



THE JOURNEY BEGINS: WELL OF WOE (ROUND 1)

A Three-Round DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Adventure
for 1st - to 3rd-Level Characters

Expedition Adventure I for the XEN'DRIK
EXPEDITIONS™ Campaign

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Eberron Campaign Setting [Keith Baker], *Secrets of Xen'drik* [Keith Baker, Jason Bulmahn,
Amber Scott], *Miniatures Handbook* [Mike Donais, Skaff Elias, Rob Heinsoo, Jonathan Tweet]

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ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

All four factions have recently been made aware, through the draconic Prophecy and other research, that there is a spot on Xen'drik known as the Well of Woe. At this spot there is some sort of flame, and interaction with that flame may hold great significance for the future of Eberron. With this in mind, all four factions are planning to send members in search of the Well of Woe and the flame. Each faction has a different goal in their interaction with the flame, so it might be possible for them to work together to meet all their goals.

Getting to the Well of Woe, however, is not as simple as following a map. Travelers through Xen'drik come to find very quickly that all normal means of navigation, and even some magical ones, are useless. It is as if some things on Xen'drik just do not want to be found.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

After getting their instructions from their leaders, the PCs meet the rest of their expedition. They head into the wilds of Xen'drik looking for the Well of Woe. After being attacked by twig blights, the PCs get lost and must deal with a lizardfolk druid, a nothic, and a yuan-ti trueblood. After being lost and possibly being ambushed by a crocodile, the PCs can encounter an orc who offers them a magical item that can give them direction toward the Well of Woe. Then the PCs enter the territory of the Slayer forestkith goblins and come across some animated wolf skeletons as they prepare for the next round of the adventure.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Each of the PCs has a map showing the route to the territory of the Slayer Forestkith goblins, but maps are of little use due to the magical effects of Xen'drik. Starting with Part 2 of this adventure, encourage PCs to make skill checks and use other resources and abilities to try to move in the right direction. Have them thinking they finally succeeded and expecting that a prominent landmark should be straight ahead, and then have them come to something else. For added fun, have PCs make the same skill checks yet get differing results. Two PCs using Survival or Knowledge (geography) might make the exact same skill check with the exact same roll, but see two completely different sets of variables. One PC sees the constellations backward from the other. Play this up as much as possible until the PCs realize that they are lost, but don't overplay it so as to cause frustration and hostility.

Also, different factions have different goals in the endgame of the third round of *Well of Woe*. However, the goals have been established so that the PCs from different factions can work together to achieve these goals, since they are not mutually exclusive. However, whenever you have different factions playing at the same table, some players may take this as a cue to behave badly (even if it is in character). This does not mean that PCs may attack each other. PC vs. PC combat is forbidden. Encourage other means to solve conflict.

The best way to avoid conflict is to encourage players to use PCs from the same faction in this adventure. If that is not possible, then be very clear in the mission-briefing portion of the adventure. Although the nature of The Flame is unclear at the outset and everyone thinks it is an actual flame, the wording of the mission objectives should make it clear what the PCs must do when they see The Flame is really a dragon.

ADVENTURE START FOR BLACKWHEEL COMPANY PCS

The word came down personally from the Field Marshal himself. In your mind, you can still see Mackinnon "Mace" Maceck as he stood before the assembled platoon, the early morning sun glinting off his adamantine peg-leg. He was tall for a dwarf, sharply clad in his "blacks:" the standard uniform of The Company. A swath of gleaming medals cut a wide path across the entirety of his right breast. You recall that as he turned to address the small assembly of troops that had gathered, he looked directly at you.

You remembered exactly what he had said, the words committed to memory. The lives of an entire platoon had been the price to bring this information to light. The Six Paths battalion had lost some of its finest operatives. Though the cost had been high, the information had proved invaluable. One of the dragon prophets from the Six Paths battalion had gone insane after the event. For days he raved about the flame at the bottom of a well. He screamed, wracked with agony as the prophecy assaulted him further. He continued on, ranting about tiny scales extinguishing the flame. The result was always the same: more screaming as he continued on about pink-fleshed beings that soaked in the life-force of the flame—their backs writhing with iridescent and indigo sigils.

The Field Marshal's description of the prophecy had been sobering. What he said next was grimmer still: the Dragonmarked Houses had their best minds working to unravel the cryptic prophecy. It was House Cannith artificers that finally made the breakthrough. Working closely with Blackwheel Company intelligence staff, House Cannith uncovered an ancient tale of woe... or rather a well of it. The raving prophecy from the Six Paths member fit nearly perfectly with a recent bit of the Caldyn Fragments that had been interpreted. The verse is burned into your mind, intoned as the Field Marshal read it:

"When Thelanis falls on the dusk of the Slayers' jungle, the Flame alights within a copper ring in a well of woe. Forever extinguished, the dreamer awakens and the pariahs rise."

Company intelligence has located the well and House Cannith believes they have solved the prophecy. This copper ring needs to be destroyed, or the resultant energy of the Flame will cause a massive flourishing of aberrant dragonmarks, the likes of which have not been seen since the War of the Mark. The majority of aberrant dragonmarks have been hunted to extinction; it would be cataclysmic to the peace of all nations if their ranks were to suddenly swell again.

*Field Marshal Maceck made your mission crystal clear. His words still ring in your ears and you can feel his piercing gaze as you reflect back on it: **Find and destroy this copper ring.** The pieces of the copper ring can be returned to the Blackwheel Company airship, Glory Road. You've been given a map to guide you to the location, a ruined temple atop a plateau in the deep jungle to the south of Stormreach.*

The Field Marshal warned you, however, that the most difficult part would not be finding the flame and the copper ring. No, as an operative of the Blackwheel Company, the most difficult part of your mission would be infiltrating the

groups that might already be on their way to seek the Flame for their own purposes.

ADVENTURE START FOR CABAL OF SHADOWS PCS

You were quietly directed to the docks, and under the cover of a mist-shrouded night you find your way to a large caravel, flying no colors. The faint smell of rotted meat greets your nostrils as you climb the gangplank and as you top the rail, the shrouded sailors slowly directing you to the hold without speaking. The hold is empty but for four chairs, each with its own unique resident. It takes only seconds for you to realize that seated before you is the Council of the Obscured, leaders of the Cabal of Shadows. Each of them ignore your entrance as they talk amongst themselves: the shapeless robe and mask that hide the pleasant female voice of The Melancholy, the speaker of the Mourners of Yore; the calm, masked, androgynous teen whose back sprouts white-feathered wings must be Sublime, the angel of destruction who leads the Children of Xoriat; the masked and deep-throated voice of the Voice of the Storm who speaks for the Defiance; and the only unmasked member, a plain looking man in a rainbow of colors must be the Discordant Voyage. The Melancholy gestures you forward, "Please children, introduce yourselves and join us for we have much to speak of."

The members of the Council have summoned the PCs to undertake a vital mission to manipulate the Draconic Prophecy to the Cabal's favor. You may use any of the Council members when speaking to the PCs as you see fit. Guidelines for role-playing each of them can be found below.

Within the last week, members of the Defiance have provided the Cabal with the writing found upon the *ebon tableau*, a large stone owned by the sahuagin of Shargon's Teeth and recently recovered for them by operatives of the Cabal. Upon the artifact, supposedly known to display random pieces of the draconic Prophecy and the *Caldyn Fragments* was the following poem.

"On the shore of the Thelanis-kissed mere, and the passage of ancestors lies the Well of Woe.

"Flame is within; new-born and weakened, but still no lamb to slaughter.

"Hesitate not. Resist greed and fear. Its death is the first gateway to the kingdom of the dreamer and those who walk in shadows—princes of the new age."

Research guided by this text has discovered a place to the south of Stormreach that seems to fit this description. Reports have come in of a hidden section of jungle peopled by a savage tribe of bloodthirsty goblins known as the Slayers. A focal point of their worship is a well that lies in the heart of an ancient ruined temple complex located on a sacred plateau. Surrounding the plateau is a Thelanis manifest zone, twisted by the rules of the Faerie Court.

It is believed by the Council, and scholars loyal to the Cabal, that the Flame is a creature of goodness and light that guards the path to the Traveler and his harbingers. They believe that for the Traveler to come, the Flame must be slain such that the gates to his realm might be thrown wide and his creatures of shadow may pour forth.

The Council requests that the PCs travel south following the clues gleaned from the *ebon tableau*, locate the Well of Woe, and extinguish the Flame that dwells within. The Council

is putting great faith in the PCs by offering them this mission, and as such, they do not anticipate failure short of the death of all members of the expedition. The Council also mentions that members of other factions may be at large, so the PCs should be prepared for infiltrators or ambushes. Trust no one and stop at nothing to clear the way for the Traveler.

ROLE-PLAYING MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE OBSCURED

The Melancholy and Sublime are two of the four individuals that sit upon the Council of the Obscured and make decisions for the Cabal of Shadows. They are old and powerful individuals whose goals exceed the daily concerns of normal folk. Their powers exceed anything the PCs may muster. When portraying them, it is important that they maintain an air of otherworldly mystery.

The Discordant Voyage: The Discordant Voyage leads the Instruments of Change and is their representative to the Council of the Obscured. The Voyage is a zealot of the Traveler who is the only member of the Council who never appears masked. Rather each time, the Discordant Voyage appears in different form with a different, often inappropriate voice. From a small halfling boy with the voice of a raging firestorm to the humble minotaur, the leader of this Obscura is never the same.

The Melancholy: The Melancholy speaks for the Mourners of Yore in the Council of the Obscured. While her true identity is unknown, the voice and mannerisms are decidedly female. The Melancholy is generally a moderating force among the Council that urges solidifying the position of the Cabal by active recruiting of new members and the establishment of safe houses.

Sublime: The speaker of the Children of Xoriat takes the form of masked teen of indeterminate sex with fine white angel-like wings. The child, known as Sublime is disturbingly calm for one of the Children and speaks of the eradication of whole cities with the same intensity one might discuss the weather. During discussions on how to proceed, Sublime generally urges the most violent and bloody methods.

The Voice of the Storm: The Voice of the Storm speaks for the Defiance. A skilled leader and orator, the Voice has no fear of the coming darkness and he urges all to embrace it. He is prone to motivating speeches filled with grandiose imagery. Among his fellows on the Council of the Obscured, the Voice of the Storm has urged frequent retribution against the Cabal's enemies. In general though, he would rather see a foe suffer, rather than kill them quickly. When speaking as a group the Voice of the Storm is the most likely to take the lead.

ADVENTURE START FOR COVENANT OF LIGHT PCS

The priest's grim pronouncement still resonates in your mind. Even when the piece of the draconic Prophecy was noticed and evaluated with the most powerful divinations, Covenant scholars were still confused. It was the kalashtar contingent that finally convinced everyone.

"When Thelanis falls on the dusk of the Slayers' jungle, the Flame alights within a ring of copper in a well of woe. Forever extinguished, the dreamer awakens and the pariahs rise."

The kalashtar quickly convinced the powerful members of the Covenant that this flame had to be seen. The diviners and prophets believe that if one pure of heart was touched by the flame, a series of events would be set in motion that would lead to a revolt of the slaves in Dar Qat, crippling the ability of the Quori to carry out their machinations. The plight of the good people of Eberron would be lessened in one instant.

After the decision was made, the rest came easily. Rumors of the Well of Woe were heard, investigated and finally confirmed. The maps were drawn, the plans made, and you—new to the organization but showing great promise—were tasked to find this Flame in the Well of Woe and extinguish it. But the problem is the wilds of Xen'drik are dangerous, traveling with an expedition is wiser than traveling alone, but you aren't sure who is going on this expedition with you.

ADVENTURE START FOR CRIMSON CODEX PCS

As you sit quietly in your barracks waiting for something to happen, a voice interrupts the stillness. "Meet me at the Raging Wrestler in 20 minutes."

At the Raging Wrestler Tavern, you are met by your handler, a bored-looking human bard named Fritz-roy, tall and lanky with a bald head and thick black moustache. He sits at a table and waves as you enter.

"We've got your first real juicy adventure for you, so listen carefully. Several signs have pointed to something big on the horizon, and now we are ready to move. A line from the Caldyn Fragments reads as follows: 'When Thelanis falls on the dusk of the Slayers' jungle, The Flame alights within a ring of copper beneath a well of woe. Forever extinguished, the dreamer awakens and the pariahs rise.'"

"Deep in Xen'drik there are some goblins who call themselves the Slayers. Within their territory is a place that supposedly contains a gate to the plane of Thelanis, the Faerie Court. On the far west of the territory of the Slayers there is rumored to be a temple that protects some sort of magical well. We need you to go to that area, find the well, and see if you can find a flame somehow held within the well. If you do, take this magical lantern and light it from the Flame. It is important that you bring back the Flame, or at least part of the Flame, for us to study. Here is a rough map that can get you to the territory of the Slayers. After that, you are on your own."

Although the PCs may have more questions, Fritz-roy does not have many answers. PCs with Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local, Xen'drik) can attempt a DC 20 check to learn that the area is reported to be teeming with fey. PCs with the Research feat can use that at this time to assist them in their research.

Those PCs who successfully completed *Prophecy's Unwitting Servant* should have received a copy of a map from Stormrider that shows the Well of Woe.

ADVENTURE START FOR MULTI-FACTION PARTIES

If the party is made of PCs of more than one faction, the PCs should get the introduction for their particular faction, and then they should be told by their faction contacts that they will be traveling with others who are seeking the same goal, as it is safer to travel into the wilds of Xen'drik with other capable adventurers. The faction contacts warn the PCs to be careful

and not trust the strangers, for they may be working for competing interests.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs from the differing factions meet:

You meet at the pre-arranged gathering place. The conventional wisdom is that going into the wilds of Xen'drik is safer in numbers. However, whoever coined that phrase obvious never adventured with strangers like these before. You each have a map provided by your superiors. You each have your instructions. The journey begins.

Give the PCs plenty of time to role-play, and encourage PC interaction. This is the first time that they will have the chance to interact directly with members of competing factions. Also take the opportunity to remind the players that this is a game, and that the point is to have fun and tell a collective story. Keep an eye out for players who might make trouble later when PCs might be at odds with each other. Diffusing problems now will hopefully make for a better interaction later.

After the PCs have had the chance to introduce themselves, they can leave for the wilds of Xen'drik and their desired goal: the Well of Woe.

PART 1: THE LONGEST JOURNEYS BEGIN WITH A SINGLE STEP

The first stretch of your journey is not a difficult one. A relatively well-traveled path heading south from Stormreach toward the main part of the continent would be considered hopelessly overgrown on Khorvaire. In Xen'drik it is the main thoroughfare. The first few days of your journey are neither particularly difficult nor dangerous. You passed a few adventuring groups returning from the main continent toward Stormreach, spotted a few wild animals, and took shelter from a severe rainshower.

Now, however, that has changed. The first sign of real danger is in front of you. You didn't see it because it was buried deep in some tall grass. You practically tripped over the mutilated tiger carcass. Something tore it to shreds. But looking around, all you see are a few trees, some thorny and dying shrubs, and an ocean of grass.

Foes: The danger here are the nearby shrubs, which are the twig blights that killed the tiger. The four shrubs are 20 feet away on all sides, and it takes a DC 20 Spot check to notice they are not normal shrubs.

Twig Blights (4): hp 7, 5, 4, 4; Combat Statistics

Treasure: In the tall grass near the dead tiger is a masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str) that some poor adventurer dropped when she was forced to flee the area.

TWIG BLIGHT CR 1/3

CE Small plant

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

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 14

hp 5 (1 HD); **DR** 5/slashing or bludgeoning

Immune poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, polymorphing, plant traits

Fort +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** +0

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee 2 claws +0 (1d3-1+poison)

Base Atk +0; **Grp** -5

Special Atk poison (DC 11 Fort save, 1 point Strength damage, no secondary damage)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 5, Wis 11, Cha 4

Feats Stealthy

Skills Hide +8, Listen +1, Move Silently +4, Spot + 1

PART 2: SNAKE PILLARS

Not long after the encounter with the twig blights, the magical misdirection of Xen'drik begins to affect the PCs. Let them wander around a while, trying to get their bearings. Then read or paraphrase the following:

A pillar of stone the height of two longspears rises from the jungle floor a mere dagger's toss from your path. The stone, larger around than a giant's waist, is carved with snakes and fangs and is pierced by dozens of small holes that do not seem to go all the way through it. The blowing of the wind generates a soft hissing noise from the stone. The base appears to have some writing, but due to mud and growing plants, its details are hard to make out.

The PCs are twenty feet from the pillar when they see it. The column of stone is twenty feet high and ten feet across. Dozens of holes are bored into the column in the mouths and eyes of the snakes carved into the column. The column radiates faint abjuration (*detect magic*, DC 16 Spellcraft). The inside is hollow. The area off the path is difficult terrain and the dense foliage provides concealment to anyone more thirty feet away.

Stone Column: 10 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 50; AC 5; Break DC 65 (to topple).

The writing on the pillar is written in Yuan-ti and reads as follows: "Seek the path of scales to the pit of knowledge where all your desires can be located. Guidance and enlightenment will be yours." The pillar also can be deciphered by the use of magic or a DC 20 Decipher Script check. Even those parties that cannot read the text can find a map on the lower back of the pedestal that seems to lead to some sort of well or pit. Several landmarks are obvious, making it easily followed. This map is substantially different than the maps the PCs have been following and that have led to their current lost state.

If any PC touches the pillar, it triggers a mental alarm that alerts and draws all reptiles within 200 feet to the pillar. The first sign of this is the dozens of snakes that begin to pour forth from the holes in the pillar. While the snakes are harmless, they drip from the pillar at an alarming rate, possibly covering any PC bending over to inspect the pillar. The true threat to the expedition is Xarecel, a lizardfolk druid devoted to recovering the lost artifacts of the yuan-ti that decorate many lonely places in Xen'drik's jungle. Xarecel views the column as a holy place not to be defiled by warm bloods. As such, he moves quickly to put an end to the infidels, arriving with his snake allies two rounds after the harmless snakes pour forth from the pillar.

Xarecel: male lizardfolk druid 1: hp 17; Combat Statistics.

X'ljryna: female medium viper animal companion: hp 9; Combat Statistics.

Small Viper (2): hp 4; *Monster Manual* 280.

Tactics: Xarecel moves within sight of the party and casts *entangle* in order to catch as many of the party in the difficult terrain as possible. Then he sends his snakes to mob one target not caught by his spell. If there are two free targets he enters melee; otherwise he uses *produce flame* on casters or ranged fighters caught in the effects of the

entangle spell. Due to his religious beliefs, he fights to the death to cleanse the land of the warmbloods.

Development: If Xarecel is captured, he knows the location of the pit of knowledge and can be forced to reveal its location with suitable applications of threats or force. Secretly he hopes that the PCs do go there, so the temple guardian may finish what he could not. If the PCs have slain Xarecel rather than keeping him alive for questioning, they are fully lost by this point and must choose to either wander blindly through the jungle or make their way to the place depicted on the back of the monument. The DM should feel free to allow the PCs to wander blindly if they think it is wise, and encounter a few random snakes or other hungry fauna until they encounter the nothic in Part 3 by chance.

XARECEL CR 2

Male lizardfolk druid 1

NE Medium humanoid (reptilian)

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Common, Draconic, Yuan-ti

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17

hp 2 (17 HD)

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

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee claw +2 (1d4+1) and bite +0 (1d4)

Melee club +2 (1d6+1) and bite +0 (1d4)

Ranged javelin +1 ranged (1d6+1)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2

Combat Gear *scroll of cure light wounds*

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 1st):

1st — *entangle* (DC 13), *produce flame*

0th — *create water*, *detect poison*, *flare* (DC 12)

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

SQ Hold breath, wild empathy +0 (-4 magical beasts)

Feats Beast Totem (Displacer Beast, +4 on saves vs. targeted spells), Multiattack

Skills Balance +4, Concentration +4, Knowledge

(nature) +3, Jump +5, Survival +4, Swim +4

Possessions combat gear plus heavy wood shield, club, 3 javelins, spell component pouch, sprig of holly

Hook “Die warmbloods!”

X'LRYNA

CR ~

Female medium viper animal companion

N Medium animal

Init +7; **Senses** Listen +5, Spot +5; Low-light vision, scent

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13

hp 9 (2 HD)

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

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Melee Bite +4 melee (1d4—1 plus poison)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +0

Abilities Str 8, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2

SQ Link, share spells

Feats Improved Initiative, Weapon FinesseB

Skills Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +12, Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +7

Tricks Attack (x2), Heel

Poison (Ex): A viper snake has a poisonous bite that deals initial and secondary damage of 1d6 Con. A DC 11 Fortitude saving throw negates this damage. The save DCs are Constitution-based.

PART 3: NOTHIC TO SEE HERE

The party arrives at this encounter easily if the PCs choose to follow the map on the snake monument discovered in the previous encounter. If not, they wander for days before coming across it.

You have followed the path through the jungle for two days, but unlike your maps, every landmark depicted on the pillar's map has been easily found and followed. It is late on the second day since leaving the column of snakes when the rubble of some structure comes into view. Covered in the foliage of the jungle, blocks of stone and fragments of weatherworn statuary lay strewn about the jungle floor. Between you and the main pile of rubble is a yawning hole, ringed in stone.

The PCs have arrived at the Pit of Knowledge, a ruined yuan-ti temple. Built following the exodus of the yuan-ti from Argonnessen, the temple has since fallen to ruin and disuse. It is not, however, entirely abandoned. The yuan-ti maintain a token presence here to keep local lizardfolk under their thumb. Of course, if the PCs should wish to pay a visit, they will be more than welcome, as the residents are always hungry.

The rubble proves to be all that is left of the temple with no walls left standing. Fragments of statues, sanded down by the elements, depict parts of snakes and pieces of what were once humanoids. The construction is too small to have been made by giants. A DC 10 Search check locates the bones of many jungle creatures, picked clean. The nothic (see below) lives in hollows between the fallen stones.

Inspecting the pit shows it to be well constructed but old. Its edges are ringed in stone to prevent the wet jungle earth from collapsing it. A set of well-rounded spiral stairs coils down into the darkness for several hundred feet. There is no light, and while the steps look treacherous, the nearby wall of the pit makes cautious PCs able to descend without problems.

Foes: The yuan-ti priests captured a creature of Khyber they found when the temple was first built, and they have used it as a pet and guardian since then. The unnatural creature, called a nothic, is a hunched creature sporting a single bloated eye. It lairs in the rubble and has been instructed to slay and eat all warm-blooded creatures that try to enter the pit. It is hiding when the PCs first arrive and attempts to surprise the PCs with its flesh-rotting gaze.

Nothic: hp 42; Combat Statistics.

Tactics: The nothic is a simple creature. It activates its gaze attack and moves close to the party so it can use its claw attacks. If reduced below 10 hp, tries to flee into the jungle in order to lick its wounds.

Treasure: In the largest hollow of the ruined temple, where the nothic often lairs, rests the bones of an expedition that passed this many years ago. Their equipment is badly damaged by its time in the jungle, but some magical items have survived: a *pearl of power* (1-level), a *potion of spider climb*, and a scroll tube containing a *scroll with cure moderate wounds* and *bless* written upon it (both at CL3). There is also a rotted pouch with the faded symbol of Breland upon it containing 135 gp.

NOTHIC

CR 3

NE Medium Aberration

Init +5; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +13; darkvision 120 ft., see invisibility

Languages Undercommon

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14

hp 5 (42 HD)

Fort +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** +7

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee 2 claws +7 melee (1d4+4)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +7

Atk Options Flesh-rotting gaze

Abilities Str 18, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 8

Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will

Skills Spot +13

Flesh-rotting Gaze (Su): Deals 1d6 damage, 30 feet, Will DC 16 negates. The save DC is Constitution based.

See Invisibility (Su): A nothic can see invisible and ethereal creatures as though constantly under the effect of a *see invisibility* spell.

PART 4: THE PIT OF KNOWLEDGE

Read or summarize the following once the PCs deal with the nothic and proceed down the steps into the Pit of Knowledge.

Slowly descending the stairs into the pit, you see the walls are decorated in the ancient carvings worn mostly smooth by the jungle rains. Here and there the fanged head or coils of a serpent can be made out from the otherwise destroyed carvings. Several minutes pass as your party proceeds further, until you find yourself in a small antechamber at the base of the stairs. The archway before you is carved from stone in the likeness of a striking serpent, the path proceeding into its mouth. Beyond, a great room opens up with braziers lit on either side of an altar. Hundreds of small snakes squirm here and there on the floor or drop out of hole-riddled columns that support the arched ceiling. All of the snakes seem to avoid the areas around the braziers and the torches that stud the walls at regular intervals. A man in robes stands behind the altar, as if waiting for you.

The temple is thirty feet wide and sixty feet deep with the ten-foot-wide entrance centered on the wall the PCs stand at. The altar is centered at the rear, five feet from the back. There are two rows of columns with one placed every ten feet, ten feet from the side walls. The columns are large enough that they may be used as cover. A DC 11 Knowledge (nature) reveals none of the snakes are dangerous.

Creatures: Vatayu, a yuan-ti pureblood, plays the part of a priest of some unnamed heretical snake god who offers knowledge. He is as smooth and calm as possible as he welcomes the PCs to his temple, and he bids them to enter if they seek knowledge. He is not initially hostile, but he is wary. He asks the PCs to please mind the snakes, the chosen of his unnamed god. Only if the PCs are threatening does he attack. If he is attacked, he tries to remain out of the reach of the PCs by moving constantly and using his spell-like abilities or ranged attacks. He tries to keep an altar or column between him and the PCs and, if pressed hard, he runs into the middle of a some nearby snakes hoping the PCs will be afraid to follow him into the (harmless) swarm. If pressed especially hard, he uses his alternate form ability to become a tiny viper and lose himself among the other snakes.

Vatayu: Male yuan-ti pureblood: hp 18; *Monster Manual* 263.

Development: Vatayu claims that the snake god wishes to help those who are lost in the jungle and as such, for the proper donation, he is willing to commune with his deity and recover the answers the PCs seek. The PCs must pay him 300 gp in coin or equipment for him to commune freely. For 100 gp, he is willing to ask his deity a single question. Vatayu has no particular interest in the PCs and is willing to help them if properly paid. Of course, Vatayu has no special connection to any deity. Indeed, he has no priestly powers of any kind. What he does have is a very good understanding of the surrounding area and the general layout of the jungle. Each time the PCs ask a question, he shakes and writhes like one might expect a faith healer to gyrate, calling loudly upon the snake god to grant him knowledge. Then he convulses as though he has been hurt badly by the effort and he relates what he knows. Use the following answer to guide his responses:

- *"The Well of Woe is nearby, but it can only be found by means of special magical dragon horn that points*

the way. The snake god has imparted to me the location of just such a horn that you may find the enlightenment you seek. Follow the sound of the cicadas at night to a small island surrounded by a stream. On the island is the person who can provide the directions to the Well." (True)

- *"The Well of Woe is guarded by many difficult tests, as well as a tribe of creatures dedicated to its protection."* (True, if vague)
- *"The creature above was called a nothic and has always plagued this area."* (Lie)
- *"The lands around the jungle often change, lost in the mystery of the continent's ever-changing landscape."* (True)
- *"The snake god is great and powerful. Your deity (choose random holy symbol displayed by the party) is but one of his aspects."* (Lie)

Treasure: In addition to his masterwork studded leather armor, masterwork heavy wooden shield, masterwork scimitar and masterwork longbow, Vatayu carries the offerings of previous worshippers. He has 218 gp in various coins and jewelry as well as a pair of *bracers of armor +1* (which he wears), a *potion of sanctuary* and a *scroll of ray of enfeeblement*. The treasure he is not wearing is placed behind the altar. A DC 12 Search check located the treasure.

PART 5: MEETING THE COLLECTOR

On a small island surrounded by a forked stream lives an orc called “The Collector” by the locals. He lives here in relative solitude, contemplating the nature of all things, picking up loose relics he finds, and talking to the flora and fauna. In order to get to The Collector, the PCs must first cross an alligator-infested stream.

Alligator Rock

If the PCs follow the directions provided to them by the yuan-ti pureblood, they can follow the chirping of the cicadas to a stream. They must cross the stream in order to reach the island where The Collector lives. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs approach the stream:

Ahead of you a stream of slowly flowing water meanders through the area. The stream is only 15 feet wide at its narrowest point, and the water is not very deep. A few logs and rocks rest in the stream, offering a resting place for some exotic birds.

Foes: Most of the rocks and logs are just that. However, one is an alligator holding very still in the water, waiting for any prey to enter. PCs can spot the alligator with a 27 Spot check. Any character making a DC 15 Survival or Knowledge (nature) check can get a +10 bonus to that Spot check, since they know what to look for.

Alligator: hp 19; *Monster Manual* 271 (see Crocodile).

Development: Since there is enough room to get a running start, a medium-sized PC needs a DC 15 Jump check to clear the stream. If all the PCs can get across without touching the water, the alligator doesn’t move. However, if a PC disturbs the water at all, the alligator moves to attack. Creatures in the water cannot take a 5-foot step and move at half speed until out of the water. The alligator only pursues injured PCs out of the water, as the taste of blood overcomes its instincts.

The Collector Is Bored

After the PCs get over the creek, it does not take them long to find The Collector. The orc has built himself a rough shelter beneath some trees on the island. Assume he sees the PCs coming unless they take great pains to hide and move with stealth as they approach.

Sitting outside a crudely erected shelter on the island is an old-looking orc. He sits on a stump, whittling a piece of wood with a dagger. “Greetings,” he says in Common as you approach. “I can’t even remember the last time I spoke to something other than Ferdinand there.” He points to a tall fern growing next to him. “What news to you bring?”

The Collector doesn’t have a name. He has been called The Collector for as long as he can remember. If the PCs ask him about finding the territory of the Slayer goblins or the Well of Woe, he says that he has just the thing they are looking for. But first he wants to talk. A LOT!

In order to get the magical dragon’s horn from The Collector, the PCs must entertain The Collector. All of them. This entertainment can take the form of a Perform check or

something similar. For those without those skills, The Collector is content with someone just talking with him about what they know (any Knowledge skill). He is even entertained by someone showing great skill with a weapon. Do your best to make the PCs roleplay this interaction before breaking it down to mere dice rolling. At least two PCs must beat a DC 15 check with whatever they are doing to entertain the old orc. If the PCs are showing martial prowess, they must hit an AC of 15 for three straight rounds to impress him. Once he has been duly impressed, he offers up what the PCs need. Reward creativity on the part of the PCs. He also offers the PCs a safe place to rest for the evening.

Treasure: The Collector offers the PCs a horn from a blue dragon bearing illegible inscriptions. The inscriptions are not writing and can therefore not be read, even with magic. It does detect as magic, however, and a DC 18 Spellcraft check in conjunction with the spell reveals moderate divination. The Collector tells the PCs that this horn is attuned to the Well of Woe, and if they throw it into the air, it always lands pointing in the direction of the well. It was given to him by a dragon shaman many years ago who was seeking the Well but gave up the quest after being injured and nursed back to health by The Collector.

For every PC above the original two who beats a DC 15 when trying to entertain The Collector, he offers one addition item, in the following order: a *+1 dagger*, an *elixir of truth*, a *scroll of goodberry*, and a *potion of mage armor*.

Ruthless PCs can just kill the old orc and take his possessions, although this is certainly an evil act. He does not defend himself, resigned to die and take his place among the stars. However, the PC that strikes the killing blow must make a DC 15 Will save or suffer a –1 on all saving throws for the rest of this adventure, as well as the final two rounds of the full *Well of Woe* adventure.

PART 6: DEATH COMES CALLING

With the magical dragon's horn now in hand, the PCs have no trouble following it directly toward the territory of the Slayer forestkith goblins. Right before they cross into that territory, however, they come across a disturbing sight.

You are now approaching the territory of the Slayer goblin clan. The signs that were included on your maps are now starting to appear since you started using the horn to lead you. Your excitement at finally being on the right track quickly turns to something else. In front of you, hanging from trees by vines, are hundreds of bones. The bones are definitely not human, and the larger ones have something written on them, but the writing is too small to read.

A DC 15 Knowledge (nature) check reveals that the bones belong to wolves. Any PC approaching within 10 feet of the bones causes them to animate.

The bones begin to rattle as if in a strong wind. But no wind is blowing. The bones fall from the vines and reanimate.

Wolf Skeleton (2): hp 13, 12; *Monster Manual* 226.

Developments: If the PCs defeat the wolf skeletons, they can read the writing on the bones. The writing is in Goblin, and it contains arcane symbols of warding against fey.

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure ends with the PCs in possession of the magical dragon's horn, fully rested and preparing to head into the lands of the Slayer Forestkith goblins. Proceed to Round 2 of *Well of Woe*, entitled *Breaching Thelanis Wall*.

ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

- How did the PCs handle the twig blights?
 - No problems.
 - The PCs defeated the thorny problem, but took extensive damage.
 - The adventure was over before it started.
- What happened when the PCs encountered the lizardfolk druid?
 - The PCs handled the druid and got from him the location of the pit of knowledge.
 - The PCs handled the druid but couldn't extract the information.
 - The PCs were defeated by the druid and friends.
- How best describes how the PCs' encounter with the nothic?
 - They were defeated.
 - They won but had a rough battle.
 - Easily defeated the critter.
 - Never encountered the nothic.
- What happened at the Pit of Knowledge?
 - They got the information from Vatayu through payment.
 - They got the information in a different way.
 - They never encountered Vatayu.
- How did the PCs fare at the stream with the alligator?
 - They crossed without rousing it.

- They roused it but escaped without combat.
- They roused it, and then the creature ate them up.
- They roused it, but defeated it.

- How was the role-playing when the PCs encountered The Collector?
 - The players roleplayed very well, and they got the horn from the orc.
 - They got the horn from the orc, but the roleplaying was weak.
 - They got the horn by killing the orc.
 - They never got the horn.
- How did the PCs handle the skeletal wolves?
 - They simply avoided them.
 - They never got this far.
 - They were defeated by the undead.
 - They won, but they took heavy damage.
 - They won easily.
- How was the roleplaying?
 - Even though the PCs were from different factions, the roleplaying was great and no problems occurred.
 - The PCs were from different factions, but the roleplaying was weak or there was out-of-game tension.
 - The PCs were all from the same faction, and the roleplaying was great.
 - The PCs were all from the same faction, and the roleplaying was weak.
 - The roleplaying was just average.

STORY OBJECTS

KNOWLEDGE OF THE LOST:

Cert ID: EXWWo2

The PC has been under the influence of the magic of Xen'drik that causes people to get lost. When not under this influence, the PC is much more likely now to know where they are going. The PC has a +2 circumstance bonus to Knowledge (geography) and Survival checks when traversing Xen'drik.