is telling the truth in this regard. Brash has been working his way through her contacts, using intimidation and the rough appeal of his illegal activities to draw away some of her business for some time. She detests him for this and would not object to him winding up dead but right now, she really does fear for Faeara's safety. She would be rescuing Faeara personally but if she or any of her people become directly involved, it could spark a street war that would get more of her employees hurt or (just as bad in her opinion) damage her business.

The PCs might wish to perform this side mission on the simple grounds that they can foil a kidnapping and the mistreatment of an innocent woman. This mission is on the level and a legitimate "good deed" – a woman is being held against her will, an evil man has terrible plans for her and if they do not help, she could wind up injured or worse.

If the PCs agree, use the Brash Endeavor map to run this brief encounter. The forces listed below can be used to offer some slight challenge to them but in general, the PCs should have no trouble rescuing Faeara and returning her home. The details of this side trek are entirely up to you; what is presented below is just a suggestion of how to set things up:

"I will send my bodyguard Pirouette to guide you to Brash's place. She will not get directly involved because I would like to keep my involvement in this at a minimum. Please, hurry back with Faeara. I shudder to think what Brash will do to her if he has her for long."

Foes: Brash has a small gang of thugs that guard his establishment while he prepares the location for business. The tavern he wants to start up is not open yet but he is nearing its completion. As such, he wants nothing to go wrong. He has a pair of thugs who watch the front door, a third bruiser at the back and his “right hand man”, a minotaur named Rampage who watches out for him and deals with anyone who gets in his way.

Vecc, Vacco and Akvor, human thugs: male human fighter 3; hp 27, 27; See Combat Statistics; These two fighters used to be members of the Vultures, a dockside gang that ruled the back streets of Stormreach until its destruction (likely at the hands of the PCs).

Human Thug

CR 3

Male human fighter 3

N Medium humanoid (human)

Init -1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common

AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15; Combat Expertise

(-1 Dex, +5 armor, +1 shield)

hp 27 (3 HD)

Fort +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** +3

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

Melee mwk longsword +6 (1d8+2/19-20) or

Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d8/19-20)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5

Atk Options Improved Trip (+6)

Combat Gear potion of *aid*, potion of *cure light wounds*,
potion of *cure moderate wounds*

Abilities Str 15, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 10

Feats Alertness, Combat Expertise, Improved Trip,
Negotiator, Weapon Focus (halberd)

Skills Diplomacy +2, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +5,
Listen +3, Ride +4, Sense Motive +4, Spot +3, Swim
+3

Possessions combat gear plus masterwork chainmail,
masterwork buckler, longsword,
light crossbow with 10 bolts, *cloak of resistance* +1

Rampage, Minotaur Bruiser; male minotaur; hp 45; *Monster Manual* 188; Rampage is a breaker, pure and simple. He likes to hurt things and is not entirely comfortable with his current duties under Brash. He answers the door, coordinates plans and leads the man’s “troops”, albeit reluctantly. He would be much happier just hurting things and if the PCs give him the chance, he will almost gratefully enter combat with them in the hopes of busting some heads.

Brash, Brutal Businessman; male human barbarian 5; hp 50; See Combat Statistics; Brash is not completely unreasonable and if the PCs offer him any alternative to fighting, he might take it if there is visible evidence of him being outclassed (which he certainly is). He really just wants to open his tavern and make a nice, dishonest living. How the PCs deal with him is entirely up to them.

Creatures: There is only one innocent in this encounter – Faeara, a quiet, unassuming young woman of exotic descent whose only crime was walking alone on the wrong street in Stormreach. Roughed up and likely in need of a little healing, she may react fearfully of the PCs until they prove their good intent.

Faeara; female air genasi commoner 1; hp 6; non-combatant; *Monsters of Faerun* 71

Combat Statistics

BRASH, BRUTAL BUSINESSMAN (RAGING) CR 5
Human barbarian 5
NE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +0; Senses Listen +4, Spot -1
Languages Common, Minotaur
[rule]
AC 11, touch 8, flat-footed 11; improved uncanny dodge
hp 50 (5 HD)
Fort +10, Ref +1, Will +2
[rule]
Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)
Melee mwk scimitar +11 (1d6+4/18-20*)
Base Atk +9; Grp +9,
Atk Options Power Attack (full power attack listed in statistic
block), Cleave
Special Actions rage 2/day (lasts 8 rounds then fatigued), improved
uncanny dodge, trap sense +1
Combat Gear none
[rule]
Abilities Str 18, Dex 10, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12
SQ illiterate, fast movement +10 ft, rage 1/day
Feats Power Attack, Cleave, Weapon Focus (scimitar)
Skills Bluff +2, Climb +6, Intimidate +8, Jump +11, Knowledge
(local) +4, Listen +4, Survival +4
Possessions studded leather armor, masterwork scimitar, belt pouch.

During this encounter, Pirouette will not get involved (though she will take Faeara back to the Hungry Hearts Hall if asked). The PCs will have to deal with Brash and his people on their own.

This scene does not have to dissolve into combat. In fact, as outmatched as the opposition is, it would almost be cruel to do so. This side trek can be a test of the PCs' diplomatic or stealth skills. The "how" of this side adventure is completely within their control. Dealing with Brash should be a quick, simple adventure designed to your specifications and run within a time frame of 20 minutes or less. The following are suggestions; use them as you wish:

- Brash and Rampage are inside with Faeara while his thugs watch the front and back doors. If the PCs make trouble outside, Brash knocks Faeara out and tries to escape with her into the tangle of Stormreach's inner streets while Rampage "deals" with them.
- When the PCs arrive, Faeara is already on the run, dashing out through the back door with Rampage in hot pursuit. This option is useful for imparting a Damsel in Distress feel to the encounter and very appropriate for chivalrous groups.
- Brash has already been warned of the PCs coming through a spy in the Hungry Hearts Hall. He awaits them on the front steps of his establishment with his scimitar held to Faeara's pretty throat. This can be an excellent test of the PCs' fast thinking and negotiating skills.
- For a change of pace, have the PCs arrive just as Rampage has finally had enough of Brash's abusive nature and is staging a revolt. If the PCs rescue Brash from his angry ex-cohort, he gratefully gives them Faeara in return (or has to then be put down when he turns on his "heroes" and tries to escape with his captive).

The important theme in this side trek is freeing Faeara; let the PCs be the heroes of this scenario and be sure that the lovely blue-haired Faeara is suitably grateful. The PCs should return to the Hungry Hearts Hall feeling like they have done a very good deed and saved an innocent young woman from a dire fate (which they have).

As a note, Faeara enjoys her work with Seera and honestly wishes to return to the Hall. She is not a slave or a captive there; she has more freedom in the changeling's employ than she has ever had in her life and she is eager to return home.

Once they return to the Hungry Hearts Hall, the PCs are given Mote's cage and wished good fortune in their hunt for whoever wrote the message they purchased. Seera has a number of other appointments and cannot spare the PCs any more time this evening. If the PCs have been cordial and polite, they may have made a good impression and be offered the Hall's patronage in the future. This is your judgment call and, if you deem them to have been suitably impressive or charming, you may award the Hungry Hearts Hall story object to any or all of the PCs as appropriate.

When All is Said and Done

This introduction ends when the PCs leave the Hungry Hearts Hall with Player's Handout Two, Vastyn's compass and possibly Mote, the expeditious messenger. They have fulfilled the initial part of their mission and may not be certain what to do next.

Fortunately for them, a friendly contact is waiting for them outside the Hall. Rennis, a valued ally to the Covenant of Light and the person responsible for getting the faction involved in this mess in the first place, has been asked to evaluate what the PCs have uncovered. Read or paraphrase the following once the PCs are ready to proceed.

A shadow detaches itself from the alley beside the Hungry Hearts Hall and approaches, revealing himself to be Rennis, an explorer ally of the Covenant and a good friend to many of its members.

"Good to see you alive and well," he says with a smile. "Shall we take a look at what you've found?"

If the PCs are wary of showing him anything, he completely understands their hesitation. A Sense Motive (DC 10) check will show his honesty and the truth behind his instructions to examine the information that cost the Covenant of Light so dearly. If it proves necessary, you may also have him produce a written verification to this extent sealed with the crest of Lord Corvalis. Rennis is here legitimately and the PCs should be made aware of this through whatever means seem appropriate.

"VDC?" Rennis's eyes go wide as he reads the missive. "If that's who I think it is, this just got a lot more serious. I know Lord Anash or at least I knew him. He was a scholar, originally from Cyre, and his work here in Stormreach was pretty famous."

Shaking his head, Rennis hands you back the letter and continues. "Anash was a member of this group we've been hearing about, the Crimson Codex. I don't know much about them but I do know Anash is extremely dead. He died during the Steel Stampede last year along with dozens of others. That was an ugly time and he died in an ugly way."

The Steel Stampede (Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (history), DC 10) occurred 13 months before the present day. The name refers to a large group of warforged that arrived aboard an unnamed ship and tore through the docks of Stormreach on an insane, murderous rampage. Nearly a hundred people were slain before the last of the metal killers were brought down. To date, no one knows why the warforged went mad or what reason they might have had for their slaughter spree.

"Well, this explains why the letter didn't get delivered; there was no one alive to give it too. Poor messenger must have gotten captured while it looked around for someone to take its parcel."

This is also true; Mote landed on a rooftop in Stormreach, unable to locate its intended recipient. Before it could decide what to do or return to its master, the little bird was captured and eventually taken to Seera as payment on an old debt. She was able to get it to open its chest compartment and yield its hidden prizes – the letter and the compass now in the possession of the PCs.

"If this was meant for Anash and what I suspect about that wily old sage is true, VDC can only be one person, Vastyn d'Cannith. You might know him better as the Bloodforger, one of the worst of the Lord-Makers of lost Cyre."

Knowledge (history) or Bardic Knowledge (DC 15 in either case) can reveal this name and give the PC doing so an idea of who they are dealing with; Vastyn was an infamous artificer during the last years of the Last War. His creations were diabolical and as famous for their mixture of flesh and steel as they were for their lethal brutality. Some of the most heinous war machines to issue forth from the forges of Cyre gained "life" at his hands and he was supposedly responsible for countless acts of terror and death during the conflict.

On the Day of Mourning, he was on a Breland battlefield, overseeing the operation of his most terrible invention – the Graveripper. A massive living construct capable of consuming fallen soldiers, feeding off their blood, and spewing forth both poisonous gas clouds and cones of lethal bone shrapnel, the Graveripper is still whispered about in Breland as a bogeyman of sorts, rumored to still be alive and haunting the wastes of their country.

Long thought dead, Vastyn d'Cannith's whereabouts would be huge news in Breland and has far reaching import to a number of organizations, including the one Rennis is about to mention.

"This explains Radiant Hold's interest in the matter. I probably shouldn't be telling you this but it's important. Come here and listen close. Remember, this doesn't leave us, all right? There's a lot going on and you deserve to know what you are getting into.

*"It might not come as a surprise to you all that the Covenant of Light and the Church of the Silver Flame have not been seeing eye to eye since the whole Garris fiasco last year. Radiant Hold probably put up the gems to buy this information as a way to appease the church and win back its favor. The Silver Flame suffered some major losses to the Bloodforger's creations and he's still considered one of the Flame's worst enemies. Turning that monster over to the Silver Flame could go a **long** way to healing the rift between your faction and the church."*

That said, Rennis offers to run news of this discovery back to Radiant Hold for the PCs if they wish to act upon what they have learned. The letter suggested that there was little time to waste so haste would be advisable – something Rennis will remind them of if the PCs seem to have missed that point.

If the PCs do not wish to get involved, the adventure ends here. If they do, proceed below with Part One: Tracks and Terror.

(Though it should not become necessary, Rennis' combat statistics appear on the next page as a matter of completeness. Under no circumstances will he accompany the PCs on this adventure. He is a busy man and he has other matters to attend to in Stormreach. Even if he did not, he has no desire to get mixed up in this affair any more than he already has.)

Of further note, the PCs may have in their possession Vastyn's expeditious messenger. This partially mechanical homunculus, Mote, is a fiercely loyal companion to the Lord-Maker and wishes to return to him immediately. See the text below in Part One if the PCs choose to make use of Mote's abilities.

Combat Statistics

Renvis, Covenant of Light Ally and Courier CR 8
Human scout 6/extreme explorer 2
NG Medium humanoid (human)
Init +8; Senses Listen +12, Spot +12
Languages Common, Celestial, Elven,
[rule]
AC 19 (20 skirmishing), touch 14 (15 skirmishing), flat-footed 19;
uncanny dodge; Dodge
hp 44 (8 HD)
Fort +4, Ref +11, Will +3; evasion, trap sense +1
[rule]
Speed 40 ft. (8 squares); flawless stride
Melee +1 scimitar +7 (1d6+2/18-20)
Base Atk +5; Grp +6
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, skirmish +2d6
Special Actions extreme hustle (free action; spend an action point to
gain a move action), *haste* (from *boots of speed*),
Combat Gear boots of speed, wand of cure light wounds (CL 1st; 15
charges), arcane scroll of fly (CL 5th), arcane scroll of
expeditious retreat (CL 1st)
[rule]
Abilities Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 11
SQ skirmish +2d6 +1AC, Battle Fortitude +1 to Initiative and
Fortitude saves, uncanny dodge, fast movement +10 ft., trackless
step, flawless stride, additional action points, trap sense +1,
trapfinding, dodge bonus +1, extreme hustle
Feats Action Boost, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Dodge,
Improved Initiative
Skills Balance +10, Climb +1 (+3 with rope), Disguise +5, Gather
Information +3, Hide +10, Jump +12, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +6,
Knowledge (geography) +8, Listen +10, Move Silently +12, Search +13,
Spot +12, Survival +5

Part One: Tracks and Terror

From here, the PCs have a number of options. Do not consider this an exhaustive list; if the PCs have other ideas of how to proceed, by all means let them do as they wish.

This part of the adventure is completely free form, presented in sections that may be put together or used in any way you see fit given the actions of the PCs and your own style of play. If you wish to skip certain elements of the adventure or if you want to alter the order of events for any reason, feel free to do so. The important thing to remember when running this part of the scenario is that the PCs should have a feeling of control over their own actions.

In keeping with that, Part One is completely non-linear. Presented below are individual scenes; their order of play (or their inclusion at all) is optional and entirely within the control of you and your Players. The Overland Map in the appendix should suggest locations for each scene. These are suggestions only and each one can be moved as needed or desired.

Proceeding with the Hunt

The PCs have certain resources now at their disposal; these can provide the following routes to track down their quarry and bring him to justice.

- The *siberys compass* points the way to Vastyn's old harbor base of operations. If the PCs choose to follow it as the letter suggests, it is a one day journey to the site. Turn to The Flooded Foundry to run this scene.

- Mote can fly directly back to Vastyn if released and allowed to do so. If the PCs treat Mote well, they are allowed to follow the expeditious messenger and it will delay its flight long enough for them to keep it in sight. Otherwise, it flies off and they will have to use their own resources to try and track its passage.
- Using either one of Mote's feathers, the letter itself or other physical evidence, it would be possible for the PCs to request magic from Radiant Hold to track the fugitive (*find the path*, etc.).
- The PCs might wish to try and follow (or join forces) with one of the other groups tracking Vastyn. Ballista and Felhand are not likely to be of aid but they can be shadowed, while the four bounty hunters from the Hungry Hearts Hall might be willing to let the PCs accompany them if they wish.
- Drow PCs could offer another solution. If they venerate Vulkoor or maintain ties to their people in Xen'drik, they might (at your option) have heard about the emergence of the Claw of Vulkoor and the planned sacrifice of a human matching Vastyn's description to its crushing grasp.

As mentioned, this list is not exhaustive. Guide the PCs while letting them determine how they proceed. As known and acknowledged heroes of the Covenant of Light, make divine magic available to them within reason at no cost other than expensive components if they wish it; spells like *wind walk* could be of great use if they think to use such resources.

The sections below are scenes that can occur along the way to Part Two, Vulkoor's Grasp. It is recommended that you run at least one of them before proceeding to the drow encampment where Vastyn is being held but do not feel constrained to do so if the PCs figure out a way to bypass these encounters. (Offering them the potential aid in The Fires of Faith is highly recommended, however, and should be worked in if at all possible.)

A Verdant Demise (CR 7)

The ground ahead descends slightly into a shallow valley. The plant life here is even deeper and greener than usual, making your surrounds a dense field of verdant life. Gone are the usual sounds of insects and animals. Even the usually moan of the constant Xen'drik wind is muted by the thickness of the vines and trees around you.

This area is the hunting ground of a pair of tendriculos, dangerous plant creatures that attack with their roots and their ability to swallow prey alive. While the pair has been able to maintain this place as their territory for many years, they may be biting off more than their emerald jaws can chew when they tangle with the PCs!

Even though they are nicely concealed and can be difficult to spot, the PCs may be able to determine they are in danger before the plant predators spring their trap. If the PCs are in any way being careful or wish to search their surrounds before continuing on, a Spot check (DC 19) will see one of the tendriculos before the PCs get close enough for it to attack. The sneakiest part of this "trap" is that the PCs will have to intentionally keep searching to find the second tendriculos. Otherwise, they may assume the one they see is all that lurks here and fall victim to the second creature while avoiding the beast they've found.

Foes: The tendriculos rely on their stealthy ability to blend in with their surrounds and the strength of their entangling roots to prevent their victims from escaping. They have had a long history of success attacking prey in this old river bed and see little reason to vary their tactics now.

Tendriculos (2); genderless tendriculos; hp 90, 90; *Monster Manual* 241

Tactics: The tendriculos pair never fight over food. If one has a PC grabbed, the other will target someone else, preferably the next closest target. They are also wily enough to know that smaller victims are easier prey and will attack Small size PCs in preference over larger ones.

Scaling the Encounter (Conditional)

8th-Level Characters: The years have been kind to these two plant beasts; increase their hit points to 110 each. In addition, thorny growths on their vines inflict an additional 1d6 piercing damage whenever it establishes or maintains a hold.

9th-Level Characters: Excellent hunting and the presence of spoor from the tendriculos have attracted an otyugh that lives symbiotically in the middle of their hunting ground. It begins the combat submerged and attacks the first PC to suffer damage from one of the tendriculos's vine attacks. This is in addition to the change listed for 8th level PCs.

Opportunistic Parasite: genderless otyugh; hp 40; *Monster Manual* 204

10th-Level Characters: Use the changes listed above for 8th and 9th level PCs. The fertile nature of the soil here has given the tendriculos even better healing properties than they had before. Their Regeneration (10) is improved to Regeneration (15). If either creature is forced to move from its starting location, it loses this improved value and reverts to Regeneration (10) for the rest of the encounter.

Using “A Verdant Demise”

By default, this encounter is placed along the route the PCs will take if they follow Mote to rendezvous with its master in the drow encampment. Because Mote flew to Stormreach, it has no idea the tendriculos are here and cannot warn the PCs about them.

Use the Verdant Valley map for this encounter, located in the Map Appendix.

Once the tendriculos are defeated, the PCs may find something of interest in the bodies of the huge plant menaces. Among the digested remains of many past meals, the beasts both have a partially dissolved humanoid in their stomach chambers. Neither of the humanoids have any equipment worth salvaging but a metal plaque with an acid-etched image of an aged human male and the name “Vastyn d’Cannith” can be found on one of them and each carries sealed identification papers revealing them to be Annor Cath (human male) and Delara (half-elven female), bounty hunters registered for work on behalf of the city of Sharn.

The Flooded Foundry

(This is a location-based encounter fully defined below. How the PCs arrive here and explore the area is entirely within their control and yours as the judge. See the text box below for suggestions.)

Arriving at the hill-lined cove along the coast, your journey has brought you to the ruins of an old harbor tucked away among cragged rocky peaks and the dense walls of jungle vegetation all around. A pair of broken buildings lies moldering near an old pier and a broken bridge of earth and stone travels into empty, featureless water along the cove’s northern edge.

The main mast of a long-sunken ship extends out of the eerily calm waters of the cove near the pier and almost directly to the south of it, a tall eroded statue stands defiantly over the remains of what might once have been a third structure dominating the harbor’s single, weathered dock.

1. The Broken Road

A cobbled road of tumbled and polished river stone connects the two southern buildings and the pier. This road is in remarkable shape, especially considering its age and though it is fractured and disappears among the jungle trees to the west, it is almost perfectly intact in the harbor area itself.

This area is a bit of a mystery, especially for PCs with any knowledge of the history or the cultures of Xen’drik. Neither the giants nor their elven slaves were particularly skilled road builders and while several avenues and streets do still exist in the ruins of this land, few are in this kind of shape or exhibit this level of craftsmanship. A Knowledge (engineering) check at a DC 15 will reveal the exacting detail and quality of the road, possibly leading the PCs to ask questions that, at least for now, have no answers.

2. Sundered Supplies (EL 4)

This old building is completely ruined on its east side, revealing a dark chamber inside stacked with barrels and crates, most of which are covered in a thick grey-green moss.

Once the location of the dock’s supply cache, this building was used by Vastyn to hold what little he could salvage from the ship that brought him here (the same ship that lies at the bottom of the harbor at location 8). While the building was serviceable for months, its inability to be fully secured eventually attracted a troublesome predator that took up residence and claimed what little remained of the goods within.

Vastyn was driven away from the harbor by the accident that occurred at location 6 before he could find the time to do away with the tentacled pest. As such, the otyugh is still present and, having consumed everything of edible value here, is quite hungry when the PCs arrive.

Hungry Otyugh; genderless otyugh; hp 35; *Monster Manual* 204; the creature begins the encounter in the very center of the crowded room. It is not above giving chase to PCs if they flee as it is starving and needs to feed. If it can securely grab and constrict even one PC until he or she stops struggling, it will try to flee into the nearby jungle with its much-needed meal.

3. The Unkempt Keep

Once a tall giant-sized structure providing protection and security to this harbor, this massive building is now almost completely destroyed. Time and the elements have rendered it little more than a pile of jagged stones and a few cracked, questionably reinforced walls.

Just a shell of its former glory, this keep is good for nothing other than wasting time in fruitless exploration. PCs with the Investigate feat or a Search check (DC 25) can find evidence that a Medium sized humanoid (Vastyn) slept here many times and used the building's shell as shelter a long time ago. Other than its value in this regard for PCs looking to camp here overnight, this location serves no useful purpose any longer.

4. A Sailor's Last Stand

Missing its head and one arm, this statue depicts a massive figure in the garb of a buccaneer. Its remaining arm raises a broken cutlass perpendicular to its chest, as if threatening some invisible foe in the distance.

Despite its seeming lack of worth, this statue was used by Vastyn d'Cannith to locate the hidden grove where his laboratory was built and now lays abandoned, waiting for the PCs to explore.

The ruins around the base of the statue hold a clue to the whereabouts of the laboratory. Knowing he might someday have to use this place to barter for his life (just as he is doing now), Vastyn concealed a riddle on a piece of brightly colored stone amid the rubble. Finding the orange rock is a DC 10 Search check if the PCs are looking through the ruins.

On the stone, carved in the common trade tongue, is "The faceless pirate knows more than he can say. Unable to speak, he shows wise men the way."

Any PC who climbs the statue (DC 10) and looks along the raised blade will see a gap in the trees to the northwest. Through this gap, a hidden building of grey stone can be glimpsed if the PCs take a moment to examine what he or she is seeing. If the PCs do not use this statue to reveal its location, finding the grove will require either a thorough and time-consuming exploration of the jungle nearby or a Search check (DC 30 because of its meticulous concealment).

5. The Perilous Pier (EL 7)

A dark ichor between the cracks of this old stone dock makes the pier look to be in far worse shape than it actually is. Though its end does drop off suddenly, the rest of the long walk into the cove looks sturdy enough to travel.

The ichor is a clue for what lies in wait along the underside of the old pier. A black pudding has spread itself out over the submerged lower half of this structure, feeding on algae and fish as it has for years. PCs walking above it will cause it to gather up and attack, emerging as noted on the map.

Pier Dweller; black pudding (ooze); hp 115; *Monster Manual* 201; the ooze feeds well here and will not risk its existence to bring down PCs putting up a good fight. It automatically flees into the water if taken below 40 hit points and will not return during this scenario.

6. A Forge Abandoned (EL 7)

Hidden in this secluded grove, a small grey stone building lies with its door open and its front steps long since weathered to the point of uselessness. Inside, only shadows can be seen. Whatever lies within has seemingly been abandoned for quite some time.

This was the first workshop Vastyn set up after coming to Xen'drik. Obsessed with the idea of setting his creations free of their dependence on him and granting them free will, he toiled for months here before finally achieving the breakthrough that also cost him his new home.

The ex-Lord Maker created a substance he called *aqua vitae*, a "water of life" and intended to use it to see if he could impart independent existence and consciousness to his homunculus servants. Unfortunately, he was unprepared for the fluid to react with the alchemical bath of elemental water he was using as a dousing medium. The liquids merged and created a short-lived vortex straight to the plane of Kythri, the Churning Chaos.

Through this portal, dozens of insane water elementals emerged and attacked everything in sight. Several of Vastyn's loyal servants sacrificed themselves to protect him, buying him the time he needed to reluctantly escape. Leaving behind his project notes and his most valued possession (the Tome of Making, the book mentioned in Player's Handout 2), he fled into the jungle with his two remaining homunculi (Mote and Blackfang, a now-deceased adamantite enhanced iron defender).

PCs will be able to recover the Tome of Making here but will have to deal with the remnant of the elemental chaos that remains in the building – maddened water elementals that lurk invisibly in the flooded room. Use the following description to set the tone for the encounter and the Abandoned Forge map in the appendix.

The middle of the stone chamber is a flooded room with a stone table barely rising above the water level and several ruined shelves covered in mold and fungus along the walls. On the table, dozens of alchemical devices rest more or less undisturbed while in the midst of them, a thick scaled leather tome lies closed and in perfect condition.

Aquatic Marauders (3); Large water elementals; hp 65, 65, 65; *Monster Manual* 100; these elementals attack without regard for tactics, logic or even each other. They will not flank or fight intelligently, seeking only to crush and destroy anything in their water grasp.

Once the PCs have recovered the Tome of Making, they can examine it and discover:

The tome is covered in black, scaled hide and reinforced along its spine and corners in engraved adamantine. A long lock plate completely covered the open right hand edge of the book, preventing access without what appears to be a gem-shaped key. In addition, the cover has a circular boss on the front with a central depression and a pair of geared wheels waiting to accept a mechanical device of some kind.

The book is built to merge with Vastyn's compass; if it is placed in the boss, it will immediately lock into place and its Siberys dragonshard needle will point directly toward Vastyn's current location (the drow encampment, most likely). It will continue to point the way to Vastyn while it is part of the Tome of Making. Removing the compass requires a Disable Device check (DC 24); failure means the compass does not budge and the check can be tried again.

This book is the de facto reason for this entire location-based encounter. Once it is obtained, the PCs can move on if they wish. Further exploration of the harbor is of course an option but the PCs should be operating under a sense of urgency (and may need to be reminded of such if you desire).

To enhance the challenge of this encounter for higher level groups, feel free to substitute the following for one of the elementals:

The Shelled Horror: tojanida, elder; hp 125; *Monster Manual* 244; this creature has been in a sort of suspended animation following its summoning and the lack of consumable food thereafter. The presence of the PCs has awakened it and it lies in wait at the bottom of the flooded room for its chance to eat again!

7. The Bridge to Nowhere

Once a stately causeway that sheltered the harbor along its northern side, this broken passage serves no apparent purpose and does not lead anywhere any longer.

The walkway once stretched between land and a small island that existed on the eastern side of the cove. The same accident that left Vastyn's workshop unusable also affected the tide here and submerged the island permanently. Nothing of interest remains on the sunken isle, though PCs could certainly explore it if they are so inclined (and you wish to adjudicate such an excursion).

If you want to discourage their doing so, an encounter with an appropriate aquatic creature or two every hour they remain in the water should get the point across to them that the scenario's goals lie elsewhere.

8. Watery Nest of the Crows (EL 4, optional)

Arching up over the still waters of the cove, a darkwood mast warped by long exposure still bears its intact crow's nest and the cross beam that once held a massive linen sail. Shreds of the latter can still be seen dangling from rusty grommets on the mast, billowing like forgotten specters in the almost non-existent wind.

Another point of interest but not directly related to the adventure, this is the murky grave of the ship that brought Vastyn to this hidden cove years ago. He abandoned it completely after salvaging what little he could and storing the goods in location 2.

Examining the ship will take quite some time and reveal that the hull is in pieces below the water line – the victim of a cunning giant trap. Two huge columns have shattered the vessel, pressed together like gigantic fists amidships. The trap can no longer be reset but once, long ago, it could have been. This smashing trap provided the ultimate defense against unwanted incursion by nautical threats and even offered a measure of security against sea creatures foolish enough to swim too close.

If you wish to offer the PCs something of a challenge here, the crow's nest can be the lair of a mated pair of massive eagles none too happy about being disturbed!

Feathered Foes; giant eagles (2); hp 30, 30; *Monster Manual* 93; these two eagles are expecting their first clutch soon and have no desire to be bothered. They begin the encounter with an attitude of Unfriendly and immediately become Hostile if attacked.

Using “The Flooded Foundry”

By default, this encounter is placed along the route the PCs will take if they follow Vastyn's written direction and the compass provided along with it. This is also the “assumed” path of the adventure though such is most certainly not a guarantee.

This site may also be used *after* Vastyn is rescued if the PCs wish to go back and recover his workbook. He will be indifferent either way, knowing that while its pages have much evil in them, he might also be able to recover the notes on *aqua vitae* from it as well and return to his work providing free will and life for homunculi in the world of Xen'drik.

Use the Abandoned Harbor map for this encounter, located in the Map Appendix.

Ungentle Giant

The trek through the Xen'drik jungle has been a difficult one, with the density of the trees and the thick undergrowth becoming deeper with every labored step. What few clearings and easier routes you have found are becoming few and farther between as the hours pass.

Ahead, a loud roar of noise like a clap of thunder splits the air. A huge limb falls from a nearby tree, revealing a massive brownish green-skinned shape with a wickedly curved axe in one hand!

The creature mentioned above is a jungle giant, a being native to Xen'drik and far more neutral than actively hostile. Her name is Kuush'ta and she is busy cutting branches to build a transport sled for Rak'ma, her injured mate lying on the jungle floor nearby. Stung by a giant scorpion because they ventured too close to Vulkoor's Clearing, he is dying from its virulent poison and she is desperate to get him back to their nomad village and the healers there.

This encounter is an exercise in honor, good nature and patience. If the PCs expect an attack and strike at Kuush'ta, she will oblige them. She has no time to waste by fleeing from the PCs and her need for the limbs she has already cut is too great for her to abandon them.

Because she only speaks Drow and Giant, communication with Kuush'ta may be limited to roleplaying and basic skill checks. Let the PCs try non-violent means of dealing with Kuush'ta is at all possible; she does *not* want to fight and would welcome any aid they want to provide. If they can heal her mate, she is particularly grateful and will even show the PCs where they were attacked. (This aid will get the PCs where they need to go – revealing Vulkoor's Clearing far faster than they might have reached it otherwise.)

The benefit of Kuush'ta's gratitude may go far beyond her acting like a guide if the PCs are kind to her. Knowing that the drow in the clearing nearby pose a threat to all life in this area, she (and her mate, if he is healed) will aid the PCs against the dark skinned invaders if asked to do so. For this to occur, the PCs will have to improve her Unfriendly attitude to Helpful in some way.

Creatures: Kuush'ta is only a combatant in this encounter if the PCs force her to become one. If they in any way act like they wish to converse or act peacefully, she will do the same. All she wishes to do is gather her cut limbs and return to her mate.

Kuush'ta; female jungle giant; hp 80; *Secrets of Xen'drik* 77

Rak'ma; male jungle giant; hp 85 (currently 21); *Secrets of Xen'drik* 77; Rak'ma is unconscious and poisoned at the start of this encounter and will pose no threat to the PCs.

Using “Ungentle Giant”

By default, this encounter is placed right outside Vulkoor's Clearing by a few miles, allowing PCs to reach it before dealing with the drow and rescuing Vastyn d'Cannith.

This site may also be used at any other point in the jungle, though the poisoning may not be related to the drow in Vulkoor's Clearing if it is located too far away for this to be plausible. There are many other threats to life in Xen'drik, including dream serpents, scarrow and other venomous hazards. Choose any potential source for Rak'ma's indigent state you wish.

Use the Green Giant's Grotto map for this encounter, located in the Map Appendix.

The Fires of Faith

The jungle parts ahead, revealing a wide, shallow depression in the land past one last stretch of dense growth. Less than an hour of travel will bring you to the end of your search for the dark fugitive and whatever awaits you there.

Offer the PCs a Spot check (DC 18). Success allows the PCs to notice the following. Alternately, you can simply assume one or more of the PCs would notice this phenomenon, especially if you want to make sure this encounter occurs for them.

A flash of light appears between the trees to the east. Dark red and lingering, the glow illuminates the trees all around its source, now pulsing like the beat of some otherworldly heart.

The PCs are witnessing the opening of a magma vein, a small rift in the ground used by Suletar drow to harvest one of their most valuable resources – blood glass. The glow is rising up off a small thicket surrounding a set of ancient ruins, providing a sinister crimson radiance for the scene awaiting the PCs should they choose to investigate.

Amid a ring of broken stones, a single dark-skinned figure clad in heavy maroon silks and bronze adornments stands over a glowing fissure in the ground. A strange cart of ornately wrought brass and inset red crystals hovers nearby, its rear section open and filled with more than a dozen rough chunks of blood-red glass.

The figure bears a heavy pick in both hands, repeatedly striking the ground as he harvests more of this strange material out of the earth.

Shurrak is a Suletar glassgather, a skilled miner capable of using his innate sorcerer's magic and mundane talents to find and harvest blood glass from the many dormant volcanic areas of Xen'drik. While he is not capable of creating full volcanoes or fire cones yet, he can sense pockets of blood glass near the surface and open temporary magma veins to bring them within reach.

Unwilling to share his bounty, Shurrak will react with an instant attitude of Unfriendly. He has no desire to be disturbed and knows he is taking a severe risk by mining in this area. Shurrak has no love for the Vulkoor worshippers nearby and while he wants no trouble with them (seeing as he is severely outnumbered) he would like nothing more than to see them cleared out of the area and their abomination (the *claw of Vulkoor*) removed from "his" hunting grounds.

If the PCs can improve his attitude even one step, they can avoid a very difficult combat. If they can get Shurrak to friendly or better, they might even be able to convince him to aid them in dealing with the Vulkoor drow in the encampment. He will agree to attack them using his *firesled* as a distraction if they get him to Friendly status and if the PCs can improve him all the way to Helpful, he will even return to his tribe and bring two other *firesled*-mounted allies to aid in this diversion. That is **all** he is willing to do for the PCs and he is only agreeing to this because of his animosity towards his scorpion-venerating kin.

Creatures: Shurrak is only interested in completing his task out here, mining out blood glass from this temporary magma rift before returning to his hidden village to the far west. While he is personally capable of much violence and is in no way friendly toward the PCs, he has no qualms about working with them in the short term to hurt Vulkoor devotees. If the PCs cross him, however, he is just as happy to burn them all to ashes in the name of his fiery lord.

Shurrak the Glassgather; male drow sorcerer 7; hp 19; See Combat Statistics

Skittering Guardians (4); alchemy beetles (fire, 21 bites of fluid each); hp 21; See Combat Statistics; these four alchemy beetles were encountered by Shurrak during a mining operation five years ago and have been inseparable from him ever since. He has no idea why they protect him but they mindlessly attack anyone or anything that inflicts harm upon him. He cannot actually give them any commands; they just wander around him at all times and attack whenever he suffers hit point damage. Until he is wounded, they take no actions.

Using “The Fires of Faith”

By default, this encounter is placed right outside Vulkoor’s Clearing by less than an hour’s travel, giving PCs an alternative to confronting the encampment without at least a chance of making an ally to use in the very difficult combat the climax of this scenario can present.

This encounter can also be used to impart information even if the PCs are perfectly capable of dealing with the Vulkoor worshippers on their own. Shurrok has scouted the camp and can inform the PCs of what they will find there and where the human is imprisoned before they reach the site themselves. If the PCs manage to get him to a Helpful status regarding them, he could even inform them of the low river gully that will allow them to approach the *claw* of *Vulkoor* without being seen by the camp’s guards.

Use the Fiery Scar map for this encounter, located in the Map Appendix.

Combat Statistics

DROW FIREBRINGER

CR 8

Drow sorcerer 7

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +3; Senses darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +5

Languages Common, Draconic, Drow, Drow Sign Language, Giant, empathic link

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 16

(+3 Dex, +4 armor, +1 deflection, +1 natural)

hp 19 (7 HD)

Immune sleep

SR 18

Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +8 (+10 against spells and spell-like abilities)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee mwk dagger +3 (1d4–1/19–20)

Ranged mwk dagger +7 (1d4–1/19–20)

Base Atk +3; Grp +2

Combat Gear 2 potions of cure light wounds, scroll of wall of fire (CL 7th, DC 16), wand of scorching ray (+6 ranged touch, CL 3rd, 20 charges)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 7th):

3rd (5/day)—fireball (DC 17), haste

2nd (7/day)—bear’s endurance, invisibility, scorching ray (+6 ranged touch)

1st (7/day)—burning hands (DC 15), expeditious retreat, mage armor†, magic weapon, ray of enfeeblement (+6 ranged touch)

0 (6/day)—acid splash (+6 ranged touch), daze (DC 14), detect magic, ghost sound (DC 14), mage hand, message, read magic

† Already cast

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th):

1/day—acid splash (+6 ranged touch, CL 1st), dancing lights, darkness, detect poison (CL 1st), faerie fire, pass without trace (CL 1st)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 18

SQ able to notice secret or concealed doors, familiar, share spells

Feats Alertness^B (if familiar within 5 ft.), Skill Focus (Profession (mining)), Combat Casting, Silent Spell

Skills Concentration +10, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Listen +4, Spellcraft +1, Profession (mining) +8, Search +3, Spot +5

Possessions combat gear plus 2 masterwork daggers, amulet of natural armor +1, ring of protection +1

ALCHEMY BEETLE

What at first glance appeared to be an enormous insect is actually some sort of construct. A black iron exoskeleton holds a glass hemisphere churning with a molten green liquid. Smoke rises where the construct’s mandibles drip this liquid to the ground.

ALCHEMY BEETLE

CR 2

Always N Small construct

Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 15

(+1 size, +4 natural)

hp 21 (2 HD)

Immune construct immunities

Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +2

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee bite +4 (1d3+1 plus 1d6 energy damage) and 2 claws–2 each (1d4)

Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Base Atk +1; Grp –2

Atk Options alchemical bite

Special Actions alchemical blast

Abilities Str 13, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 14, Cha 8

SQ construct traits

Feats Weapon Focus (bite)^B

Skills Hide +4, Jump +5, Listen +0, Spot +0

Advancement 3–6 HD (Medium); 7–12 HD (Large)

Alchemical Bite (Ex) An alchemy beetle’s bite deals an extra 1d6 points of damage of a type determined by the alchemical fluid it holds (acid, cold, electricity, or fire).

Alchemy beetles can deliver roughly 100 bites before running out of fluid. The giants knew the secret of refilling the beetles, but no record of the process currently exists.

Alchemical Blast (Ex) When an alchemy beetle is reduced to 0 hit points, it explodes in a 10-foot-radius burst. Any creature in the area must succeed on a DC 11 Reflex save or take 3d6 points of damage of a type determined by the fluid the beetle holds. A successful save results in half damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.

An alchemy beetle whose fluid supply has been exhausted deals no damage when it explodes.

This encounter does not scale; if the PCs are higher level, dealing with Shurrok will simply be an easier combat and there will be less risk to the party in general. Shurrok is not opposed to use his *firesled* to flee if he is clearly outmatched and has no qualms about leaving the strange little beetles behind to hold off the PCs while he escapes.

Part Two: Vulkoor's Grasp

(This scene can be run any number of ways, with the PCs limited only by their own imaginations, tactical skills and roleplaying considerations. Do not force this upon the Players as a pure combat encounter; the PCs will likely be overwhelmed by the numbers and firepower available to the Sy'estni-Vah tribe of drow. This encampment is a powerful force in the jungles of Xen'drik and should only hit the PCs head on if they are foolish enough to risk a frontal assault.)

Just past a final line trees, a wide stretch of ruins can be seen in the distance. Amid the crumbling stones of an ancient giant stronghold, several square animal hide tents are tucked among the sheltering walls of long sundered buildings from Xen'drik's past.

Near the middle of this encampment, a rock-strewn hillock rises above the shallow crater once dominated by this time-lost fortress. A moving carpet of darkness writes over the hill's peak, circling and spiraling around a cloaked and cowed figure standing next to a massive claw of green stone. The claw monument appears to have recently burst forth out of the ground, leaving the hilltop cracked and rent for several yards in all directions.

Inside the claw, lashed to one half of its leather grasp by constricting vines, an older human male struggles against his bonds. Gagged and restrained by thorned ivy, he seems to be in utter torment. Black energy flickers over the claw, tearing into his flesh!

1. Beast Pen (CR 8)

Weathered sandstone walls shelter two sides of this partial structure, the remaining open area fenced off by tough woven vines to form a temporary paddock for keeping dangerous beasts. The inhabitants of the pen shift and move in the shadows of their earthen home – massive scorpions bearing leather riding tack, their black shells painted with white drow tribal markings!

The Sy'estni-Vah tribe keeps their riding scorpions here, though recent losses to a nearby band of Suletar drow have thinned those numbers considerably. At present, the pen only holds Darkvice, the scorpion belonging to the tribe's female leader and high priestess, and three other, slightly smaller vermin used by the Sy'estni-Vah's outriders.

If left alone, these creatures will only come into play if you decide to have the drow mount up to repel an assault. They cannot escape on their own and are helpless against ranged attack if the PCs wish to burn them down at a distance.

If used as riding beasts during play, each of the three Large scorpions will be mounted by Drow Hunters from three of the Family Tents (location 2) and Darkvice belongs to Hesh'aat and allows no one else to ride it.

Riding Scorpions (3); Large monstrous scorpions; hp 30, 30, 30; *Monster Manual* 287.

Darkvice; Huge monstrous scorpion; hp 75; *Monster Manual* 287.

2. Family Tent (EL 7)

Crafted from tanned and darkened leather, many sections of which still bear black, white or grey fur from whatever jungle creature once wore them, these tents are sturdily built and have a double flap along one side that allows quick entrance while blocking out all light.

Each of these tents is the home of a small family unit of drow, males and females of fighting age. Because this entire encampment separated from the main bulk of the Sy'estni-Vah tribe to come secure the latest location of the *claw of Vulkoor*, there are no children present. Everyone at Vulkoor's Grasp is adult, capable of fighting and extremely unforgiving of interruption.

Foes: If disturbed, each tent will fight as its own unit; these drow have trained together and know each other's combat styles intimately. While the entire encampment will do battle at the same time if mobilized by threat or by the word of their high priestess, they will still do so in multiple family groups as shown here.

All drow present begin encounters at Hostile and, because of the presence of their most treasured icon nearby, impose a -2 circumstance penalty on any attempts at Diplomacy against them. They are bloodthirsty and not at all afraid to die in the service of their scorpion-god. This fanatical devotion also makes them very unlikely to flee; they will never break combat willingly so long as Hesh'aat is alive or the *claw of Vulkoor* is present.

Conversely, they are also deeply superstitious. If the *claw of Vulkoor* descends (as might happen depending on PC actions at location 3), the entire encampment will rout even if Hesh'aat is standing.

Drow Lookouts (4); mix male and female drow warrior 1; hp 8, 8, 8, 8; See Combat Statistics
Drow Hunters (2); mix male and female drow ranger 2; hp 14, 14; See Combat Statistics

Tactics: Even as a group, these might not seem like a formidable challenge for 7th level or higher PCs but keep in mind their intensive training and their command of the local terrain. They should flank, get distance and use ranged attacks and even Aid Another in combat to boost each other's abilities whenever possible. Drow family groups can be extremely vicious in combat and your portrayal of them during the adventure should match this.

Combat Statistics

DROW LOOKOUT

CR 1

Drow warrior 1
 NE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; **Listen** +2, **Spot** +2
Languages Common, Drow, Drow Sign Language, Giant

AC 14, **touch** 12, **flat-footed** 12
 (+2 **Dex**, +2 **armor**)
hp 8 (1 HD)
Immune sleep
SR 12
Fort +2, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0 (+2 against spells and spell-like abilities)
Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee drow scorpion chain +2 (1d6+1/19–20)
Ranged Xen'drik boomerang +3 (1d6+1)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2
Atk Options Drow Skirmisher
Combat Gear smokestick, thunderstone
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st):
 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire*

Abilities **Str** 13, **Dex** 14, **Con** 10, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 11
SQ able to notice secret or concealed doors
Feats Drow Skirmisher*
 *New feat described in Chapter 5
Skills **Climb** +4, **Jump** +4, **Listen** +2, **Search** +2, **Spot** +2, **Swim** +3
Possessions combat gear plus chitin armor*, drow scorpion chain*, 4 Xen'drik boomerangs
 *New armor and weapons described in Chapter 5

DROW HUNTER

CR 3

Drow ranger 2
 NE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft.; **Listen** +8, **Spot** +8
Languages Common, Drow, Drow Sign Language, Giant

AC 15, **touch** 13, **flat-footed** 12
 (+3 **Dex**, +2 **armor**)
hp 14 (2 HD)
Immune sleep
SR 13
Fort +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +1 (+3 against spells and spell-like abilities)
Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee mwk drow long knife +4 (1d6+1/19–20) or
Melee mwk drow long knife +2 (1d6+1/19–20) and
 mwk drow long knife +2 (1d6/19–20) or
Ranged Xen'drik boomerang +5 (1d6+1)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +3
Atk Options Drow Skirmisher, favored enemy giants +2
Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 2nd):
 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, faerie fire*

Abilities **Str** 13, **Dex** 17, **Con** 12, **Int** 12, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10
SQ able to notice secret or concealed doors, wild empathy +2 (–2 magical beasts)
Feats Drow Skirmisher*, **Track**^B, **Two-Weapon Fighting**^B
 *New feat described in Chapter 5
Skills **Climb** +6, **Hide** +8, **Knowledge (geography)** +6, **Listen** +8, **Move Silently** +8, **Search** +3, **Spot** +8, **Survival** +6 (+8 to avoid getting lost, avoid hazards)
Possessions combat gear plus masterwork chitin armor*, 2 masterwork drow long knives*, 3 Xen'drik boomerangs
 *New armor and weapons described in Chapter 5

3. The Claw of Vulkoor (CR 8)

This hill is covered in hundreds, perhaps thousands of scorpions, crawling over every inch of the broken mound except for a small area around the summit's chief feature and its two residents. There is a massive green claw extending out of the earth, open and shuddering as if alive.

Tied to the claw, bound and gagged, is an older human male with a metal arm and one eye concealed or replaced behind a steel-ringed crimson crystal. His skin is rent and ravaged, turning ever greyer under the destructive ravages of a deadly black lightning cracking over the claw's entire emerald surface. In addition to this terrible fate, the man will also be crushed in the claw's grasp if it closes, a fate that seems to slowly be coming true, moment by agonizing moment.

The other inhabitant of the hill is a drow woman clad in a full black cloak, a breastplate of worked chitin and a scorpion-motif headdress ornamented in beaded strands of humanoid finger-bones.

This location is likely the climax of the entire adventure. Vastyn d'Cannith is the human tied to the claw. He was found by the drow during one of his explorations and brought here to linger as an agonized sacrifice until the night of Vulkoor's Feast – tonight.

The female drow is Hesh'aat, priestess of Vulkoor and the leader of this contingent of her tribe. She is the one who led her people to this site, drawn by prophetic dreams of the *claw of Vulkoor* and the silent promise of great power if she venerates her predatory lord properly. She has been keeping the human alive through periodic healing and intends to prolong his torment until the *claw of Vulkoor* crushes him in its titanic jade clutch along with her own hand (the required sacrifice to invoke the *claw's* great magic).

Foes: Hesh'aat may be here without bodyguards but she is far from alone. The scorpions around her are vicious beasts willing to strike at anything that comes into the area of the hill. There are five swarms in total; consider every square of the cross-hatched area of the hill (the terrain marks as light undergrowth) to be covered by part of a single swarm.

Hesh'aat the Venomous, Priestess of Vulkoor; female drow cleric 7; hp 45; See Combat Statistics **Crawling Swarms (5)**; Diminutive vermin (swarm); hp 9; (use Spider Swarm, *Monster Manual* 239); these swarms will not overlap each other even if there are victims to be stung. They cover their individual areas, keeping the hill swarming with legs, stingers and clashing claws.

Tactics: Because she is immune to the vermin swarms, Hesh'aat will try to move any melee combat into the hill area so that her little scorpion friends can torture anyone foolish enough to confront her. She is quite skilled with her scorpion chain weapon and will use it and her spells to the best of her abilities. She knows the *claw of Vulkoor* is a once-in-a-lifetime find and is quite prepared to die before she abandons it.

As an unnerving note, Hesh'aat constantly chants prayers to Vulkoor – even during combat.

Combat Statistics

DROW SHAMAN

CR 8

Drow cleric 7
CE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +2; Senses darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +5
Languages Common, Drow, Drow Sign Language, Giant

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15
(+2 Dex, +5 armor)
hp 42 (7 HD)
Immune sleep
SR 18
Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +9 (+11 against spells and spell-like abilities)
Weakness light blindness

Speed 20 ft. in scorpion breastplate (4 squares); base speed 30 ft.
Melee +1 drow scorpion chain +8 (1d6+2/19–20)
Ranged dart +8 (1d4+1)
Base Atk +5; Grp +6
Atk Options Drow Skirmisher, smite 1/day (+4 attack, +7 damage)
Special Actions rebuke undead 4/day (+3, 2d6+8, 7th)
Combat Gear scroll of *deeper darkness* (CL 5th), scroll of *poison* (CL 7th, DC 16), *wand of cure light wounds* (CL 1st, 50 charges)
Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 7th):
4th—*divine power*^D, *poison* (+6 melee touch, DC 17)
3rd—*cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *magic vestment*^D, *prayer*
2nd—*bear's strength*, *cure moderate wounds*, *shatter*^D (DC 15), *sound burst* (DC 15), *spiritual weapon*
1st—*bless*, *cure light wounds* (2), *magic weapon*^D, *obscuring mist*, *shield of faith*
0—*create water*, *cure minor wounds* (2), *detect magic*, *purify food and drink*, *read magic*
D: Domain spell. Deity: Vulkoor. Domains: Destruction, War.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th):
1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 13, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12
Feats Combat Casting, Drow Skirmisher*, Weapon Focus (dart), Weapon Focus (drow scorpion chain)^B
*New feat described in Chapter 5
Skills Concentration +11, Heal +8, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +5, Search +5, Spot +5
Possessions combat gear plus +1 scorpion breastplate*, +1 drow scorpion chain*, 8 darts, *cloak of resistance +1*, *pearl of power* (1st-level spell), silver holy symbol of Vulkoor

DROW KAXAT

CR 10

Drow fighter 6/ranger 3
NE Medium humanoid (elf)
Action Points 3
Init +3; Senses darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +8, Spot +8
Languages Common, Drow, Drow Sign Language, Giant

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; Two-Weapon Defense
(+3 Dex, +3 armor, +1 shield)
hp 68 (9 HD)
Immune sleep
SR 20
Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +4 (+6 against spells and spell-like abilities)
Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee +1 frost drow long knife +14/+9 (1d6+6/17–20 plus 1d6 cold) or
Melee +1 frost drow long knife +12/+7 (1d6+6/17–20 plus 1d6 cold) and
mwk drow long knife +12 (1d6+3/17–20)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +13/+8 (1d8+3/×3)
Base Atk +9; Grp +12
Atk Options Drow Scorpion Warrior, Drow Skirmisher, Power Attack, favored enemy giants +2
Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of haste*, *potion of rage*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th):
1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14
SQ wild empathy +5 (+1 magical beasts)
Feats Drow Scorpion Warrior*, Drow Skirmisher**, Endurance^B, Heroic Spirit, Improved Critical (drow long knife)^B, Power Attack^B, Track^B, Two-Weapon Defense^B, Two-Weapon Fighting^B, Weapon Focus (drow long knife), Weapon Specialization (drow long knife)
*New feat described in Chapter 5
Skills Climb +9, Hide +9, Jump +9, Listen +8, Move Silently +9, Search +2, Spot +8, Survival +6, Swim +9
Possessions combat gear plus +1 chitin armor*, +1 frost drow long knife*, masterwork drow long knife*, masterwork composite longbow (+3 Str bonus) with 20 arrows, *gauntlets of ogre power*, *cloak of resistance +1*, hunter's kit*
*New armor, weapons, and equipment described in Chapter 5

Development: Because she has been so focused on her victim and the ritual of veneration to come, Hesh'aat might actually be taken by surprise if the PCs find a way to get to her through her people's vigilance and the constant swarms of scorpions that surround the green stone artifact.

If Hesh'aat is slain or rendered unconscious and stops praying, the displeasure of the Scorpion-Lord becomes instantly known throughout the camp! See the text box of the same name below for details; killing Hesh'aat effectively ends this entire part of the Scenario.

Scaling the Encounter

8th and 9th-Level Characters: In addition to the swarms, Hesh'aat has a pair of beloved pets with her at all time. They protect their mistress with their lives and will not flee from combat.

Clasp and Pin (2); Large monstrous scorpions; hp 32, 32; *Monster Manual 287*.

10th-Level Characters: For powerful groups of PCs, the additional challenge of a second potent drow opponent should make this a memorable encounter. Hesh'aat has been joined on her expedition to the *claw of Vulkoor* by her mate, a drow kaxat war chief named Kal'drak.

Kal'drak, Kaxat of the Sy'estni-Vah; male drow fighter6/ranger 3; hp 68; See Combat Statistics

Vulkoor's Displeasure

Hesh'aat is one of the Scorpion Lord's most devoted subjects, singing his praises almost every waking moment of her life since she joined his priesthood decades ago. Her fervor earned her the prophetic dreams that brought her here and has given her the protection of her scorpion swarms. Her entire clan is blessed with Vulkoor's favor because of her unswerving loyalty and faith.

However, Vulkoor the Hunter can become Vulkoor the Wrathful in the blink of a scorpion's eye. If Hesh'aat falls in battle, his favor is instantly lost and this encampment is doomed to be sucked into the earth as he withdraws his legendary *claw of Vulkoor* in furious retribution for their failure.

The earth trembles and several sections of old stone tumble down in a thunder of devastation. The crater is shaking violently, tents falling and camp fires scattered by the tremors tearing through the land. Drow and scorpions alike are fleeing in all directions, raw panic shattering their resolve and sending them all into panicked flight.

The massive green stone claw begins to descend into the earth, closing as it does so!

If the PCs have not yet rescued Vastyn d'Cannith, they have five rounds to cut him free of his bonds and get him off the *claw* before it closes, killing him instantly and pulling him underground to be entombed beneath Xen'drik forever. If the PCs are close by, this should not pose a challenge. However, if the PCs kill Hesh'aat at range or are otherwise some distance away from the *claw of Vulkoor*, this scene could prove to be very difficult indeed.

As soon as Hesh'aat dies or is rendered unconscious, the scorpions and drow no longer count as opponents and will flee from combat immediately, even if doing so would put them at risk or provoke attacks of opportunity. This place is no longer sacred ground and the drow of Xen'drik are well aware of the consequences of angering their dangerous, mercurial god.

4. Scorpion Run (CR 6)

A bizarre sight can be seen wandering around these tents, chained to a thick iron pole thrust into the ground. A massive metal construct in the shape of a scorpion has turned the stony earth around it into a broken wasteland, tilling and churning the rocky soil beneath it with bladed legs as it rambles in endless circles around its tether.

This warforged scorpion is what got Vastyn d'Cannith caught in the first place. He was following it through the jungle, curious about how it operates, when he ran afoul of the drow hunters and their reinforcements. While the warforged scorpion is not evil, it does seem possessed of a low cunning and might very well have led the old man into their trap on purpose.

The drow here consider the metal scorpion a religious icon; this is why they keep it so close to their homes. It does not harm them but it has a tendency to leave for days on end. Because Hesh'aat wants to be sure it is present for the ritual tonight, it is chained up (albeit poorly). Normally the metallic menace is allowed to wander free.

The chain holding the warforged scorpion is incapable of actually holding it should it truly wish to escape or attack the PCs. It is a free action for the iron monster to break loose.

Wandering Idol; warforged scorpion; hp 85; See Combat Statistics; the marked area on the map around this encounter number is considered difficult terrain and cannot be charged or run through.

WARFORGED SCORPION

Eight metal legs move with timed precision, supporting a segmented body made to look like a scorpion. Two long arms end in razor-sharp pincers, while a barbed tail waves overhead, dripping a caustic slime.

WARFORGED SCORPION CR 6

Usually NE Large construct

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common, Drow, Giant (can't speak)

AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 19

(-1 size, +3 Dex, +10 natural)

hp 85 (10 HD); DR 5/adamantine

Immune construct immunities (MM 307)

Resist acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10, sonic 10

Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +5

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee 2 claws +12 each (1d8+6) and
sting +7 (1d6+3 plus 1d6 acid)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Base Atk +7; Grp +17

Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun,
Improved Sunder, Power Attack

Special Actions acid spray

Abilities Str 22, Dex 17, Con —, Int 4, Wis 14, Cha 1

SQ construct traits

Feats Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, Improved
Sunder, Power Attack

Skills Climb +10, Hide +4, Listen +0, Move Silently +7,
Spot +0

Advancement 11–18 HD (Large); 19–30 HD (Huge)

Acid Spray (Su) 30-foot cone from the tip of the warforged
scorpion's stinger, 1/day, damage 8d6 acid, Reflex DC
15 half.

This encounter is not tiered for higher levels; more powerful PCs will simply have an easier time destroying the metal fiend should they have to engage it.

5. Hesh'aat's Tent

More ornate than the other tents, this leather domicile is covered in intricate white marks and pictograms. The symbols show images of scorpions in battle and a great claw rising out of the earth. Beads and bones are worked into the hide walls of the tent, accenting the abstract scenes of arachnid carnage.

This is Hesh'aat's personal tent (and that of Kal'drak if he is also present in the scenario). It is mostly Spartan inside; only clothes and basic furniture are kept within.

A careful Search (DC 20) will find one thing of interest on the ground near the back of the tent, covered by a bedroll and half buried, there is a shard of black scale. Hesh'aat found this in the jungle on her way here and has been examining it to no avail. She believes it to be a dragon's scale but can determine nothing else about the item. She has hidden it mostly out of frustration. (See the text box for more information about the strange ebon scale.)

A Shard of Darkness

If the PCs discover the black dragon scale shard, read or paraphrase the following to them:

Nearly six inches long and half that wide, this object is as rigid as steel and as black as a moonless night. A deep scratch runs down one end of the shard on one side and its side edge is perfectly smooth. The rest of the shard is textured like a snake's scale on one side and rough on the other.

Give the Players the Mysterious Shard image from the Player Handouts.

If the PCs have the proper skills (Knowledge (nature), the Investigate feat, etc.) or have ever seen a black dragon up close (which is possible if they have played Crisis of Faith, the second Covenant of Light scenario), they can automatically recognize this as a broken scale from a black dragon.

Psionic PCs who touch the scale will sense a powerful evil surrounding the object and get a mental flash of struggle, pain and insensate rage. This is automatic and requires no skill checks or power use. Nothing further can be divined from the scale at this time; the power that tore it free from the dragon has left its mark of madness upon the shard.

One other thing *can* be determined from the dragon scale shard. Any kalashtar PC coming into contact with the object will get the flash noted above and will also be certain of its source – a nightmarish Quori!

(The dragon scale shard will be seen again in a future scenario. For now, it is merely a curiosity and can be noted on the Adventure Record of any PCs wishing to keep it. It has no intrinsic value.)

6. Supplies

Several blackened wood poles are shoved into the ground around this tent, their sharpened upper ends smeared with some kind of greenish fungal paste. Even the scorpions on the ground nearby avoid this tent; nothing seems to be coming anywhere near it.

Despite its ominous appearance, this tent is not even slightly dangerous. The spikes are merely there to dissuade large predators and the paste on them is an herbal concoction that smells horrible to animal life and vermin. These precautions are needed because the tent holds the entirety of the camp's supplies, ammunition and foodstuffs.

There is very little in the tent currently. Like most nomads, this tribe knows it is moving on very soon and so they have been heavily drawing on their stockpiles to keep from having to carry or abandon the extra weight of materials they have not used.

If the PCs choose to search this tent, you can abstractly determine that they replenish their food and water stores, ensuring they have enough for the journey home. Beyond that, there is nothing of value.

7. The Dry Gorge (CR 3)

This was once a wide river bed, part of the tributary that used to course through the jungle in this area. Long since dammed up and dried out, now only deep gullies like this one remain. Nearly ten feet deep in some places, the gorge runs from the jungle's edge all the way up to the hill in the encampment's center.

The gorge is completely empty save for a single occupant at the base of the center hill – a huge monstrous scorpion resting at the end of the gully. If the PCs think to use this old river bed (or are advised to do so by allies they might have made along the way), it will provide them cover and get them all the way to the hill without being detected by the drow watchmen at the monoliths (location 8).

The gorge provides full concealment and cover for PCs in its area with regards to the rest of the encampment; it is deep and wide enough that even the largest of PCs can hide in it easily.

Foe: The massive scorpion at the end of the gully is currently resting off a large meal, intent on digestion alone. It is not being particularly watchful and could even be surprised if the PCs are careful enough. Unlike the rest of the camp, it does not automatically fail to see the PCs if they are in the gully with it; attempts at stealth must be made normally to sneak up on this beast.

Lurking Guardian; Large monstrous scorpion; hp 30; *Monster Manual* 287

Development: This combat is not intended to be a challenge for the PCs and is not even tiered in difficulty. It is mostly a test to see if the PCs will be able to take out the arachnid threat without alerting the high priestess 20 feet away.

8. Auld Monolith (CR 5)

A five foot wide needle of red and black marble rises up out of a granite base here, its top long since shorn off and crumbled into shards and sand on the ground nearby. A platform of wood and vines has been erected atop it, providing a perch for a drow observer to watch over the entire encampment.

These monoliths were once waystones for the giants who lived here, decorated with images and markings that denoted distant locales that waited along the paths they marked. Now they are merely stony towers for the camp's scouts, useful only to elevate these guardians ten feet off the ground and provide them a better view of the area.

Each monolith has a single occupant and while this sentry has an excellent vantage point for watching the encampment, there are a few noticeable blind sides the PCs can take advantage of if they are careful. Neither pillar can see through the hill; everything happening on the opposite of the hillock from one of the monoliths is concealed from its watcher. The Dry Gorge (location 7) is also hidden, even from the tower close to it because of the concealment provided by the high-sided river bed and the floor of the guard tower's own woven perch.

Foe: These sentinels are armed with ranged weapons and are trained to use them with deadly accuracy. If they can, they will sound an alarm by shouting during the first round of any engagement. In battle, they usually target the least visibly defended enemy they can see first; an opponent that is wounded or slain quickly is a burden to the attacking force, after all.

Monolith Sentry; male or female drow ranger 2/fighter 2; hp 27; See Combat Statistics.

Combat Statistics

DROW RAIDER

CR 5

Drow ranger 2/fighter 2

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +4; Senses darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +8, Spot +8

Languages Common, Drow, Drow Sign Language, Giant

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 13

(+4 Dex, +3 armor)

hp 27 (4 HD)

Immune sleep

SR 15

Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +1 (+3 against spells and spell-like abilities)

Weakness light blindness

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee mwk drow long knife +10 (1d6+1/19–20) or

Melee mwk drow long knife +8 (1d6+1/19–20) and

mwk drow long knife +8 (1d6/19–20)

Ranged mwk Xen'drik boomerang +9 (1d6+1)

Base Atk +4; Grp +5

Atk Options Drow Skirmisher*, favored enemy giants +2

Combat Gear *potion of bull's strength*, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th):

1/day—*acid splash* (+8 ranged touch, CL 1st), *dancing lights*, *darkness*, *detect poison* (CL 1st), *faerie fire*, *pass without trace* (CL 1st)

Abilities Str 13, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10

SQ wild empathy +2 (–2 magical beasts)

Feats Blessed of Vulkoor*, Drow Skirmisher^{B*}, Track^B,

Two-Weapon Fighting^B, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (drow long knife)^B

*New feat described in Chapter 5

Skills Climb +8, Hide +10, Knowledge (geography) +6,

Listen +8, Move Silently +11, Search +3, Spot +8, Survival +7 (+9 to avoid getting lost, avoid hazards)

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *chitin armor**, 2 masterwork

drow long knives*, 3 masterwork Xen'drik boomerangs

* New armor and weapons described in Chapter 5

Development: If a Sentry sees a PC, he will spend one round observing the target before sounding an alarm. Then he will attack with a boomerang and shout a warning to the camp simultaneously. The drow of this tribe are trained to rally to these warnings and every available dark elf except Hesh'at will react.

Running This Encounter

Even if most of the locations in this scene have Challenge Ratings that are far lower than the average level of the PCs, the encampment as a whole will most likely annihilate them if it mobilizes as a single force. The point of this scenario is **not** to smash the PCs with superior numbers or overwhelm and destroy them. This is a rescue and capture mission; getting Vastyn d'Cannith out of the literal clutches of Vulkoor should be their primary objective.

As such, offer the PCs this encampment as a mental and tactical challenge. There are a number of ways to accomplish the PCs' mission, including stealth, diversions and anything else they can think of as an approach to a camp full of powerful, hostile drow.

Give the PCs a fighting chance no matter what their chosen plan ends up being. This is the climax of the adventure and should offer the PCs an exciting challenge without being impossible.

The high priestess herself is too occupied with her ritual to fight the PCs unless they come up onto her hilltop or try to interfere with her sacrifice. If the PCs attack her directly and confine their strikes to Hesh'aat alone, the other drow will not intervene. In their eyes, this is a struggle for dominance and a holy battle; for her part, Hesh'aat will not ask for help unless she is reduced to 5 hit points or less.

Once the priestess is down, proceed to the events listed in Vulkoor's Displeasure. The drow in the encampment might have been surrounding the hill, intent on slaughtering the PCs, but the fickle powers of Xen'drik have... other plans.

Ending the Adventure

Once Vastyn d'Cannith is rescued, the adventure is technically over. The PCs may already believe him to be worthy of redemption or may come to that conclusion after speaking with him. He is quiet, unassuming and willing to follow the PCs to whatever fate they desire for him. He knows he has been a terrible force of evil in the past and done things that few could ever forgive.

Even so, he has truly repented of his sins and is living his life in the hope of absolution. If the PCs offer it, he will gladly join them in the Covenant of Light and try to turn his knowledge and skills to the service of Good instead. He is a powerful artificer and his skills could accomplish much if guided properly.

Some PCs will want to recover the book mentioned in his original letter; Vastyn will assist in this matter as best he can, revealing the location of his laboratory and warning the PCs about the water elementals that forced him from the area in the first place. Vastyn d'Cannith is not detailed in this scenario because he is effectively reduced to a non-combatant with no magic following the ravages of the *claw of Vulkoor*. If he appears in future adventures, his full statistics will be provided then.

Of the mnemosyne stone, Vastyn will only say that it is a part of him and always will be. He is referring to the stone's magical property of bonding to the body of its owner and disappearing into his or her flesh. He will withdraw the stone for the PCs if they desire it but would prefer to wait until they are all safely back at Radiant Hold.

The stone unlocks the plate on the Tome of Making, something else he is unwilling to do openly. The Tome contains his long years of dark work, including schematics for devices and homunculi too terrible to imagine – many of whom might still exist somewhere in Eberron. While there is much to be learned from its pages, most of what lies within is what Vastyn now considers blasphemous knowledge and should, in his opinion, be destroyed.

Returning Vastyn d'Cannith to Radiant Hold, either for trial or for redemption, is a decision for the PCs. If they speak with Vastyn, be sure to make it clear he is a changed man. He does not detect as evil (he is currently of Neutral alignment) and if Mote is present, his care and gentle handling of the homunculus should be another indicator of his changed heart. (Taking this option or any other choice that leaves Vastyn d'Cannith alive and contactable by the PCs provides them the "Meeting the Lord-Maker" story object.)

One way or another, the adventure ends with the rescue of Vastyn d'Cannith (though you may wish to run the PCs through the recapture of the book at the Abandoned Harbor if time remains in the scenario's allotted play slot). There is also a wealth of roleplaying opportunity between the PCs and Vastyn d'Cannith. Allow for as much conversation as the Players desire.

If the PCs have had an easy time of things during this adventure, feel free to use Felhand and Ballista to ambush them on their way back to Radiant Hold. Use the Green Giant's Grotto map if you wish.

Here ends ***A Dark Fugitive***.

Adventure Questions

- 1. Which best describes the apparent attitude of the PCs toward their mission during the scenario?**
 - a) The PCs were totally professional and seemed genuinely interested in upholding the faction's goals during the mission.
 - b) The PCs were motivated but seemed to be more interested in rewards than in serving the common good or their faction's needs.
 - c) Aside from the desire to earn experience and get another mission "over with", the PCs did not seem to have any motivation at all.
 - d) They were completely disinterested and had no desire to perform this task at all.

- 2. Did the PCs constantly monitor their surroundings during the mission for clues and leads?**
 - a) If there was a hidden coin under a jungle rock, the PCs would have found it.
 - b) They maintained a strong vigilance but there were things they could have found and did not (such as the Mysterious Shard or the Tome of Making).
 - c) The PCs only found things that slithered up and hit them in the face.

- 3. Did the PCs accept Seera's offer to deal with Faara's capture in exchange for Mote, the expeditious messenger?**
 - a) They did, possibly even suggesting the trade themselves, and performed admirably. No one was hurt that did not have to be and the girl was saved.
 - b) There was collateral damage or deaths but the girl was saved.
 - c) They tired to perform this side mission but the girl was not successfully rescued.
 - d) Either by choice or by disinterest, the mission was never attempted.

- 4. How did the PCs handle themselves during their journey through the jungle to Vulkoor's Grasp?**
 - a) Constantly heroic, constantly maintaining their morals and good alignments, the PCs handled themselves admirably and won through every encounter in their path.
 - b) Things got ugly in places but the PCs handled themselves well. (Use this option if the PCs lost or had to flee from one or more encounters but still made their way to Vulkoor's Grasp.)
 - c) By the time they reached Vulkoor's Grasp, the PCs were bloody, broken and managed to fail at every task in their path.
 - d) The PCs never made it to Vulkoor's Grasp.

- 5. How did the PCs deal with Hesh'aat?**
 - a) Through force of arms or stronger faith, the PCs were able to slay the vile scorpion priestess and rescue Vastyn.
 - b) At least one PC was dropped or taken out of action but in the end the priestess was killed and Vastyn d'Cannith was saved.
 - c) The dark fugitive was rescued and at least one of the PCs made it out of Vulkoor's Grasp. Beyond that, not much can be said for their performance.
 - d) The PCs failed to rescue Vastyn d'Cannith.

- 6. What was the outcome of the PCs' encounter with Vastyn d'Cannith?**
 - a) Inspired by their good examples, Vastyn d'Cannith is now a member of the Covenant of Light.
 - b) Justice is justice; he has been given over to the authorities for trial as the law demands.
 - c) One or more of the PCs decided to execute the man or let him die as punishment for his crimes.
 - d) Vastyn d'Cannith, the last surviving Lord-Maker of Cyre, was sacrificed to Vulkoor.

- 7. How would you rate the group's roleplaying?**
 - a) Exemplary! Everyone was in character and having a grand time.
 - b) Good! Most of the Players were enjoying themselves and acting in character.
 - c) Decent. There was some in-character action but not a considerable amount.
 - d) None! The game was little more than tactical decisions and dice rolling.

Story Objects

"Member of Hungry Hearts Hall" (Story Code: EXCL20)

You have suitably impressed Seera, the current owner of the Hungry Hearts Hall or earned her gratitude in some way. You have been given the members only pass phrase, 'A broken heart is fun to fix' and may freely enter the Hall during business hours.

In addition to its roleplaying value and possible usefulness in future adventures, the following rules items are now unlocked for PCs with this story object.

Base Class: *Beguiler (Player's Handbook II)*

Prestige Class: *Lyric Thaumaturge (Complete Mage), unlocking this prestige also unlocks the Melodic Casting feat in the same book (page 44). Troubadour of Stars (Book of Exalted Deeds), unlocking this prestige class also unlocks the Knight of Stars feat in the same book (page 44).*

"Meeting the Lord-Maker" (Story Code: EXCL21)

By rescuing one of the Lord-Makers of Cyre, you have made contact with a valuable ally and a mechanical loremaster beyond peer. Though Vastyn never wishes to repeat the sins of his past, he is willing to use his knowledge in the service of good. As such, you may call upon him once during any adventure that takes place in Stormreach (or if you have the ability to make contact with him during play) to automatically make a DC 30 skill check with the following skills: Knowledge (engineering), Knowledge (arcana) or History (Cyre or the Last War).

This story object may have other ramifications in future adventures.

Appendix One: Player Handouts

Honored Scions,

It is with great pride that I hail you, heroes that have persisted against all odds and through the darkness of the past year.

It is through that courage that you have come to earn my trust, enough so that I place into your custody a considerable amount of wealth and the mission for which it is intended.

Please take this parcel to the Hungry Hearts Hall and show the enclosed special token to the guardian at its door.

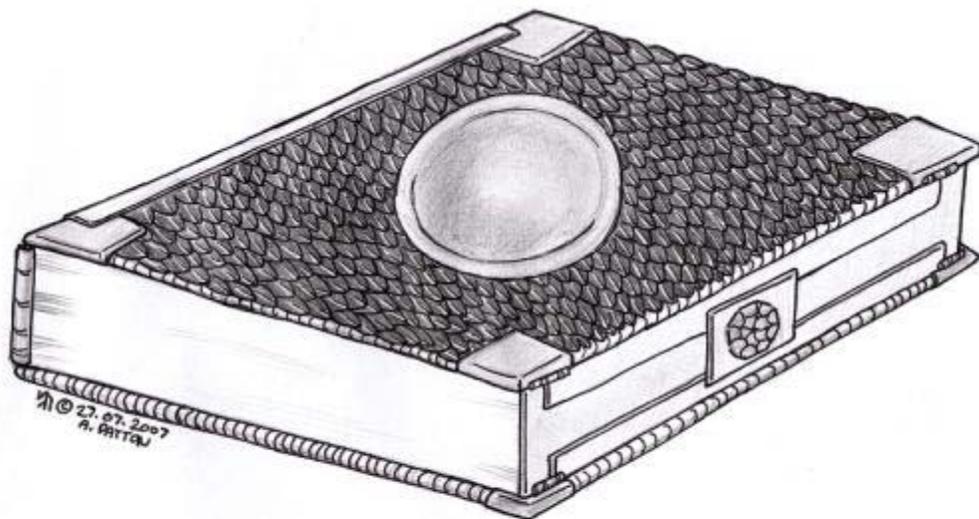
You will be meeting with a woman of considerable beauty and wit on a matter of information exchange. Give her the parcel in exchange for her knowledge about "The Feathered Missive".

She has indicated there may be more information of interest to us on this matter and is willing to make further exchanges. In that matter, I will respect your judgment and initiative. We are prepared to match the amount we are already paying; additional or alternative coinage will be reimbursed to you if we are able.

This mission is one of vital import; we know you will not fail to do your best on our behalf.

Yours in the Light,

Xandrin Corvalis – Radiant Hold



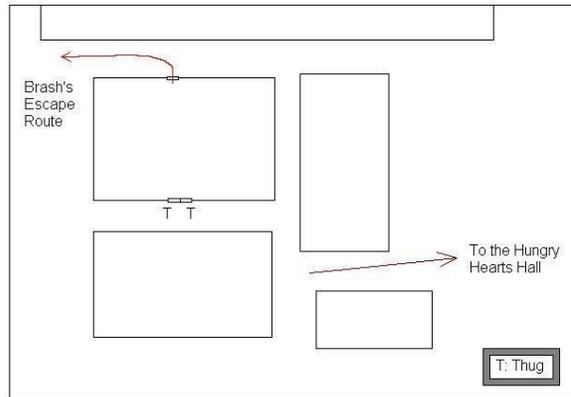
The Tome of Making



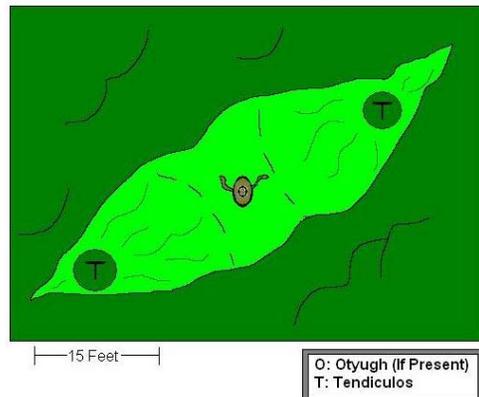
Mysterious Shard

Appendix Two: Maps

A Brash Endeavor



Verdant Valley



Overland Travel Map



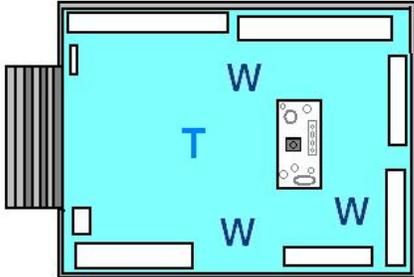
- 1: Stormreach
- 2: The Flooded Foundry
- 3: Vulkoor's Grasp
- a: A Verdant Demise
- b: Ungentle Giant
- c: Fires of Faith



Map Key:	
1: The Broken Road	5: The Perilous Pier
2: Sundered Supplies	6: A Forge Abandoned
3: The Unkempt Keep	7: The Bridge to Nowhere
4: A Sailor's Last Stand	8: Watery Nest of the Crows

The Abandoned Harbor

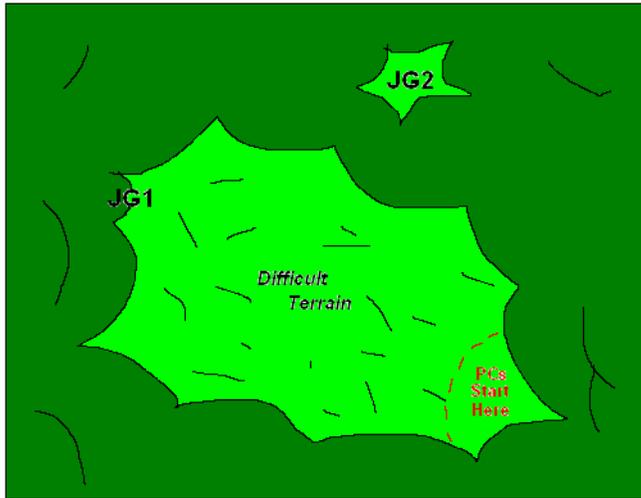
A Forge Abandoned



 = 10 feet x 10 feet

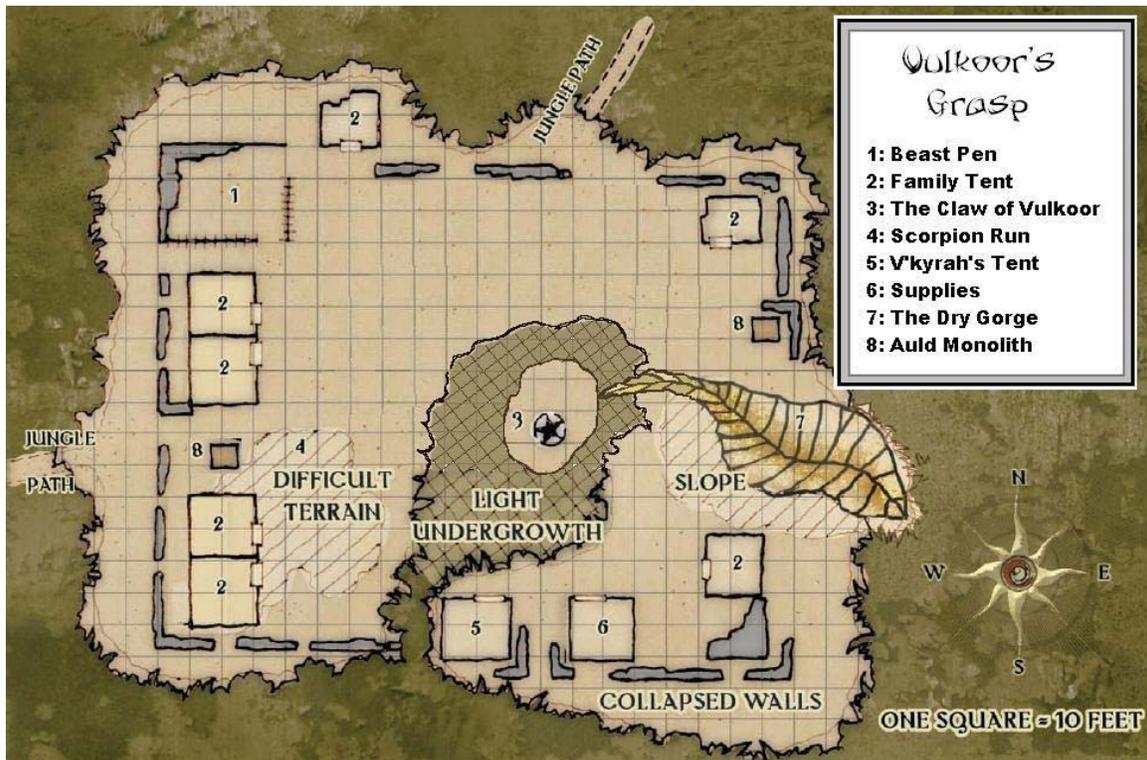
W Water Elementals
T Tojanida (if present)

The Green Giant's Grotto



JG 1 Kuush'ta
JG 2 Rak'ma

□ = 5 feet x 5 feet



Appendix Three: Rule Items

New Feats (From Secrets of Xen'drik)

BLESSED OF VULKOOR [RACIAL]

A scorpion-shaped birthmark denotes you as one of the chosen of Vulkoor.

Prerequisites: Drow, region of origin Xen'drik.

Benefits: You gain extra spell-like abilities and an affinity for scorpions, the deity's favored children. As a blessed of Vulkoor, you gain the following spell-like abilities as a 1st-level caster: 1/day—*acid splash*, *detect poison*, *pass without trace*.

If you have the ability to summon a familiar, you can choose to gain a Tiny monstrous scorpion in addition to the list of available options.

If you have an animal companion, you can add the following creatures to the list of available options: 1st level—Small or Medium monstrous scorpion; 4th level—Large monstrous scorpion; 10th level—Huge monstrous scorpion. If you have the wild empathy ability, you can treat scorpions as animals for the purpose of that ability.

Special: Unlike most feats, this feat must be taken at 1st level during character creation.

DROW SCORPION WARRIOR [RACIAL, TACTICAL]

Your study of the ways of the scorpion grants you special tactics.

Prerequisite: Drow, Drow Skirmisher, base attack bonus +4, region of origin Xen'drik.

Benefit: The Drow Scorpion Warrior feat enables the use of three tactical maneuvers.

Deadly Sting: To use this maneuver, you must score a critical hit with either a drow long knife or a drow scorpion chain (both on page 137) against a living creature. Your next attack against the same target with the same weapon (which must be made before the end of your next turn) gains a +2 bonus on the attack roll and deals 1d4 points of Constitution damage in addition to the normal damage dealt.

Lunging Sting: To use this maneuver, you must make a charge attack with a drow scorpion chain against a foe. If you hit, that opponent takes a -2 penalty on attack rolls against you until the start of your next turn.

Rending Sting: To use this maneuver, you must hit the same target with two different drow long knives in the same round. In the next round, you deal an additional 1d4 points of damage with your drow long knife attacks against that target.

DROW SKIRMISHER [RACIAL]

Your experience with the guerrilla-style combat of the deep jungle grants you mastery of the weapons of the drow.

Prerequisites: Drow, region of origin Xen'drik.

Benefit: You treat the Xen'drik boomerang (*ECS* 119), the drow scorpion chain, and the drow long knife (both on page 137) as martial weapons. You gain a +1 bonus on damage rolls when making an attack with a drow long knife or a drow scorpion chain as long as you have moved more than 5 feet under your own power during the round in which you make the attack. For example, being pushed 10 feet by a bull rush attack isn't sufficient to grant you the extra damage from this feat.

If you have any of the following feats for the dagger or short sword, you can apply the feats' effects to the drow long knife: Improved Critical, Weapon Focus, Weapon Specialization, Greater Weapon Focus, or Greater Weapon Specialization. If you have any of the same feats for the spiked chain, you can apply the feats' effects to the drow scorpion chain.

Additionally, when you spend 1 action point to influence an attack roll made with either a Xen'drik boomerang, drow scorpion chain, or drow long knife, you also add the result of the action point roll to your damage for that attack.

New Weapons and Armor (From Secrets of Xen'drik)

Armor	Cost	Armor Bonus	Maximum Dex Bonus	Armor Check Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure Chance	—Speed— (30 ft.) (20 ft.)	Weight
<i>Light Armor</i>							
Chitin armor	20 gp	+2	+7	–1	5%	30 ft. 20 ft.	10 lb.
<i>Medium Armor</i>							
Scorpion breastplate	300 gp	+4	+4	–3	20%	20 ft. 15 ft.	20 lb.

Exotic Weapons	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range Increment	Weight ¹	Type
<i>Light Melee Weapons</i>							
Drow long knife	15 gp	1d4	1d6	19–20/×2	10 ft.	2 lb.	Piercing
Scorpion claw gauntlet	40 gp	1d4	1d6	×2	—	6 lb.	Slashing
<i>Two-Handed Melee Weapons</i>							
Drow scorpion chain ²	25 gp	1d4	1d6	19–20/×2	—	3 lb.	Slashing

¹ Weight figures are for Medium weapons. A Small weapon weighs half as much, and a Large weapon weighs twice as much.
² Reach weapon.

Chitin Armor: The drow of Xen'drik have perfected a method of harvesting chitin plates from monstrous scorpions, which are then finished with cloth and hide. Lightweight chitin armor consists of a few chitin plates protecting the shoulders, head, and abdomen, supplemented by bone at the forearm and shin.

Scorpion Breastplate: This armor resembles chitin armor, but adds a sturdy breastplate crafted from a monstrous scorpion's abdominal carapace, and a helmet assembled from chitin plates.

Chain, Drow Scorpion: A drow scorpion chain resembles a regular spiked chain in many respects, but it is slightly longer than a normal spiked chain and features a daggerlike blade at each end. The drow of Xen'drik have perfected the use of the weapon to harass larger enemies such as giants, or as a poison-delivery weapon against less hardy foes. The weapon takes its name from the technique of holding a length of chain behind the back and then flipping it over the head to strike a foe; drow warriors often open combat with this strike.

A drow scorpion chain has reach, so you can strike opponents 10 feet away with it. In addition, unlike most other weapons with reach, it can be used against an adjacent foe.

Because the chain can wrap around an enemy's leg or other limb, you can make trip attacks with it. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the chain to avoid being tripped.

When using a drow scorpion chain, you get a +2 bonus on opposed attack rolls made to disarm an opponent (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if such an attempt fails).

You can use the Weapon Finesse feat (*PH* 102) to apply your Dexterity modifier instead of your Strength modifier to attack rolls with a drow scorpion chain sized for you, even though it isn't a light weapon.

Most drow who wield the drow scorpion chain take the Drow Skirmisher feat (see page 134), but other characters who take Exotic Weapon Proficiency, Weapon Focus, or Weapon Specialization for either the spiked chain or drow scorpion chain can apply the effects of those feats to attacks with either weapon.

Gauntlets, Scorpion Claw: Made from the claws of Large monstrous scorpions, these gauntlets are usually sold in pairs. In combat, you can use scorpion claw gauntlets to slice opponents open with deadly efficiency. When wearing two scorpion claw gauntlets, you get a +2 bonus on grapple checks made to deal damage to your opponent. On a successful check, you deal the weapon's normal damage rather than nonlethal damage for an unarmed strike.

Knife, Drow Long: The drow long knife is a slender blade resembling a short sword in length and weight, but balanced for throwing like a dagger or smaller blade. Featuring a haft and guard often constructed of a dream serpent's fangs, the long knife's design makes the weapon more difficult to wield than a normal dagger, but makes it far more deadly in the hands of a skilled user.

Most drow who wield the drow long knife take the Drow Skirmisher feat (see page 134), but other characters who take Exotic Weapon Proficiency (drow long knife) can apply the benefit of Weapon Focus (dagger) or Weapon Specialization (dagger) to their attacks with a drow long knife.

New Magical Location (From Secrets of Xen'drik)

THE CLAW OF VULKOOR

Never seen in the same place twice, the *claw of Vulkoor* is considered by many drow to be the greatest boon their god can bestow. Its appearance is always heralded by an eruption of the forest floor, from which swarms of scorpions rise. After them comes a great jade claw. The scorpions circle reverently around the mighty claw before fading from view.

The *claw of Vulkoor* grants the power to summon scorpion allies to those who pay a price. Only those strong in their faith to Vulkoor can undertake this ritual; all others who touch the claw convulse and die.

Lore: Characters can gain the following pieces of information about a *claw of Vulkoor* by making successful Knowledge (religion) checks at the appropriate DCs, as given below.

DC 15: The *claw of Vulkoor* is a large jade claw said to grant power over scorpions to those who learn its secrets.

DC 20: Anyone not loyal to Vulkoor who attempts to use the claw is stricken dead by the scorpion god.

DC 25: The appearance of a *claw of Vulkoor* is considered a great boon to the drow tribe that receives it, and they will fight to the death to protect it.

Description: Made from one piece of solid jade, the *claw of Vulkoor* is over 12 feet tall and inscribed with intricate detail. The inside of the claw is a razor-sharp serrated edge. Its segmented base is covered in prayers to Vulkoor, written in Drow.

Scorpions, both ordinary and monstrous, seem drawn to the claw and can usually be found in the immediate vicinity or crawling across the claw's surface. These vermin do not attack drow and those loyal to Vulkoor, but all others are at risk.

Prerequisite: To gain the benefits of the *claw of Vulkoor*, a creature must be able to cast 2nd-level divine spells and have Vulkoor as its patron deity.

Location Activation: To gain the power bestowed by the *claw of Vulkoor*, a character must place an appendage in the claw and recite the prayers written on its base. This activity takes 1 minute, at the end of which time the claw slowly closes, dealing 3d6 points of damage and 1 point of Constitution damage. The physical damage can be healed normally, but the Constitution damage cannot be healed until the special ability has been used three times.

Recharge: After the *claw of Vulkoor* has granted its power three times, it sinks back into the ground and cannot be found or used again. It might reappear in another location after one month, ready to be used three more times.

Special Ability (Sp): A devotee of Vulkoor who gains the claw's power can summon one Large fiendish monstrous scorpion or 1d4+1 Medium fiendish monstrous scorpions once per day as a standard action. This ability otherwise functions as the spell *summon monster V*. These scorpions serve the summoner faithfully for 1 minute or until slain.

Duration: The ability to summon scorpions lasts for one month.

Aura: Moderate conjuration.

Ability Value: 30,000 gp (10,000 gp per affected creature).



New Magical Item

Mnemostones

Also called a mnemosyne stone, this small crystal sphere is brooding grey in color and perfectly smooth. Its glowing, cloudy depths swirl continuously, coming to rest only when it is held by a sentient creature. Created to contain memories too complex to record in words, these crystals can also act as command word storage or be keyed by thoughts to activate magical locks.

Activated as a standard action through contact, a mnemostone can hold one memory of up to an hour in length and pass it on to any sentient creature that makes contact with it. Receiving the memory is a free action. A mnemostone can also be "stored" by touching it to living flesh and willing it as a standard action to "submerge". It then disappears, becoming part of the user's body until he or she takes another standard action to will it to "emerge".

Caster Level: 7th; Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *Rary's Mnemonic Enhancer*, *Major Image*; Market Price: 21,600 gp.

Appendix Three: NPCs

Combat Statistics

Ballista, Warforged Sniper / Bounty Hunter CR 8

Warforged female-personality fighter 6/exotic weapon master 2

NE Medium construct (living construct)

Init +9; **Senses** Listen +1, Search +1, Spot +1

Languages Common

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 14; 25% resist to critical hits/sneak attacks, 20% miss chance

hp 56 (8 HD)

Resist Warforged immunities

Fort +10, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3

Action Points: 8 (d8)

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +11/+6 unarmed slam (1d4+3 lethal) or

Range +16/+11 *armbow* (1d8+4, 19-20 x2)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +9

Special Actions Ranged disarm, close quarters combat (no AoE when shooting in melee)

Abilities Str 16, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10

SQ: warforged traits, living construct traits, light fortification

Feats Point Blank Shot, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (repeating crossbow), Precise Shot, Far Shot, Weapon Focus (repeating crossbow), weapon specialization (repeating crossbow), Improved Initiative, Track

Skills Climb +9, Craft (weaponsmith) +7, Intimidate +6, Jump +9, Ride +11, Survival +7

Possessions *armbow* (+2 *repeating light crossbow* warforged component), *cloak of displacement (minor)*, *bracers of dexterity* +2 (treat as gloves of dexterity), composite plating has been enchanted to +2

Ballista is a bitter, angry female-personality warforged with a scarred face and a hardened soul. Surviving the Last War was difficult for her; having to watch as the rest of her unit fell to the ravages of the Day of Mourning was even harder. The experience left her with an empty soul and a desire for revenge that burned brighter with each passing day. Even once she was repaired and given her “freedom”, she felt nothing but a hollow need to lash out at anyone and everyone around her.

This attitude brought her eventually to the doorstep of the Lord of Blades in the Mournlands. In her, he saw a useful tool. In him, she saw hope for the future for the first time in her life. Practically a religious conversion, this newfound sense of purpose has driven Ballista ever since. She serves the Lord of Blades in all things, even traveling across the world to hellish places like Xen'drik at his behest.

Combat Tactics: In battle, Ballista acts like her namesake. She stays as far out of combat as she can, sacrificing her Point Blank Shot bonuses in favor of her Far Shot ability unless she needs the additional attack bonus to hit her targets. She is especially fond of shooting weapons out of her foes' hands with her Exotic Ranged Disarm feature; she uses this skill every chance she gets.

Ballista is no coward but she is also unwilling to die for no good purpose. If she has to sacrifice herself to further the will of the Lord of Blades, so be it. However, she has no wish to throw her life away. If she can, Ballista will always flee from combat if things are going badly.

Roleplaying Hook: <cold, impassive stare, a lens inscribed with crosshairs folding down over her remaining optic jewel> “*You are standing in my way. Move now. You won't get a second warning.*” <an audible click from her raised armbow as a bolt manifests and slides into place>

Combat Statistics

Felhand, Warforged Fighter

CR 7

Warforged male-personality fighter 7

N Medium construct (living construct)

Init +1; **Senses** Listen +1, Search +0, Spot +1

Languages Common

AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 21; 25% resist to critical hits/sneak attacks, 2/- DR

hp 75 (7 HD)

Resist Warforged immunities

Fort +8, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3

Action Points: 8 (d8)

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +11/+6 unarmed slam (1d4+4 lethal) or

Range + 13/+8 *claw gauntlet* (1d6+7, x2)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +10

Special Actions +4 to attack rolls when targeting held items, +6 total bonus to hit with sunder attack actions

Abilities Str 18, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10

SQ: warforged traits, living construct traits, light fortification

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (scorpion claw gauntlet), Adamantine Body, Weapon Focus (scorpion claw gauntlet), Power Attack, Cleave, Weapon Specialization (scorpion claw gauntlet), Improved Sunder

Skills Climb +9, Intimidate +5, Jump +9, Ride +6

Possessions *claw gauntlet*, composite plating enchanted to +3

During the war, Felhand (then Ram) served his masters with brutal efficiency and showed a distinct talent for breaking things into very small pieces. Used for his skill at siege and sundering, Ram was sent time and time again into the heart of desperate struggles and bloody combats on more than a hundred battlefields. By the time the Last War ended, he was haggard, weary and in terrible disrepair.

Once his usefulness ended, he was forgotten and ended up in the wilds of Xen'drik, slaved to a group of dispassionate explorers interested in using him for trap detection and physical protection. With no other aspirations and barely any will of his own left, he accepted their orders and suffered for many months during their dangerous expeditions. When these human "masters" were slain by another warforged, one who answered to no organic being, Felhand saw for the first time that his kind could aspire to something greater than slave labor.

Now Felhand follows his liberator and does her bidding, not because he is forced to but because he chooses to do so. He believes every word she tells him about the great kingdom that the Lord of Blades will someday found in the Mournlands and would do anything to make that dream a reality. Anyone who interferes with that goal is destined to meet a grisly end, clutched in the inexorable grip of his terrible black metal claw.

Combat Tactics: Felhand is not a subtle creature. The sum extent of his combat finesse is centered around his use of his claw gauntlet to sunder weapons and shields whenever they get in the way of his normal targets – his enemies' throats. He rarely attacks to wound; if he raises his dark hand to strike at someone, it is almost always to kill.

Felhand knows that he is hard to hit and harder to hurt. He always takes the brunt of any attack, trying to tie up his opponents so that his sharp-shooting partner Ballista can put bolts in them at a nice, safe distance. He is bright enough in combat to take advantage of any weakness in his foes and any disorganization in their movements. Attacks of opportunity allow him to put his claw to good use, so moving past him to attack Ballista might prove to be a fatal mistake.

Roleplaying Hook: *"This does not concern you. Do as the lady says and step aside. Now."* <a low grind of metal gears as the claw opens wide>